

HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA

Minutes for the May 1st, 2014 Meeting

The Historic Preservation Board meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robbie Correa at 4:06 pm. Other members present included Larry Beaton, Lynda Little Crabill, Elizabeth van Rensburg, and Laura Schoenberger. The following members were absent: Robert Goodwin, and Gilbert Evans Jr. Staff present: Planning Director Thad Crowe, Recording Secretary Ke'Ondra Wright, and Project Manager Jonathan Griffith.

Motion made by Ms. Crabill to approve the February 20th, 2014 minutes, seconded by Ms. van Rensburg and including correcting Marlene Lagasse's last name, motion passed unanimously.

Appeals Procedure- Chairperson Correa read the appeals procedure.

NEW BUSINESS-

Case: HB 14-04
Address: 301 River St.
Parcel Number: 42-10-27-6850-0000-0010
Applicant: City of Palatka, Jonathan Griffith
Request: New construction of a water taxi terminal and public restrooms (redesign).

Mr. Crowe briefly discussed his recommendations in his staff report. He noted that Staff had tried to address the Board's concerns about the River St. side of the building by improving the façade appearance, combining the two buildings into one, and adding the gable roof. Staff recommends approval with the condition that an awning be applied to at least 80% of the riverfront side of the building, extending at least 10 feet.

Jonathan Griffith, Project Manager City of Palatka, 201 N 2nd Street, said that Staff is trying to improve on the conditional approval from the 02/20/2014 Historic Preservation Board meeting. Staff revisited the building design with the architect to change to a single gabled structure.

Ms. Crabill asked if the new building had the same square footage as the former two buildings. Mr. Griffith answered that it's basically the same square footage. He said that in terms of functionality the new design works better also. For instance two separate buildings would require two additional restrooms, while the one building can have the restrooms for both the public and the boaters under the same roof.

Ms. Crabill asked about the new doors that replaced the old roll up doors on the neighborhood side. Mr Griffith answered that the material use is depicted a basic metal door, but Staff is open for any alternative recommendations.

Discussion continued regarding changes to the neighborhood side elevation. Mr. Griffith said other than the building combination other changes included adding a primary entrance and wooden columns with the entrance awning. Small windows were also added to the building and dumpsters and electrical transformers will be hidden in with screens, landscaping, walls or something so the public will not see them. Typical exterior lighting will be provided around the entrance and the decorative Washington style and Acorn lighting will be utilized for parking lot lighting.

In answer to a Board member's question, Mr. Griffith said that the City of Palatka has also worked with the operators of the water taxi in developing the building design. The operator's one request was to extend the

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awning on the river side to cover the whole building elevation. Ms. van Rensburg asked if the pavilions would be retained. Mr. Griffith said the remaining pavilion in good shape (with the red roof) and the four picnic tables will either be left in place or relocated to the central area of the park and the other three pavilions in deteriorated shape need to be demolished either before or during construction. The City took out three other deteriorated pavilions a couple of months ago.

Pam Garris, 603 Emmett St Palatka FL 32177, stated that she was opposed to the new water taxi terminal and restaurant building. She read a letter into the record from Sally Jane Smith stating her objections in opposition to the design of the building (on file). Ms. Garris asked what the construction cost of the building was. Mr. Griffith answered around \$500,000 to \$555,000. Ms. Garris said she had wondered why local architects were not given the opportunity to submit a drawing until she found out the submittal criteria excluded local architects. Mr. Griffith answered that this was not the case and also that the City welcomed public input, although when such input was offered very late in the design process it was difficult to consider such input. He added that the architect selection process was an extensive request for qualifications (RFQ) process. Approximately thirty architectural firms submitted qualifications and the City went through a detailed and publicly noticed process to short-list five of those firms (two local architects were short-listed - Robert Taylor and Mr. Goodwin). Architects were ranked by a committee (including Mr. Griffith, Commissioner Phil Leary, Mr. Crowe, Bobby Holt from Georgia Pacific and former Parks Director Jeff Norton). The City did not exclude any architect from this ranking process, but the winning architect was selected based on qualifications. The committee was not involved in developing of the building design. Mr. Griffith explained that the initial design received approval from the Historic Preservation Board. City Staff then voluntarily came back to the Historic Preservation Board with the updated design to address concerns expressed by the Board and the public.

