

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**CITY OF PALATKA**  
**Meeting Minutes December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Roberta Correa at 4:06 pm. Other members present included Larry Beaton, Lynda Crabill, Elizabeth van Rensburg and Laura Schoenberger. Absent: Meri Rees. Gilbert Evans Jr., Robert Goodwin. Staff present: Planning Director Thad Crowe and Recording Secretary Ke'Ondra Wright.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion made by Ms. van Rensburg to approve the October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 minutes, seconded by Ms. Crabill. Motion passed unanimously.

**APPEALS PROCEDURE**

Chairperson Correa read the appeals procedures.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Case:** HB 14-39  
**Locations:** 1.) 4015 Reid St; Unit 7

**Applicant:** Administrative Request  
**Request:** Preliminary determination of Historic Status

Mr. Crowe summarized his report and recommendations, noting that this case is a little unusual for not having a formal application for a local historic designation; staff is looking for direction from the board on whether to proceed with local historic nomination. The structure in question is the airport Quonset hut, the last of the relatively older airport buildings. He noted that the City of Palatka operates under a lean budget, but there are a few success stories with one of them being the airport hangers. There is a strong market demand for more hangers but because of the lack of available land the City's consultant has determined that e the Quonset hut blocks opportunities for new hangers. The City is fortunate to receive FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) federal and state grant funding for the new hangers and believe this is an opportunity to pursue. Mr. Crowe reminded the Board that these economic factors cannot guide their decision, but are merely presented as background information.

Mr. Crowe said that Kay Larkin Field is the City's airport, originally developed during World War II Quonset huts were across the nation during the War to further the nation's military mission. Quonset huts were used for a variety of purpose including barracks, latrines, offices, medical and dental offices, isolation wards, warehouses, housing, and bakeries. This Quonset hut, constructed around 1942, is a simple corrugated metal structure covered with an earthen berm, to contain potential explosion and fire attributed to munitions storage. At a later and unknown date a wood frame additions was added at the south end for sheltered entrance and small restroom. In the 1970s the hut functioned as the offices for Skydive Palatka until the business moved into larger facilities to the east. During the last ten years another metal addition was added to the north side for additional storage. Except for these additions, it appears that the original building elements remain. The building has been used for storage for quite some time.

In preliminarily terms, the test for historic designation requires a look at historic, architectural and cultural significance of the structure. In Staff's opinion the hut doesn't really rise to the level on either one of these categories to really justify local historic designation. Staff is asking the Board to confirm their interpretation that this building is not eligible for the local historic designation. More specifically Staff recommends that the

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**CITY OF PALATKA**  
**Meeting Minutes December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

board makes the finding that the Airport Quonset Hut is not eligible for the inclusion for the Historic District overlay zoning.

John Youell, 4015 Reid St, Airport Manager, spoke in agreement with staff recommendation.

**Board Discussion**

Chairperson Correa asked Mr. Youell if the current location of the Quonset Hut is the only place where the new hangers could be located. Mr. Youell answered that this is the next logical place to locate the hangers.

Ms. Crabill asked if there were any place the Quonset Hut could be moved to save as an historic site. Mr. Youell answered that he could not answer this question as he isn't a construction expert. Chairperson Correa added that there would be a cost to move the hut. Mr. Crowe advised that removing the context of a historic building could be problematic. Mr. Youell said that the city has looked at this option; however the funds are not available to move the building. Chairperson Correa also advised that we don't know what the hut looks like under that berm. Mr. Crowe said the hut would probably be deconstructed and not sure what would be left of the hut after the deconstruction. Mr. Youell stated if the hut was moved the metal would eventually corrode. If you notice the pictures of the north side of the building, visible from Highway 100, you can see aluminum extension was added on, And with this aluminum component the hut doesn't have its original appearance. The other side was modified with a wood structure most likely when Sky Dive Palatka moved into the building during the 1970s.

Ms. Crabill asked if the plans were just to demolish the structure. Mr. Youell answered in the affirmative. Ms. Crabill asked if the City has thought about offering the hut to someone so they can move it. Ms. van Rensburg advised the board that the only reason why this Quonset Hut hasn't fallen down yet is because no oxygen hasn't come in contact with any metal yet. Chairperson Correa said you have to give the hut some credit for standing up this long.

