

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 12, 2022
Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Alan Mesecher.....Chairman
Susan Pennington..... Member
Kenneth WheelerMember

Members Absent:

Robin Craig-Hunt..... Vice Chair
Robert Manning.....Member

Staff Present:

Kelvin Knauf, Director of Planning & Community Development
Wendy Lloyd, Planning Secretary
Marvin Benoit, Building Official

City Council Members Present:

Brad Childs

Chairman Mesecher called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2022, regular meeting

Member Pennington motioned
Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Friends of the Orange Train Depot to locate an accessory structure on the property at 1210 Green Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated back in 2019 the Friends of the Train Depot came before the Historic Preservation Commission and requested to locate a Conex shipping container at the Train Depot but have it painted like a box car to kind of blend in with the Train Depot because they were in need of some storage space. The commission at that time approved it. It was a 40 foot long Conex shipping container and they were going to locate it a little further away to the north of the building. Since the time has passed and now the Friends of the Train Depot are coming and

asking for a smaller shipping container but painted like a box car again which is the same design as what the HPC approved back in 2019. But they're also requesting a smaller one, a 20 foot Conex shipping container and then move the container closer to the Train Depot building.

Alicia Booker – Orange, TX: Ms. Booker stated it's just for storage for our tables and chairs for when we have events and other functions there at the depot. It's the same concept, a smaller unit closer to the building to make it more accessible for us to put in our Christmas decorations that we have for the depot as well as stuff that we store. It will be a small walkway with a ramp and would be on concrete blocks and there's a place off of or going towards Vidor that we found a container. They build them, condition them, insulate, windows or air conditioners or anything that you need. We need to have a sliding door on it. It will be coming in from Sulphur. I didn't want to purchase it until we got approved. That was suggested so this is why I'm here. The reason we went with a smaller unit is that they're adding more trees to the green area that we have right now and we really don't need 40 and we're not going to do the restrooms that they were including at one point. We are just going to do it for storage for us.

Member Wheeler stated is it going to be illuminated for electrical supply to it. Ms. Booker stated yes there's going to be some lights in there because we're going to have a little window unit in it and that would be it. We're not going to put water. Maybe in the future but not at this time.

Member Pennington stated didn't the city pass something against these kind of containers. Mr. Knauf stated well there is a new ordinance. Now commercial businesses can have 2 Conex type shipping containers. Residential cannot have any. Commercial can have 2 or commercial can have 1 Conex type shipping container and 1 POD type container. Now residential can only have 1 POD for 2 weeks while moving but they cannot locate a POD permanently on their property. Member Pennington stated and this is zoned commercial. Mr. Knauf stated it is zoned commercial. Member Pennington stated but our historical guidelines say no, don't they? Mr. Knauf stated well it really doesn't address it too much as far as what they're requesting.

Member Wheeler stated I just hate opening the gate for that type of structure to be in the historical district. That's a concern and I didn't know it was previously approved. Do we have that in minutes? Mr. Knauf stated it's in the memo in your packet. Member Wheeler stated ok so I don't have a problem with the appropriateness of what their plans are but painting that is a concern because putting it on piers and with the electrical, it's what I would consider more permanent and that's the concern that I have. That's something to be proven. I really hate to open the gate for the historical district to start getting these containers and they're businesses at the same time but especially the residential areas. Who are you all getting to do this? Ms. Booker stated the container. Member Wheelers stated no the paint job. Ms. Booker stated Leigh or Lauren the one that is doing all the oranges. She's going to come and paint. It's going to be like an orangey, rusty color, like a rail car and have just the façade as a caboose. Member Wheeler stated why are you not getting a rail car. Ms. Booker stated that was going to be more expensive. It wasn't really more practical. This is a little bit more feasible for us. They can kind of modify it to what we need especially with the sliding door versus those heavy doors. Mind you, everybody that is there is a little bit older than myself. I'm the youngest one and I'm usually the one that's moving the tables, chairs and Christmas ornaments and the Christmas trees and all that. So, we wanted something well right now we have storage over at Johnson's over on MLK. So, we are having to go all the way over there and come back 2 or 3 times. At one point, we talked about having restrooms there because of Depot

