



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: March 9, 2023

Council Chamber & Virtual Zoom

8:30 A.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Caroline Willis; Board Members David Bower, Gogo Heinrich, Margaret Wimmer and Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz

Absent: Vice Chair Christian Pease and Board Member Michael Makinen

Public Comment

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Ms. French noted that the next meeting is planned for April 13th. There is interest from Stanford to come and talk about the Veterans flagpole and plaque at MacArthur Park, at the former Veteran's Building. The inventory update will be on the agenda for this meeting as well. She asked that anyone not able to attend on the 13th let her know.

Study Session

Action Items

2. Review and Adoption of Historic Resources Board By-Laws to Address Remote/Virtual Meeting Attendance

Ms. French gave an overview of the HRB By-Laws which were last updated in January of 2017. Last November, new by-laws were discussed to address the expiration of the statewide emergency. AB2449 is in now effect which allows for hybrid meetings to continue, but with certain restrictions. The Brown Act also applies. The Board Members were invited to a training session in December of 2022. Exceptions under AB361 no longer apply, and a new section, 6.2, in the HRB By-Laws states that "Boardmembers may attend remotely to the extent permitted by law." The Planning and Transportation Commission adopted this policy last November.

Relating to the Brown Act, remote attendance is permitted as long as the Board Member's location is posted in notices and agendas; the agenda is posted at each remote location and each location is open to the public; and at least a quorum of the board members participates from within locations within the boundaries of the city. There is no restriction on how many times this can happen.

In the event of emergency circumstances, if someone at the last minute is sick or has extenuating circumstances that were not posted in advance, they may attend remotely under AB2449. This exception cannot be used for more that three consecutive months, or more than 20 percent of regular meetings in a calendar year, which is about four meetings.

Board Member Bower asked whether they are being asked to approved Attachment B or A. Ms. French clarified that Attachment A is the recommendation, a single sentence. Board Member Bower supported this,

and felt that Attachment B asks for things that he did not feel Boardmembers could reasonably provide. In Section 6.2, Attachment B, paragraph 4, it states, "A Boardmember attending remotely must ensure that there is a quorum of the Board participating in person." He asked how a Boardmember could assure this without polling every other board member. Also, there is an advance written notice in paragraph 3.F. which requires notification to the Board Secretary 12 days in advance if they were not going to attend, and that is often not possible, aside from emergency circumstances. He felt this puts a burden on Boardmembers, and he would not support Attachment B.

Chair Willis also supported Attachment A, the single sentence, but wondered, with Board Member Makinen in mind, if there would be leeway for special circumstances. She expressed a desire to be supportive and wondered if a conversation with the City Attorney could be warranted to request a single exception. She also felt they should keep in mind that, while they are used to attending remotely, the aim is to have in-person meetings again, and that Boardmembers should be in person when they can. Chair Willis and Ms. French affirmed Boardmember Wimmer's choice to attend the current meeting remotely since she was not feeling well. Ms. French explained that when they know where Boardmember Makinen is participating from there is no limit to the numbers of meetings that can be posted in a such a way.

Motion by Board Member Bower to approve Addendum A, paragraph 6.2 of the HRB By-Laws allowing for Boardmembers to attend remotely to the extent permitted by law. Seconded by Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz, the motion carried (5-0) by roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

3. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of October 13, 2022

Board Member Heinrich moved to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2022, meeting. Seconded by Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz, the motion carried (4-0-1) by voice vote.

4. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of February 9, 2023

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz moved to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2023, meeting. Seconded by Board Member Heinrich, the motion carried (5-0) by voice vote.

Commissioner Questions, Comments, Announcements or Future Meetings and Agendas

Board Member Bower commented that one of the PAST Heritage Board Members has written a book about Birge Clark. This is the 100th anniversary of the opening of his architectural practice in Palo Alto. PAST will present Council Members and the City Clerk with copies so that they are familiar with the substantial achievements that his architectural work in Palo Alto has made toward historic buildings, including the President Hotel and the former University Art Building on the corner of Hamilton and Ramona. Several buildings in the Ramona Historic District block are also Birge Clark buildings. Board Member Bower noted that there are also many residences in the city, so it is a significant year for architecture in Palo Alto. It is the first year that a significant number of residential buildings were built following WWI.