Mr. Griffith asked the board if he needed to address Mr. Tony Harwell's letter. Chairperson Correa said maybe the Planning Director could help us in reference to the Secretary of the Interior Standards, which stress that the City should not mimic historic architecture of the historic districts or even downtown. She noted that the intent is to have something compatible but with some historic flare. Mr. Crowe responded that the National Park Service developed the Standards for Historic Preservation to address the new construction and renovation of historic buildings. The Standards key point is to not mimic older architecture as this is a disservice to the historic buildings that are already there. If you build the building exactly the existing historic buildings you can't tell which one is historic and you take away the uniqueness of the historic buildings. So the intent is to have similar exterior materials, proportions, and massing so that the new building will blend in and not imitate the historic buildings. The standards are very broad and allow much flexibility. Chairperson Correa made the point that architecture changes over time and some changes should be considered to avoid locking into one time period that would exist eternally. Mr. Griffith added there were three design reiterations with this one being the third. He noted that the building is a brick construction building with similar in style to the Florida Furniture building, a local landmark.

Michael Gagnon, 703 Emmett St, said that people like to come out in opposition after the deal is done. The City of Palatka staff has no lack of transparency and always has published information to the public. The City Commission and staff do not call the Palatka Daily News and advise them to run a story, the Palatka Daily News acts independently and is not directed by the City of Palatka. He said that the City reconsidered the design of the building after considering public input. The City wanted to come to the Historic Preservation Board for conditional approval. The board is a mechanism for public input, and if there are some recommendations for design changes to the building exterior, including the roof, cladding material, and or the roof structure the City would gladly take them into consideration, but then again someone has to propose them.

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Diana Sanders, 905 S 12th St, would like to know information on the water taxi. Chairperson Correa advised Ms. Sanders to speak with Mr. Griffith. Ms. Sanders would like to see the building keep in line with the old standard of the time.

Christy Sanford, 312 Dodge St, said that she loves the idea of being able to sit on a terrace and look out at the water. Ms. Sanford thinks the building will be highly functional.

Susan Jacobs, 117 Hotel St, said that the building could be functional but it doesn't look like other marina buildings that she has seen in the past.

Ms. van Rensburg asked Mr. Griffith if Mr. Harwell tried to qualify to be an architect for this project. Mr. Griffith stated that Mr. Harwell submitted to the City's RFQ for architectural and engineering services and he was not selected to be on the short list, but he did submit renderings through the Palatka Boathouse Marina's response to the City's RFP. In negotiations with the Marina it was made clear that the City had to employ services of their short listed architect.

Board Member Schoenberger would like to know rather the roofline will be the same on both sides of the building. Mr. Griffith responded that on the neighborhood elevation side the roof line only extends over the entrance area. On the riverfront side it is currently shown extending to cover the seating area outside the restaurant space and over the secondary entrance over the riverfront side. Ms. Crabill said this give you more of a feel of openness when you get to the front where people could sit and wait on the taxi as well as outdoor dining. Mr. Griffith agreed.

Board Member Beaton said his duty as the representative of the Putnam County Historical Society is focus on the historical perspective. The current design is appropriate for the riverfront in the context of the post-1884-fire City. The building should not be the focus of what people see when they cross the bridge. It should not be unpleasant looking but also should not be the focus because it is a newer building. Either alternative would draw attention away from the appearance and architecture of the South Historic District. What has been presented to the Board is very appropriate. Ms. Garris responded that this is a simplified viewpoint and if you look at the architecture before the fire, the architecture after the fire was very cheap construction and it is not pretty to look at. She added that there should be some idea of beauty in the architecture, not just what's purely functional. She said that this type of building is not what's going to attract tourist to this town.

