

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present:

Alan Mesecher.....Chairman
Susan Pennington..... Member
Robert Manning.....Member
Kenneth Wheeler (arrived at 6:00 p.m.).....Member

Members Absent:

Robin Craig-Hunt..... Vice Chair

Staff Present:

Kelvin Knauf, Director of Planning & Community Development
Wendy Lloyd, Planning Secretary

City Council Members Present:

Brad Childs

Chairman Mesecher called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 11, 2022, regular meeting

Member Pennington motioned to approve
Member Manning 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Member Pennington asked if we discuss these items in a different order because Kenneth Wheeler has an item on here and he's not here and so could we do that one first and put off these solar ones until he's here. Mr. Knauf stated that's up to the chair. Member Pennington stated he can't vote on it anyway, so that's why I thought we could do that one first.

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Kenneth Wheeler to construct an addition to the primary structure at 1008 Pine Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated Mr. Wheeler wants to move some doors and some windows and it looks to me on the rear of the property just to create another office inside his house and it would necessitate a modification to the exterior of his house. Member Manning stated do we have anything in the packet. Mr. Knauf stated yes. I was hoping he would be here to help explain this. This is where the office would go in and then he would move the back door and move it on up. Member Manning stated knowing him we are looking at all the same building materials, same construction of window frames. Member Pennington stated probably the same contractor.

Chairman Mesecher asked for any discussion. Member Pennington stated it's just a 7 by 8, just little. Mr. Knauf stated yes it's not very big addition at all. Member Manning stated I'll have to ask him later how he's going to park his Jeep in the garage. Member Pennington stated you used to go out the back door and there was a patio and now the patio is going to be closed in except for a hallway. It just takes a little bit off the patio. It doesn't go into the driveway. It doesn't change the outside exterior. I think it makes the house a few foot longer.

Member Manning motioned to approve

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Betty Odom to install solar panels on the rooftop at 1004 6th Street

Mr. Knauf stated I spoke to Ms. Odom and she has a really bad cold and isn't able to be here this evening. This request is for solar panels on her rooftop. I'll pull up the diagram here. Basically, they want to put it on all sides of the house and the Historic Preservation zoning district ordinances is silent on solar panels on whether they're allowed or not allowed or what. This is the plan for the installation of the solar panels on the roof. I searched other cities and didn't find in other cities that historic districts where they've really regulated solar panels. It's just silent. I was able to find the City of Fredericksburg where some of their informational materials indicated that solar panels were allowed if they were near the back and away from the front façade of the building. They're just very sketchy materials. I searched the internet for some articles on solar panels in historic districts and that's the bulk of your agenda packet is those articles and information about installing solar panels in historic districts. What they seem to indicate is that they may be okay if mounted or faced so that they detract from the historic character of the structure or the neighborhood which would be things like putting solar panels near the rear of the roof or make sure that the solar panels are the same color as the roof or some areas where maybe the solar panel could be on the ground and then screened. It looks like there's not just a blanket saying oh you don't want to do that. There's just not a whole lot of materials especially in this area about solar panels in historic districts.

Member Manning stated my question is there's tons of different styles and types. There's the ones that sit about 8 inches off the surface and the ones that are actually composite parts of the roof. There's ones that are framed in, there's ones that are framed in sections. That's what I would want to see. If they're a profile that doesn't stick out like a sore thumb, that's different to me then ones that are more of a profile to a roof. Is there any more information on what style? Mr. Knauf stated there's some pictures in here.

