

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 11, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Robert Manning.....Chairman
Bridget Trawhon..... Member
Codie Vasquez.....Member
Kenneth Wheeler.....Member

Members Absent:

Robin Craig-Hunt..... Vice Chair

Staff Present:

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

City Council Members Present:

Paul Burch

Chairman Manning called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Manning asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 9, 2023, regular meeting

Member Trawhon motioned
Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Consider and possible action on an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Miguel Lopez on behalf of Tekoa Academy to demolish two structures at 1408 W. Park Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated this is a request from Tekoa Academy to demolish 2 buildings. The educational building and the front building. Chairman Manning stated and that was the front building lobby area and then that brick structure. Mr. Knauf stated yes this is the front building, this white building that looks like it used to be a church and then the educational building is behind it. The plan is if you approve the Certificate of Appropriateness and they end up demolishing it then they would come back to the historic preservation commission with plans for a new building that would be like a small gymnasium. That is the educational building. Chairman Manning stated the small structure would stay? Mr. Knauf stated the gray structure stays. Chairman Manning stated I was having trouble figuring out

which buildings. The one on the left, the brick. Mr. Knauf stated this it and this is the front building. Member Vasquez stated so the brick building will be demolished. Mr. Knauf stated yes. Member Wheeler stated what's the condition of those buildings. Mr. Knauf stated we're not working them as substandard buildings or anything. I think they're just wanting to move in a whole different direction from what they've been doing and maybe attract more students. Member Wheeler stated I think they got flooded in Ike but other than that I see activity there. Member Vasquez stated it says damage to the walls and the roof you can see it there is in bad shape. Chairman Manning stated I think the question is does it have historical significance. I don't think so. I don't know the history of what those structures are but they look newer. Mr. Knauf stated yes their style really isn't like a 30's or 40's are like a lot of the buildings in the historic district are. They're much more modern. I thought we were going to have a representative tonight but apparently he may have gotten tied up or something. Member Wheeler stated I wonder how long it's going to be a vacant lot. Mr. Knauf stated I don't know. It probably just depends if they can get the money raised to build the new building and how long it would take to do that. Member Wheeler stated where are they currently housed. Mr. Knauf stated well I think they are currently operating out of both buildings but I think they are planning on moving everybody into the gray building back there. This is Miguel Lopez. He is the applicant for Tekoa Academy. They had some questions for you.

Chairman Manning stated do you know the historical significance here or when they were built.

Miguel Lopez – 5080 Hunter St, Beaumont, TX: Mr. Lopez stated to be honest I don't. I'm new to this area and don't know the history. Chairman Manning stated on the deed is there a year or date built. Mr. Lopez stated I don't know.

Member Wheeler stated where are you all currently housed and are you working out of the gray building? Mr. Lopez stated no we're not working out of any yet. We are trying to see if you let us tear down those 2 buildings and put a new one by following your rules. Mr. Knauf stated but currently are using the 2 buildings you want to demolish now. Mr. Lopez stated no. Mr. Knauf stated so where are the students now. Mr. Lopez stated I think the students are in the church on another street so they are teaching in that area. Those 2 schools are not operating now.

Councilmember Burch stated Kelvin, are these going to continue to be used for what it was used before. Mr. Knauf stated as a school. Mr. Lopez stated yes it's still going to be used as a school.

Chairman Manning stated again I don't see any evidence of there being any historical significance. There's no historical markers. There's nothing that stipulates there's something there to be preserved or saved.

Member Wheeler stated just from curiosity, how long are you planning to leave a vacant lot? Mr. Lopez stated as soon as if you let us take the buildings down, we want to bring you the blueprints. If you say we are approved, then the demo starts but we're not going to tear nothing down before we have the blueprints being approved by you. Mrs. Lopez stated because we don't want to ruin it if it's historical. We want to keep it the same. Part of what we do is we want to keep Texas the way it is. We don't want to change anything that's historic or anything that's meaningful for the City of Orange or any city regardless. Councilmember Burch stated are you the current owner. Mr. Lopez stated no. Mrs. Lopez stated we work for the owner. Councilmember Burch stated you work for the school. Mr. Lopez stated no we're the contractor for the building. Mrs. Lopez stated but we do currently work for them. We have changed and modified a lot of their other schools including their personal houses. This one is a new project of course but we do want to have students in there so we want to make sure that it's also safe and we don't want to destroy the historical building but it's not at all safe for children now period. That's our concern. We are new

to doing this. We do want to make sure we are doing everything and make sure that they're happy, you guys are happy and it's abandoned. There's nothing in there so we can make it useful and everybody has some kind of a common bond and it's also for education. Chairman Manning stated so you won't demo the buildings until you have a plan for it. Mrs. Lopez stated exactly. We have an idea of what we want to have on there but we do know that it's a historical part of the city and we want to make sure that whatever we do everybody is happy with it and of course our concern is that there is going to be children in there and we want to make sure. It's a charter school and that's wonderful for anywhere in the city, which is what my goal as being a wife, it's something to do for the community here in Orange. Member Wheeler stated I know the main structure where the cross is an old building. Is it brick? I know it's got stucco on it right now. Mr. Lopez stated no it has wood and then the stucco. It's not brick. Member Vasquez stated I have no objection.

Chairman Manning stated do we have any further discussion.

Member Vasquez motioned to approve

Member Trawhon 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Chairman Manning adjourned the meeting at 6:13 p.m.