Ms. van Rensburg said that we just can't please everyone in Palatka - some people think the building is a wonderful idea and other people think it is bad idea. In this instance we don't have the ability to just do nothing until everybody is happy. Let's move ahead unless otherwise we are going to be known as the little city that could have done something and didn't.

Motion- made by Ms. Crabill to accept the new design with the additional of the extended roofline/awning extending the length of the building on the riverfront side. The motion was seconded by Mr. Beaton. All present voted in the affirmative, motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM –

A. Zoning Code changes to further preservation of large and obsolete historic buildings.

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Mr. Crowe advised the board that zoning code hardships have come up on several occasions but hasn't come up to extent to where we are talking about dozens of properties. There is one instance where a home was constructed as an historic quadraplex and there is another instance on Laurel St. in which the commercial building is in residential zoning it cannot be used as its intended business use. So there are several instances of buildings in historic districts that can't be utilized and as a result of this the structures are deteriorating and not being maintained, negatively affecting properties around them. Some of these buildings could be potentially utilized as limited multi-family uses, some could be mixed-use and some could maybe offices or neighborhood retail. Mr. Crowe said his research of other jurisdictions indicated that exceptions to such zoning limitations have usually required the public hearing process with criteria that strives for compatibility of new and existing uses. The intent of this discussion item is to get the board thinking about exceptions to zoning use limitations that provide for neighborhood protection. He noted that as far as residential uses the size of the lots for the North and South Historic Districts will generally restrict any multi-family uses in single-family zoning districts to duplexes

Chairperson Correa asked if the board would like to discuss the code change in the future and even be specific as to allowing limited multi-family, maybe with a requirement that such uses be owner-occupied. Mr. Crowe advised Chairperson Correa of the need for compatibility standards, which other jurisdictions have employed, for example keeping the appearance of a single family home.

Ms. Crabill noted that the apartments on N. 2nd St., built as a four-unit apartment building, were denied use as an apartment building. Since it was not usable as a single family residential home it has therefore sat there and deteriorated since the cost of conversion to single-family use would be prohibitive. She said the Board really needs to look at this zoning change.

Ms. van Rensburg thinks if the buildings are built as a duplex then it should be given some consideration and there are more creative ways to go about then to just make it into a rental because no one wants to live right next door a rental.

Christy Sanford, 312 Dodge St, said that she lived in the Duck Pond neighborhood of Gainesville for over 20 years. In particular N. 1st Street in this neighborhood has an old house that has been converted into a restaurant that maintains the integrity of the old house, and this street also has lawyer offices and an old church that was converted into a community performance arts center. Ms. Sanford can understand the reservations about going back to multifamily but interims of these other uses would be a fabulous idea. Maybe the board needs to consider Main Street in the zoning code change. Chairperson Correa advised Ms. Sanford that the board would be looking at both historic districts for the zoning code changes.

Ms. van Rensburg asked if there were truly a lack of commercial space unavailable in our area that we would have to convert residential to commercial use. Mr. Crowe stated with the sole purpose of this zoning code change would be a way to preserve these historic structures.

Michael Gagnon, 703 Emmett St, can see where Mr. Crowe is coming from with the zoning change because there are a couple of historic homes in his neighborhood that this would apply to.

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Chairperson Correa asked the Board there was a need for Mr. Crowe to research this more and have further discussion in the future. Board members agreed and the consensus was for Mr. Crowe to come back to the Board with recommendations.

