

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Alan Mesecher.....Chairman
Robin Craig-Hunt..... Vice Chair
Robert Manning.....Member
Kenneth Wheeler (arrived at 5:43 p.m.).....Member

Members Absent:

Susan Pennington.....Member

Staff Present:

Kelvin Knauf, Director of Planning & Community Development
Wendy Lloyd, Planning Secretary
Rita Monson, Grants Planner

City Council Members Present:

None

Chairman Mesecher called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 8, 2021, meeting
Member Manning motioned to approve
Vice Chair Craig-Hunt 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Lisa VenKatesan – 802 4th Street, Orange, TX: Ms. VenKatesan stated just about the whole process itself, I think it should be made known to the property owner that this procedure here needs to take place prior to getting a permit when you are in a historic district so that they can start sooner in the letters that are sent out.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a structure at 402 Orange Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated this is a house that was damaged heavily in Hurricane Laura to say the least. It got nailed pretty good by a tree and so Lisa is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish and remove.

Member Manning stated so what is the definition of or well to me that is demolished. So why are we going through the process when to me that's a cleanup. Mr. Knauf stated yes because under the ordinance since it's the primary structure on the property, then it has to have your approval and it's in the historic district. Member Manning stated I mean this is a pile of rubble and we are going through where we have to determine if it's historic. Mr. Knauf stated that is just the way the ordinance is written.

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt motioned to approved COA

Member Manning 2nd

Vote: 3 – 0

Motion Carries

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated one of the things that we are trying to do through the historic district is to have homeowners understand that this is considered a restricted area because we are trying to uphold and keep that historic value of homes. Unfortunately, there are so many residents that were already here that have been here a long time, maybe the house was given to them but real estate agents when they sell homes, the homeowner is supposed to be notified of that. I don't know how long you have lived here or how long you've had your residence, but you may not have been aware if you were never told upon buying it or obtaining it, but it is restricted, and the historic district is so that's why. So, if you didn't get anything other than the letter that was sent to you, it's come to the attention that ok something is going to change on this property and now we just need to approve it. Does that make sense? Ms. VenKatesan stated it makes sense, but my thing is that I received letters stating that I needed to either clean it up or else basically. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated well that's part of the city right. Mr. Knauf stated yes that's a substandard building. Ms. VenKatesan stated I was just suggesting that this process here should be made known. Mr. Knauf stated yes, we can definitely look at those letters going out and see about expanding on them. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated oh, so it wasn't on that letter. Ms. VenKatesan stated right, and I could have moved a little bit quicker. Member Manning stated the point that I'm making though is that this lady has received letters to clean this up and she attempted to do that in good faith and then we stopped her because of an ordinance. I would think that a code enforcement person could walk out there and look at this thing and say you know we can probably skip this portion of the ordinance because that is not going to be salvaged. It has so historical value so is there a way to amend that ordinance and get with the city. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated well I feel personally as a member of this committee, I feel like this is our job to do it. Now her not knowing was where the fault was that caused her to delay. I want that opportunity even if it's rubble to say that has no significance, she can tear it down. Member Manning stated let's think about this, she got a letter saying

clean up your mess. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated from the city not from us. Member Manning stated from the city because it's a nuisance. There is an ordinance that said that's a pile a rubble and it needs to be cleaned up. Mr. Knauf stated well the ordinance says that it's substandard. Member Manning stated the point is, this is counterproductive. Mr. Knauf stated the problem is, where do you draw the line. How much damage before staff can decide on their own without having to come before the commission? I mean where do you draw that line. Member Manning stated so explain to me if we were to not agree and a code enforcement person went out and sent letters to this nice lady to clean up your property based on an ordinance that it's substandard and what if we said no we find historical value. Mr. Knauf stated then it just stops, and we don't take any further action. Member Manning stated so then this pile of rubble just sits on this property because we deemed there's some kind of historical value. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated we've approved some that looked a lot better than this one and in my opinion had some historical value, but it didn't make sense and I think that this board is made up of intelligent people or we wouldn't be sitting here. But like I said there are some that have been demolished that to me had significance, but it didn't make sense to tell the person not to tear it down because there was a significant amount of damage. I understand that this one looks silly that it had to come to us but it's just a procedure, a formality. Member Manning stated what would happen if she said no I'm not cleaning it up. Mr. Knauf stated then the city would take bids and we would have a contractor clean it up and we would bill her for it and if she doesn't pay the bill, then we would file a lien. We have to go through the right procedures.

Consider a finding of no historical significance for structures at the following addresses:

- **1115 10th Street**
- **801 Adams Street**
- **502 Azalea Avenue**
- **612 Park Avenue**
- **1800 Sholars Avenue**

Ms. Monson presented power point presentation:

1115 10th Street – not level, open to vagrancy and predation and vagrancy

Member Manning stated we don't have any internal pictures or anything. Ms. Monson stated we do not. They were unable to go in. It was not safe.

801 Adams Street – structure has severe damage, open to predation and vagrancy, mobile home missing most of one side.

502 Azalea – structure is overgrown, open to predation and vagrancy

Member Wheeler stated has the owner been contacted about that. Ms. Monson stated yes.

Mr. Knauf stated it has gone to a hearing and the hearing officer ordered it demolished.

Member Wheeler stated I know the owner, that's the only reason I'm saying that.

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated so are all of these properties going to be demolished by the city. Mr. Knauf stated yes. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated and then the city puts the lien on whoever the owner is. Mr. Knauf stated right. Ms. Monson stated what we've been doing lately is we are waiting for them to go to the hearing officer and if he deems them to be demolished then we are bring them to you all because before we had brought some to you that hadn't even gone to court yet. We decided to do this process because you'd know that it had already been ordered by the hearing officer to be demolished. Mr. Knauf stated and that's with using CDBG funds, federal funds to do the demolition with and that's part of the federal requirement is the historical aspect. It's one of those checklist kinds of things that we have to go through before we can demolish it. If you decide not to then we either have to leave it there or we will have to use general funds money to demolish it with. We do tear down things that we use general funds money for that don't come before you but those are more like commercial buildings and properties not in a low to moderate income area that don't qualify for CDBG.

612 Park Avenue –overgrown, open to vagrancy and predation. Ms. Monson stated this will be done with general funds but because it's in the historic district we are bringing it to you to look at.

1800 Sholars Avenue – structure is overgrown, open to vagrancy and predation, abandoned vehicles on the property, plants and trees have taken over.

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion

Member Wheeler motioned to approve finding no historical significance to properties

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a structure located at 612 Park Avenue

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt motioned to approve COA to demolish

Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a structure located at 1800 Sholars Avenue

Chairman Mesecher asked for a motion

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt motioned to approve COA to demolish

Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt motioned to adjourn

Member Wheeler 2nd

Chairman Mesecher adjourned the meeting at 5:52 p.m.