Board Member Bower inquired about the status of the Fry's development project.

Board Member Heinrich said she had mentioned Birge Clark at the February meeting, when they had discussed doing a proclamation. She wondered about that status of the proclamation. Chair Willis said they talked about it before the meeting, and she will talk to the City Clerk regarding who might be the best person to write it and support it with Council. Board Member Heinrich said the Birge Clark book was being passed around among the Board Members and she wondered who had it currently. She hoped that everyone could see it. Board Member Bower noted that it is also available at Bell's Books for purchase, and it contains an impressive amount of information. Ms. French commented that it would be worth the City having a copy of it as well, and perhaps she could bring it to display at the next meeting.

It was noted that Board Member Bower will remain on the Board until a new Board Member is appointed.

Ms. French reported on the inventory update project. Staff and the consultants met a couple weeks ago and proceeded with the contract. They talked through some of the details. There will be an optional task within the contract to include the commercial properties that are on the National Register eligible list, along with the residential properties. They will be looking back to the 1970s to determine Category 1 and 2 homes. There will be a study session, a community meeting, probably an evening meeting. The target date is April 25th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. She encouraged Board Member Bower to attend regardless of his status as an HRB member. The meeting will possibly be held in the Community Room, if available, which would allow for a live feed for those unable to attend in person. The meeting will introduce the project. It will be publicized on a webpage for the project. The consultant helping Page and Turnbull and Ms. French – Isabel Castellano – will be helping digitize and scan the original black and white photographs and DPR forms from the 2000 survey. They will then be uploaded to a webpage for all to reference, showing documentation such as “before” and “after” photos. There will also be at least four meetings with the HRB, which will involve going through the list of remaining properties, discussion of their integrity and their appropriate category, et cetera.

Chair Willis expressed that it will feel good to get the project going. She shared that she was at the 1550 Cowper Building again with the potential new owners. The sale is not finalized, but she thinks it will happen, and the buyer is talking about preserving all of the structures and making it a community resource and perhaps holding annual concerts on the property to bring people in. He is interested in a historic district. Chair Willis commented that this could be the best Mills Act they could possibly dream up – five units of housing, a de Lamos property, near Gamble, central to Old Palo Alto. She encouraged the Board to push for this project. She didn’t think they would need to wait until the property changes hands, and she advocated trying a sample Mills Act for this particular property. She said the buyer is interested in this and is interested in a historic district as there are two adjacent Pedro de Lamos properties on Churchill. One may change hands soon. She felt the Board should not miss this opportunity.

Ms. French asked if the Chair wanted her to agendize the Mills Act for this. Chair Willis stated she would, and she would like the potential new owner to be invited, as he would be interested in hearing about the possibilities. She said this would be a positive for preservation and as they go through the inventory update, they need to make sure people understand that the Board values all of their historic properties and that the City is willing to make some allowances.

Ms. French reminded the Board that they did have a subcommittee for the Mills Act, including one who is soon to no longer be on the Board. They might want to revisit the subcommittee as far as follow-up. If the Board wanted to, for example, write a letter in support of this pilot project and select a certain address, this might be the type of thing that the subcommittee could take on. This could happen before the April 13th meeting. At least one volunteer would need to be on the subcommittee to continue the work beyond March.

Chair Willis asked Board Member Wimmer and Board Member Bower if they were willing to take this on. Board Member Bower agreed for as long as he is on the Board and can participate. Chair Willis suggested he could still be a citizen member, and perhaps the new Board Member would be interested. Ms. French said if anyone else on the Board is interested, there could be a third member on the subcommittee as it is often nice to have three people. Board Member Wimmer recalled that they had originally started with three members on the subcommittee, and she felt this was a good number. Chair Willis reiterated that it is a perfect opportunity to get this going, adding it could be a legacy for Board Member Bower.

Adjournment

Motion by Board Member Heinrich to adjourn. Seconded by Board Member Bower, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.