B. Enhance code enforcement measures for historic districts.

Mr. Crowe advised the board Chairperson Correa requested this discussion item. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Element Policy A.1.5.2 states that “neither the owner of, nor the person in charge of, a structure within a historic district within a historic district, or a structure that has been designated a national, State or local historical landmark shall permit such structure to fall into a state of disrepair which may result in the deterioration of exterior appurtenances or architectural features so as to produce to tend to produce, in the judgment of the board, a detrimental effect upon the character of the district as a whole or the life and character of the structure in question.” There are a number of old buildings that have reached this stage and since the City’s code enforcement policy is still on a complaint basis the policing of this policy has been weak. However in this case the overriding Comprehensive Plan policy calls for a higher level of scrutiny and potentially code enforcement in historic districts as they are highly valued as a local resource. Chairperson Correa said that the mechanics of a higher level of code enforcement throughout the historic district should be carefully developed, including coordination with the City’s Code Enforcement Board. Mr. Crowe stated the best way to do this is to be very open about this and we have clear standards in the code.

Chairperson Correa said that RV and boat parking, temporary structures not approved by the historic preservation board, and things of that nature reduce property values. The City Commission could set a higher level of control for historic district code enforcement policy. Chairperson Correa asked Mr. Crowe what should be the next step for the board. Mr. Crowe suggested that the board place this item on the agenda and recommend some code changes. Chairperson Correa brought this topic up to Mr. Crowe because so many people were coming up toward her complaining about their neighbors. The code enforcement officer has said that she needs more specific standards to be able to utilize a higher level of code enforcement in historic districts.

Pam Garris, 603 Emmett St, notice a lot of things in her neighborhoods such as trailer, and campers. She asked if the City has something in the existing code enforcement code for parking campers and boats with mold growing on them. Mr. Crowe advised Ms. Garris there is something in the code for these violations and she would need to make a complaint to the code enforcement officer. Ms. Garris think the code needs to be enforced. Chairperson Correa advised Ms. Garris to go to the Code Enforcement Board meeting to present her issues.

Michael Gagnon, 703 Emmett St, said he is on the Code Enforcement Board and this board is trying to change some language in the code enforcement standards that applies just to the historic districts. Both boards need to get together and come up with some language for the historic districts. If a complaint is filed the code enforcement officer will act on the complaint and bring the complaint to the Code Enforcement Board. Mr. Gagnon would like to see a workshop for people who live in the districts to talk about specific things, it doesn’t need to be a long list of things, and the boards should be able to recommend about five code changes to the City Commission. He said that we should not try to overwhelm the City Commission or change the whole code in the City because drastic changes can’t be done immediately. Everyone who looks after their house in the historic districts wants to be protected by the codes and by the City Commission as much as the ones who are terrorizing the neighborhoods because they don’t care.

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Chairperson Correa asked the board if they would like Mr. Crowe to assist the board in developing enhanced code enforcement measures for the historic districts. The board agreed by consensus.

OTHER BUSINESS – Chairperson Correa advised the Board of the Campbell administrative building possibly being placed on the National Register of Historic Places and wondered because we are a CLG and the building is in the south historic district CLG zoned would it be possible to get some help from Michael Zimny and company. We just would like to make sure the building is protected. Board member Mr. Beaton stated the discussion came up at the South Historic district meeting and we thought it would be appropriate because of the significant of the building to have it individually listed. Mr. Beaton did have an opportunity to speak with Superintendent Criswell and she supported the idea of the building being placed on the National Register and if the City put something together she would be willing to present it to the School Board. Mr. Crowe reminded the Board that owner approval is important. Protection of the old building is needed for when the School Board transfers the property. Chairperson Correa said board it would be great to get the building back on the tax roll and we also do not want to see any damage done to the building.

Christy Sanford, 312 Dodge St, asked the board while looking to get the Campbell Building on the National Register could we also look at the Tilghman House, Water Works Environmental Education Center and West View Cemetery. Chairperson Correa stated she didn't know if Mr. Zimny would help with the Water Works Environmental Education Center and West View Cemetery, because they are not in the CLG.

Pam Garris, 603 Emmett St, heard the Campbell Building might be rehabbed into apartments, possibly placing it back on the tax roll. She asked if the building could be sold to an entity that would establish a museum and library branch. Chairperson Correa answered that the issue has come up and Ms. Criswell is aware of it and this is something that has to be discussed with the School Board. If someone with money comes along the school board will have to sell the building.

Adjourn- with no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:18pm