Day and all the other events but it was just going to be more cost to do it. So, we only need it for storage for these items. On Depot Day, we usually get Porta Potty's and we get like 4 or 5 of them. That solves our problem with that. Member Wheeler stated how is the skirting. Can you explain that? Ms. Booker stated since the unit is just a box, David had suggested to put a skirting around it since we're going to have it up on blocks. On the skirting she would be able to paint all the way down like it's sitting on the wheels. So, it will have our round logo and the other will be Southern Lines Pacific which was the depot rail cars that used to pass by here and that would be it. Member Pennington stated what kind of skirting are you talking about, metal? Ms. Booker stated metal, yes, something that would be compatible to the box itself and once we have it onsite we can kind of determine if it's going to be corrugated or if it's just going to be straight, what would look best and what would look better. We don't want to take away from the Depot because that is our place that we want to represent but then again there's no place in our building to put storage. We can put it in the back. We can't put it anywhere on the green area that we have right now and again I went from 40 to 20 just to be able to have green area and not disturb the structure itself. Member Wheeler stated on page 12 of 34, on pilings, the container will be 24-30". Ms. Booker stated oh that was my bad. That was considered for the 40 foot so that is going to need to be changed to accommodate just the 20 footer. Member Pennington stated so it's going to be lower than that. Ms. Booker stated yes since it will be a smaller unit. Member Pennington stated so then you really won't have much height to paint wheels on it to make it look like a box car. Ms. Booker stated well we can't put it too high because of our ramp. We definitely need a ramp to be able to have access to it and a shorter one as well. Member Wheeler stated you see what we don't want squatty wheels. Ms. Booker stated of course. Member Wheeler stated 20 inches is only about this tall and that's kind of squatty wheels for a 20 foot container so that's a little bit concerning. Maybe if we could get some more detail of how you're going to paint it. Ms. Booker stated no I understand and I think David wanted when he came back in 2019, he had expressed all these things and it was approved so we are like we just need a smaller unit. Member Pennington stated the trouble that we have with the whole neighborhood is these metal storage buildings that people just put in. Now this is compatible to a metal storage building, that's my problem. If it's 40 foot long, it's like a building. If it's 8x20, it's the same square footage as if I bought a 10x12 metal storage building and I stuck it there and that does not meet our guidelines. Our guidelines say it's got to be wooden or brick on the outside. Do you see that one exception and I understand maybe you're commercial and somebody else is not but we've made people move these off of their land? Ms. Booker stated I see. That was not something told to us or myself that the city had a problem. Chairman Mesecher stated some historic value to it in appearance. Member Wheeler stated I think maybe a more descriptive explanation of how you are going to paint it in detail is something that we would like to see. You just cut and paste this and it's kind of hard to really visualize how you're planning to do that. I understand the concept but at the same time the pilings before were 30 inches which that is getting real close to almost the size of a wheel that would be appropriate for that size container or that size car. I guess we need to see some more detail on that. Ms. Booker stated sure I can do that.

Councilmember Childs stated I have got a possibility. I spoke with David about this a long time ago. Member Pennington stated can we have a last name. Ms. Booker stated David Derosier. Councilmember Childs stated he had this idea a couple years ago. Have you all checked and possibly getting a storage box car donated? If you look at the Holocaust Museum in Houston, they actually have a ramp going up the whole side of it and your door situation probably could be solved with some sort of power button to where you could push a button and the door would slide itself but I don't know if you all even tried getting a box car donated because we were looking at putting one at our store and the gentleman that rebuilds box cars across from LCM High School, you'll see the

parts. He says you can get these box cars for next to nothing and you probably could get him and Orange someone to donate a real box car and then it would be proportional to the size of the Depot. It would actually match the Depot. Just a thought in case this bogs down. Member Pennington stated and then it wouldn't be us making an exception that we don't want. Councilmember Childs stated but the Holocaust Museum if you've been there, there's a nice ramp that is handicap accessible and it actually goes up to the doors where it's not a strain to bring anything up into the box car. Chairman Mesecher stated because once these get into the area and somebody had a restaurant and they want one for their storage and it just opens a can of worms.

Member Wheeler motioned to table for more details

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Dorsey Robinson to demolish a structure located at 811 John Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated actually there's 2 structures located at 811 John and the one structure, the house structure there in the back is what they would like to demolish on that. It is a substandard structure. There's windows missing, part of the roof is missing, it's severely deteriorated, it's open to vermin and rodents and it's really in bad shape. This is Jerry Jones. Is there anything you would like to add?