Member Pennington stated I have a question about the City of Orange ordinances. Is there anything in the city ordinances that deal with solar panels or is it just an area that has not been addressed? Mr. Knauf stated it's just an area that hasn't been addressed. We've allowed them in the non-historic district areas. If you drive around there are some houses that get an electrical permit and they are allowed. They are not prohibited. But in the historic district it's just not addressed. Member Manning stated it's more of a regulation on the setup, the hookup and how they interface with the electrical grid and all that other business. I have seen solar panels that you just didn't really notice they were solar panels until someone pointed it out but I've also seen the DIY ones where somebody picks up a couple dozen of them at a home show and they haul them home and mount them themselves and it looks horrible. In many other packets we've had, we've had more of a detail design. Member Pennington stated there's detail. They cover the entire roof because these are small houses and so there is no way it's not going to be seen. They're going to be in your face. They're going to be seen. Chairman Mesecher stated it pulls away from the whole historic concept. I think we should have more information and discussion on whether we will have them here in the historic district or not. Even some of the larger houses, one in particular, has a flat roof and you wouldn't see some of it but eventually you will. It still has to have an angle. I don't see that it would be beneficial to the other houses. Member Manning stated this is part of the discussion but is there any appetite, we have guidance in a lot of the stuff we do. They tell us no you can't have an iron framed carport and it gives us direction. In this case, there is no direction. It's a fairly new ask. I know of a lot of folks that are getting wrapped up in the discussion about solar panels and tying into the grid and saving a bunch of money and how beneficial they are. But we don't have any guidance. So, is there any appetite to build some guidance into our ordinance. I don't know if ordinance is the right word. Mr. Knauf stated it is. Member Pennington stated I think that's what the concern was because Ms. Craig-Hunt called me and said look I'm really concerned I can't be there tonight and I'm really against this. I'm kind of like for having solar panels on my house and I don't know that I want somebody telling me I can't but then as I've read and I've looked and I've tried to ask other people how they felt in the historic district. I really feel like we need to table this, have a discussion about it. Mr. Knauf stated yes have a workshop and study it more before really making a decision on this one or the next one. Member Manning stated otherwise I kind of feel we are molding and ordinance which is not really our role here. We have a lot of guidance. I mean we've had many cases where folks have come in with new structures and yeah those building materials aren't really approved in our guidance and so we kind of guide them in that and give them some help to accomplish our role which is to preserve the historical presence of the district. I agree. I don't think that I'm comfortable making the decision here. We can have a workshop and table it and we could get somebody to come in and talk about what specifically this install is going to look like. Mr. Knauf stated we could even have the contractors come in at a workshop and explain different ways to mount solar panels and help the commission maybe come up with some standards and then put those standards before the Planning and Zoning Commission because that's part of the zoning ordinance for a recommendation for City Council and they would actually amend the zoning ordinance. That way at least there's some set record of whatever it is whether it's total prohibition or build whatever you want. There's 2 extremes there. That would be my suggestion is not really decide on these 2 tonight but have a workshop and kind of study the issue more. Member Pennington stated you took the time to do all that research for us. I'm sorry I didn't allow that time this afternoon and read through it. Chairman Mesecher stated it's not fair on both sides for us to make decisions and just come out and say no without having more information. Member Manning stated and then if we'd just said yes too, there's no guidance on what that install looks like. We approved a structure not too long ago and then we asked them to put shutters on it so that it didn't look like a

track house. Member Pennington stated and then they put it up on piers and it looks really strange because they put no skirting around it. So, that's why I just don't want to jump into something. Mr. Knauf stated I think that's really smart to really study it and come up with at least something on how to regulate solar panels in the historic districts.

Councilmember Childs stated are if you all are working towards an ordinance, I would suggest driving into the first road into Oak Valley. I think that's International. There's a house on the right in the very beginning of the neighborhood and it's on the very front of the house and it detracts from the neighborhood. If it were put on the back of the house or the side so it's always going to have to do with the orientation and that might be something to consider in the ordinance because I think that house takes away from the very beginning of that neighborhood. So, it might be something you all might want all to take a field trip out to and just see if you all end up working towards an ordinance. Obviously, it can't be on the front of a house, especially in a historical district. Member Pennington stated but do you see these, they're all over the entire house and the next one is even more. Mr. Knauf stated and for some people it may be problematic because of the orientation with just the way the house sits on the lot and the best angle for the sun. Councilmember Childs stated and also with energy with how we're going in the next couple years, it's going to be something that people are going to be looking at all the time. Member Manning stated so that's why I think we need to have some real solid guidance. If we were to make a decision today, that impacts people's wallets. That impacts their movement forward in setting up their home and costs them money.

Member Manning motioned to table item

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Anna Thibodeaux to install solar panels on the rooftop at 812 3rd Street

Member Manning motioned to table item

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Edieth Solomon for a new structure at 808 Park Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated Ms. Solomon has submitted this and before she proceeds with any building plans or anything, she would like to know the response from the commission as to whether this would be acceptable or not acceptable.