Chairperson Correa advised the board that these Quonset Huts are amazing and there are many in New England, some of which people have converted into homes which they use for everything and every purpose. The huts have a pretty long shelf life considering that they could rust away. Ms. van Rensburg advised the board the hut in its current condition will stay there for a long time, but when you start moving earth and exposing it to oxygen then the structure will pretty much fall down. Mr. Youell advised the board that if the aluminum structure was taken off the back that would leave a gaping hole. We don't know where the doors and sand bags are that Sky Dive Palatka removed are now.

Ms. Crabill thinks it would be interesting to have an article written up about Quonset Hut and see if someone is interested in it. Chairperson Correa stated that is easy to do but it may not be enough to result in someone moving the structure. An article on the Quonset Hut would be nice because it's a piece of history of the field. The board has to determine whether the Quonset Hut rises to the level of a local historic structure.

Ms. van Rensburg asked if anyone expressed any interest in the building. Mr. Youell advised the board that no one has talked to him about the building.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**CITY OF PALATKA**  
**Meeting Minutes December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Mr. Beaton advised the board that he has mixed emotions about the Quonset Hut. There aren't many Quonset Huts in Putnam County. The Quonset Hut is the only left at the airport that is the World War II vintage. The airport website mentions that the Quonset Hut dates from World War II, and notes that it is partially under restoration. Mr. Beaton said his research indicated that a pilot by the name of Ross Bennett did a fly-in to the Airport in 2011 and referenced the Quonset Hut in a document. Mr. Beaton added that the airport itself was opened in 1937 on 214 acres of property, named after Lt. "Kay" Larkin in 1942, after he was killed in action during World War II. Mr. Youell said that Lt. "Kay" Larkin was actually killed in a training accident in Texas and there is a painting of the airplane he was killed in. Mr. Beaton said that he understand the need for more hangars, but wondered that since this was the only older structure left is there some way the designers could work around the Quonset Hut and locate the hangars a little further down along one of the runways. Chairperson Correa stated once the Quonset Hut is gone then it's gone. Mr. Crowe said that he had discussed designing around the Quonset Hut with Mr. Griffith and Mr. Youell and was informed that there are no locations where the new hangars can go. Chairperson Correa asked if the hanger location restrictions are posed by the federal and state government or are they due to the layout of the property. Mr. Youell answered that there is a 30 year master plan layout that does not include the Quonset Hut, and also the hut was in pretty bad shape. Mr. Youell invited Board members to come out and take a look at the Quonset Hut before making a decision. Ms. Crabill asked if the interior was in bad shape also, because it would make a great museum. Mr. Youell said that the Quonset Hut is pretty musty. Chairperson Correa stated there are great ways to restore the hut if it's not totally damaged, which is also a cost factor. She advised board members to visit the hut first because several board members have mixed feelings about the hut. Mr. Crowe stated that if the board feels this warrants for a study then staff could go ahead with an evaluate looking at the criteria.

Ms. Crabill asked if the FAA would donate any money to restore the Quonset Hut. Mr. Youell answered that the FAA only provides new construction grants. Mr. Beaton said that he only found one more Quonset Hut - a World War II vintage structure that has been renovated as a museum in Clermont, FL turned the Quonset Hut into a World War II museum. This Quonset Hut was renovated in 2012 with the assistance of grants.

Chairperson Correa told Mr. Youell that it would be an advantage for the Board members to look at the Quonset Hut individually.

Ms. Crabill asked if a general contractor had looked at the Quonset Hut and provided any assessments. Mr. Youell replied that none had.

**Motion** made by Ms. van Rensburg to table this item, pending Board members individual visit. The motion was seconded by Mr. Beaton and approved unanimously.