Jerry Jones – Orange, TX: Mr. Jones stated as you can see it from the picture, we would like to demolish that 2 story area and further we would like to transform the front into apartments, renovate it and transform it into apartments meeting the historical landscapes and such. Mr. Knauf stated but the smaller structure, you want to leave that. Mr. Jones stated yes the smaller structure we would like to leave and renovate and demo the back structure, just tear it down because it's unrepairable. Member Wheeler stated how big is the front of that? Mr. Jones stated I believe it's like 30 by 40. We were trying to renovate that front part to apartments. It's zoned commercial. Mr. Knauf stated it's zoned for apartments. So, apartments would be eligible under the zoning for it. Mr. Jones yes that is what we want to do is convert it into apartments and also once we remove the back half, try, and extend that to put 2 in the back and 2 in the front. Member Wheeler stated are they the same style. Mr. Jones stated no what I was going to do is just now see if I can demolish it and then I have architects working on how we are going to go about setting it up conducive to what the historical landscape allows. Mr. Knauf stated yes you are not asking for approval of the change to modify the smaller structure tonight. All you are asking for is to demolish the larger structure. Mr. Jones stated no all we want to do is demo for now and come back for the other. Chairman Mesecher stated dealing with any apartments you're going to have to have green areas. It's concrete all the way around it. Mr. Jones stated yes once we get that back half down, I want to come in with a plan and meet the specifications to transform it from that structure and turn it into apartments. Right now, we just need to get that building down.

Mr. Benoit stated just to give you all some background information, this entire property was sent to the hearing officer June 15th for the City to tear all of it down. The owners were there at court and what they requested from the hearing officer was to allow them to tear down the rear part of the structure themselves and then

come back and come up with some ideas on what they wanted to do in the front section, the part that faced John as far as a remodel. So, by the 20th of this month they will go back to court and by the 20th of this month the hearing officer is expecting the rear part of that building to be tore down if that is what is approved and allowed him to do. Then, they would approach the historical commission in August with new plans of what they would do for the front half. But there is a time restraint. He only allowed them until the 20th to make something happen here. But they can't do anything until they came before your board to get the permission to tear it down. Mr. Jones stated I wanted to mention I already had the asbestos study done and have people in place if you all do approve it for demo because we are working on a timeline if not then it would be on the City.

Member Wheeler stated what year is that house. Mr. Knauf stated I really don't know. I don't have that information for you. Mr. Jones stated it was red tagged if I'm not mistaken for demolition. Mr. Knauf stated yes the hearing officer has already considered it. Mr. Benoit stated yes its leaking inside, it's all molded up. They've had problems with the law, people occupying that structure that were not supposed to be there.

Member Pennington stated so can we just scratch out the renovate part on this application. Mr. Knauf stated tonight we are just doing the demolition part. Member Wheeler stated if you read the application. Mr. Knauf stated we could make that in the comments to only approve just the demolition but to come back with plans for the renovation.

Member Wheeler motioned to approve COA for demolition of back half of structure (2 story part)

Member Pennington 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City of Orange to demolish the structure located at 505 Park Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated if you remember a few months ago the owner Pedro Ibarra came before you wanting to rehab and repair the structure but he only wanted to do part of it and the commission at that point turned it down with the provision for him to come back with a complete rehab and repair of the whole structure. Since that time, he has decided he's not going to sink anymore money into it. He actually signed a consent to demolish with the City for the City to demolish it. Since this is in the Old Orange Historic District then before we can demolish it then it would have to have your approval.

Mr. Benoit stated Mr. Ibarra has actually gone in now and he's removed all the windows. So not it's just an open structure. It had a fire and that's what caused some of the damage.

Member Pennington motioned to approve COA to demolish

Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Staff update on the installation of solar panels on properties located in a historic district

Mr. Knauf stated council discussed this in executive session on June 14th and of course we can't talk about what was discussed in executive session but in open session the Mayor announced that council would look at studying the issue more and then maybe do something then. At this point they did not give us any direction on it. I just wanted to give you an update on that.

Member Wheeler stated I appreciate that but as this drags on, how many more are we going to see get covered in solar panels. That's a concern because there's already 2. 1 bordering the district and 1 in the district. Hopefully, the attorney can forward a better idea.

Chairman Mesecher stated does your department have anything to say about it. Mr. Benoit stated we approve them when they come in. We look to verify there is a structural engineer that has determined that the roof can support the panels and then we look at all the electrical. We go out and do the inspections and things but unfortunately on those solar panels most of the time when the electrical engineer designs them, he's trying to get the most sunshine that he can for the longest part of the day and so there's no real rhyme or reason. A lot of times it would be to the west and to the south that he's trying to face the panels. So, depending on the where the house is, that's where they try to put the panels. Sometimes it will be in the front. Sometimes it will be in the back. Member Pennington stated well the ones we've seen are all over everywhere because the houses are so small.

Member Pennington motioned to adjourn

Member Wheeler 2nd

Chairman Mesecher adjourned the meeting at 6:43 p.m.