Edieth Solomon – Orange, TX: Ms. Solomon stated I have a beauty school and right now I'm at Dr. Couliant's old dentist office and I have outgrown it. So, I have this property right down the sidewalk in old Beaty insurance office. There's just a trailer and a metal building and I could just take that away. It would be a metal building but in the front windows across and brick so that it looks more not like a metal building. That is just a sample of what I envision in my mind. Member Manning stated where exactly is this at? Ms. Solomon stated 808 West Park. It's on park between 7th and 8th Street. You'll see the administration building on one block and it's the

next block. This other building would be so much better and nicer than that right there. I would have parking in the front. The building wouldn't be right up by the road and parking would be in the front area. Chairman Mesecher stated so is it zoned. Ms. Solomon stated it's zoned commercial. Mr. Knauf stated yes. Ms. Solomon stated on the corner was a paint store. Councilmember Childs stated that's where the paint store used to be. Ms. Solomon stated it's on the side of that.

Member Pennington stated is there a big difference in the cost of Hardy board and the metal building faced with brick. Ms. Solomon stated I don't know. I just was looking around up and down Park Street and was seeing some of the structures and I saw the other metal buildings but it would look nice to add some brick or something to make it look not so industrial. Then in my mind windows all the way across because I want people to be able to see in and see out. So maybe along the side maybe about halfway brick. I just say brick because I thought it would look nicer.

Member Manning stated could you go to the overhead map. This is on the same side of the street as the administration building. Ms. Solomon stated yes. Member Manning stated I will say this that dressing up that end of town is certainly. Ms. Solomon stated it would be way better than what's there now. But I picked this picture because of the windows. It would be similar with brick and just way nicer than what's there now. Member Manning stated so what is our ordinance or what's our guidance as far as building materials if we were to look at that. I am assuming you haven't gone to the next step to get plans drawn. Ms. Solomon stated well I didn't want to do that without approval first. That will be my next step. I went and looked for what it would take and the cost and what all I'm getting myself into so I have a little idea but I did not go further into it by getting an architect and all that and getting details of the plans without permission. Mr. Knauf stated to answer your question the columns are only permitted as vertical supports of the front entrance of the main building or as vertical supports for porches. Columns must be structured of brick, wood, aluminum, or other materials that look typical of the style of the main building. The only permitted façade materials are brick, wood siding, vinyl siding and wood and fiber cement products that look like wood siding. All façade treatments must be done in a manner so as not to change the character of the building or irreversibly damage or obscure the historical architectural features of the trim of the building and that would be of the existing building. Existing facades must be preserved to appear in a manner for which they were originally intended. Wood shingles are not permitted as a primary façade material unless the same is historically correct. Front entrances, veiling's, moldings, tile work, carvings and other detailing and architectural decorations on front entrances and front porches must be typical of the style and period of the main building and the contributing structures are similar style in the historic district. Enclosures of front porch or front entrances may not be enclosed in material including iron bars, glass, or mesh screening without a Certificate of Appropriateness. Floor coverings, indoor/outdoor carpeting is permitted as a front porch or step covering. Each front porch and entry treatment must have a shade roof of materials and colors that are typical of the style and period of the building and must reflect the dominant horizontal or vertical characteristics of the main building and contributing structures of a similar style in the historic district. If this could be made to look a little more historical of the period and everything, I think it would fit in better in the neighborhood. This appears to be a little bit too modern in my opinion. But maybe if columns were round columns instead of the square and maybe less glass. I know you want people to be able to see in but that's more of a modern architectural look. Member Manning stated here's my take. Park Avenue as I'm told in many of the pictures, historical Park Avenue used to be quite the pointily financial center with stoplights and how many grocery stores. So, when I think of historical value I own a historical home and I know what that looks like. I've always kind of questioned as to why we have guidance. I mean are we looking at historical value of 1909 or are we looking at historical value of 1927 or a grocery store from 1956. The whole idea of maintaining the historical value of the historic district is to keep some of that