Michael Czymbor, 201 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St, City Manager arrived at the meeting and addressed the Board to provide additional information on the previous case, Mr. Czymbor described the airport expansion project and noted that the airport is an enterprise fund - all revenues go back into the airport. He added that the City really needed this area for the new hangars and this structure is not of an historical significant as determined by Mr. Crowe through his research. Chairperson Correa advised Mr. Czymbor that a motion was made and approved to table the item so Board members could individually look at the structure, She added that it is important to take this extra step because this is the only World War II structure left in the City and may be one of the only two Quonset Hut in existence in Putnam County. Mr. Czymbor asked when will be the next meeting as the City was

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**CITY OF PALATKA**  
**Meeting Minutes December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

opening bids on December 18, 2014 and will reward the bid after that. Mr. Crowe advised Mr. Czymbor that the next regular meeting would be January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, so any meeting before then would have to be a special called meeting. Mr. Czymbor asked if the board can reschedule the meeting before January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 that would be better so the awarded bid can go to the City Commission on that day. Chairperson Correa told Mr. Czymbor that the Board can have a special called meeting in December if a quorum can be achieved.

Ms. Crabill asked if there were any way to modify the master plan. Mr. Czymbor stated that the City has looked at the options the airport consultant provided and determined that this is the preferred option. Ms. Crabill asked if the options can be brought back to the board at the special called meeting. Mr. Czymbor stated that Staff can do that and that the consultant can meet Board members at the airport. Chairperson Correa advised Board members that they would have to visit the site separately (due to the Sunshine Law). Mr. Czymbor suggested that maybe the City could provide the board with a report or we could provide the consultant's contact information.

Mr. Beaton asked if they were someone who could look at the building's structural integrity without a cost to the City. Ms. van Rensburg said she would ask her husband Conrad van Rensburg to accompany her when she looked at the building for a free unofficial opinion. Chairperson Correa also stated that if Mr. van Rensburg can't go and look at the building then she will get Michael Gagnon to look at the building.

Mr. Beaton asked if there were any legal requirements that the board has to meet for the next meeting and could the meeting be at the airport. Mr. Crowe said he did not recommend relocating the meeting because the public generally depends on a consistent venue. Mr. Beaton understands that it would start a precedent because other people probably would want the board to meet at their site as well. Mr. Crowe did note that board member could visit the building.

Ms. van Rensburg asked if the Board primarily only dealt with the two historic districts with a little in the central business district only by a case by case basis. Chairperson Correa advised if there were a question about something being historically significant throughout the entire City then the Board would be involved. Mr. Crowe agreed and added that the board is the arbiter of what is historic, per certified local government rules.

**Public Comments**

No Public Comments.

**OTHER BUSINESS** – Staff presented to the Board the 2015 calendar with one meeting date off the normal first Thursday (one week later on January 8<sup>th</sup>) due to the New Year's Holiday conflict.

**Motion** made by Ms. Van Rensburg to approve the staff 2015 Historic Preservation Board calendar as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Crabill and approved unanimously.

Mr. Beaton has done some research on Quonset Huts and realized the lions club on Osceola St (across from the West View Cemetery), used to be a Quonset Hut, maybe that Quonset Hut got moved to Horseman Club Rd & State Rd 19 and used for a private residence for a period of time, then for junk storage and then it disappeared - maybe it had fallen apart. A more significant Quonset Hut that might be of historic value is located at the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> & Madison St. Ms. Crabill said this was the City's black movie theater, called the Madison Theatre. It

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**CITY OF PALATKA**  
**Meeting Minutes December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

opened in 1950 and closed in 1962. There was an online oral history remembering as a child going to the theater, costing nine cents to attend and twenty five cents for adults to attend. The theater had one screen and 325 seats and was operated by a company named Bailey's Theaters. This company operated many African American theaters across the country. There were only 120 Quonset Huts that were used as movie theaters in the United States, with Palatka being one of them. In Florida there were only five African American movie theaters, in Winter Garden, Fernandina Beach, Largo, St. Petersburg and Palatka - two of those buildings are still standing. The Palatka theater building was vacant for a period of time and then in September of 1978 Dr. Ruth Lowes Reaves, one of the first ordained women ministers, opened a church there. The church currently located there now is called the Christ Witness Church of the Almighty God. Mr. Beaton wants to encourage the Board to take a look at this building for local and National historic designation because of the theater aspect, Quonset Hut construction design, and also the significance of Dr. Reaves in the community.

**DJOURNMENT - Motion** to adjourn made by Ms. van Rensburg to adjourn the meeting, adjourned at 4:39 pm.