historical grit alive. We're talking about a new structure and what I would like to say is I'm all for your project. What I would like to see is you working with someone to design the structure so we can see. I mean I look at the picture and I see a ski shop in Vail which isn't bad. It's a nice looking building and I would love to see any new build in that area to dress that up. So, I think where I'm at, I'm all for this, I would just like to see more detail with our guidance to your builder or whomever so they know the guidelines of what building materials they can use, more brick and if the thing came out looking like a grocery store from 1948 to me that's historical value. I don't want you to think we're steering you to make this look like my house which is built in 1909. Councilmember Childs stated so are they willing to accept a front elevation before she gets into full plans and all. Member Manning stated yes. Member Pennington stated my concern is what he was reading to you, you get a copy of that and just make sure it fits that because that is what we have to judge by. Ms. Solomon stated yes. Chairman Mesecher stated so we are all for your idea. Mr. Knauf stated I also think it would look really cool if there was an awning across the front. Ms. Solomon stated well I was trying to find a building and it's so hard to try to figure out what I can do to make it fit in this historical area and so I said this is just a sample. Of course, I will get a front elevation and present it to you and be more compliant to what you need for historical area. Mr. Knauf stated yes we would love to work with you to tear down that monstrosity that's there would be phenomenal. Member Pennington stated yes we would enjoy driving by that. Ms. Solomon stated what I envision in my mind if even better than that picture I presented to you with beautiful landscaping. Member Pennington stated I don't know my house was built in 1910 and it has 33 windows so there's not many walls in my house. Councilmember Childs stated well the paint, Adam's Paint was done in the 60's wasn't he. Member Pennington stated yes. Mr. Knauf stated I wish we had a picture of that so that we could kind of use that as a pattern. Member Pennington stated just as long as it meets those building materials. Ms. Solomon stated I think that information was here and I took that to him. Member Pennington stated I just don't want you to bring us a metal building when it says you can't do a metal building. Ms. Solomon stated exactly so I will bring that back to you.

Member Manning motion to support project but bring back with more detail with something that closer matches regulations and instruct staff to work with Ms. Solomon

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Edieth Solomon to make repairs to the primary structure located at 1008 8th Street

Mr. Knauf stated this is Ms. Solomon again and actually I think you started replacing the roof before getting the COA. Ms. Solomon stated yes. Mr. Knauf stated but it was replacing with what was there, like with like. You would like to replace the windows with energy efficient windows and then paint the exterior of the home in approved color. Ms. Solomon stated yes and the skirting that comes down take that off and just let the siding come down. Mr. Knauf stated and then put up a fence. Ms. Solomon stated yes I was thinking on the back of it go ahead and close the backyard. I also do not like that driveway. I would like to have a whole solid slab on the side and the trees need to go. There's rotten trees all the way around and I just want them to go bye bye and just really bring the house out with beautiful paint. It's got good bones. It just needs some love. Mr. Knauf stated now the windows you want to replace; would they be the same style or solid pane. Ms. Solomon stated they will slide up and down. Mr. Knauf stated like those. Ms. Solomon stated those are aluminum that are in there now so I'm taking those out and putting in the double pane windows and just a nicer beautiful front door.

Member Wheeler stated my one question about the windows is it going to be full pane as those are. Ms. Solomon stated yes. Chairman Mesecher stated no grids. Ms. Solomon stated no grids. Member Manning stated and you're not changing the casing sizes. Ms. Solomon stated well that one right there on the side. I just want to take that one away and just close it in like it never was there because that's a little small room right there in the front and I feel it would be all windows because it's so small. The front window will be bigger than that right now but still the same shape and just nicer and energy efficient. Those houses back then didn't have any insulation and its shiplap in there. Member Manning stated when changing the configuration of windows one of the big mistakes people make is part of the historical structure of houses in the way windows were built which are the casings and framing and all that stuff. A lot of times you make those changes but modern construction comes in and there's no framing around the windows. Ms. Solomon stated oh it will still have that frame around the window. Member Wheeler stated is that a kitchen window or bathroom window. Ms. Solomon stated the bathroom window will still be a bathroom window. That one that is boarded up and then the bedroom window is boarded up. Then I think that maybe on this other wood that is gray and blended in with the house, I think that was a door there. It will just be siding and the siding a lot of it is rotten so a lot of the siding will be replaced with the same siding except get rid of the skirt and bring it all the way down. Member Pennington stated ok but that one window. Ms. Solomon stated there will still be some windows in the front where the trees are at but that window on the side just close it off with new wood. While we're at it, I want to close in the backyard with a fence but I feel like with Texas heat we need some kind of covering for the cars. Is there some kind of way I can have like a, I heard you say no metal carports but could I have a carport that's not metal to have a car to park under? You see where the house sticks out right there, a little bit coming off of that like it's attached to the house but with shingles. Mr. Knauf stated and with the same roof form as the house is one of the requirements. Ms. Solomon stated yes like it was always there and then the concrete all the way, no grass and nice landscaping. Member Pennington stated you can't concrete the front yard. Ms. Solomon stated no just on the side. I don't think you can park on the street in the historical part. I was thinking just widening the driveway on the side part.

Member Manning stated once again, I'm very excited. You're talking about doing a lot of great work to a structure. What I wonder since didn't read the entire packet, are all these detailed in the request. Ms. Solomon stated I filled out a paper. Mr. Knauf stated it's on her application. Member Manning stated and everything that was presented here this evening is on the application. Mr. Knauf stated she didn't mention removing the one window on her application. Member Manning stated so the motion has to be made based on what's submitted right. Mr. Knauf stated you can make a motion on whatever you want to approve so if you want to approve it and also approve closing in that window, you can do that.

Member Manning motioned to approve her rehab plans plus closing in one window, wood fence and carport approved but to come back to HPC with plans

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider a letter to the Texas General Land Office concerning appropriate mitigation for the structure located at 216 College Street

Mr. Knauf stated they had applied to have this structure demolished and rebuilt as a GLO house and this is not in a historic district. But, again the GLO, this was a house of a mayor a long time ago in Orange and the GLO has a

certain historical sensitivity to this. They sent me an email and basically it looks like it's just too far to salvage the house. They would like some guidance to see what your preference is on whether to do a historical project where they just document the historical nature of the property and put that into like a binder or would you prefer to do an actual museum exhibit to put in like Heritage House museum or something like that explaining the historical nature of the house. So really they are giving you a couple of choices either the historical project or the museum exhibit and they would like to know which one you would like for them to do.

Member Wheeler stated to make sure I understand the historical document where would that stand in the title of the property. Mr. Knauf stated we would keep that on hand here. They would give us the binder for the historical project so that we have that and maybe we'd put it in to the library so that future generations can look at it and research it. Member Wheeler stated I think both of them are good ideas. Is it possible to get something in the historical museum as well as having documentation in the library here? Is that possible to get both? Mr. Knauf stated we can ask. I think the historical exhibit was more a kiosk thing not really a fleeting model. Member Manning stated of what it used to be. Mr. Knauf stated yes the way it was originally. The property owner actually started tearing it down originally which he wasn't supposed to do. Yeah they tore off the roof and they weren't supposed to do that because the GLO they want it to stand just like it is until their contractors come in and tear it down and build the new house. They don't like the property owners just going ahead and demolishing it. They have their procedures. We had another person do that and they almost lost their GLO house because they tore down the existing house without getting the GLO's permission. Member Wheeler stated did we give permission to tear that down to begin with. Mr. Knauf stated it's not in the historic district. It's not with city funds and what they should have done was come in and get a demolition permit. Member Wheeler stated we have approved demos outside of our district. Mr. Knauf stated right that's when we use CDBG funds. Member Pennington stated my preference would be the Heritage House thing but I don't know if the Heritage House would want that. Can we table this to ask them or if they would be interested in that? Mr. Knauf stated I can check with them. If you're interested in both then we can contact the Heritage House. Member Pennington stated if we want to do them both then that's great.

Member Pennington motioned to table item

Member Manning 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Discussion and possible action on adopting regulations concerning the requirements for houses funded and constructed through federal grant programs

Mr. Knauf stated after a great deal of effort of trying to find the right person at GLO to talk to, this afternoon I got a lead who maybe knows the right person for me to talk to. They are going to contact me and just see what can we do for these GLO houses to look more like they belong in the historic district or like the fit in more compatible with the historic districts. I've had a devil of a time just trying who to contact and who knows and who can make decisions. So, I think we're really close and hopefully by the next meeting I will have had those discussions and maybe bring something to you on whether we need to change our ordinance or do we need to adopt better standards and what can be done. I contacted April who was here last November. The consultant that said well other cities have standards and never got a phone call back from her. So, I contacted some other consultants that have done GLO house and they didn't have any contacts but finally I was able to find somebody in the General Land Office that could kind of point me in the right direction. I don't have anything to report to

you tonight other than it looks like we finally got connection with the right people and maybe by the next meeting we can actually have something more specific. Member Pennington stated and these houses have some sort of regulation against a garage or carport. Mr. Knauf stated that is what I'll check and see how flexible are they with their regulations and standards. Member Pennington stated because a big slab of cement in front of the house to me is not historic and very unattractive and then no provision for parking area leads to people parking in their yards which is against the ordinance. I know when I was on the Habitat for Humanity board and we built all those houses, we ended up building garages because this is not New York City where there's public transportation. Everybody has a vehicle to get around. Mr. Knauf stated and garages are very common in the historic district. Member Pennington stated they all had them or a place to keep their horses. It's just my concern that the problem keeps getting worse because people keep cementing their yards because they have no parking or garage.

Member Pennington motioned to adjourn

Member Manning 2nd

Chairman Mesecher adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.