

HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
CITY OF PALATKA
Meeting Minutes January 8th, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Roberta Correa at 4:01 pm. Other members present included Larry Beaton, Elizabeth van Rensburg, Meri Rees and Lynda Crabill. Absent: Gilbert Evans Jr., Robert Goodwin and Laura Schoenberger. Staff present: Planning Director Thad Crowe and Recording Secretary Ke'Ondra Wright.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. van Rensburg to approve the December 18th, 2014 minutes with minor corrections, seconded by Mr. Beaton. Motion passed unanimously.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

Chairperson Correa read the appeals procedures.

NEW BUSINESS

Case: HB 14-41
Locations: 923 Laurel St

Applicant: John Nelson, Palatka Housing Authority
Request: Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of one condemned dwelling 923 Laurel St. (South Historic District)

Mr. Crowe summarized the facts of this case and noted that there were two structures demolished, with 913 Laurel St being a non-contributing structure and therefore not requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for demolition. Staff did determine that 923 Laurel St was a contributing structure and did require a COA for demolition. The City's building official and fire marshal inspected the structure and determined that it was destroyed beyond the point of restoration, and would in fact require new construction. It was determined that the structure was a life and safety hazard and quick action was needed in the form of demolition. Staff recommends after-the-fact COA approval based on the recognition that building restoration was impossible and also based on the need for reasonable justice and equity for the property owner.

Board Discussion

Mrs. van Rensburg asked how long ago the fire was where the structure was. Mr. Crowe responded that has been a while since the fire and he did not have the exact date. Chairperson Correa said there have been multiple fires at the building along with vandalism. When city staff did get into the buildings they took quick action to address the problem. Mrs. van Rensburg said she understand the reason for a retroactive permit if the homeowner has a giant hole in the roof and the rain is coming in inside the house, but she questioned the quick action after the years of the building standing in a derelict state. Chairperson Correa said that the flooring is now in another building on South 4th St and looks very nice. Chairperson Correa said she did see the inside of the structure and has also lost a house that couldn't be saved and she could see the difference. You could get to the flooring and remove it without the house caving in, someone removed the flooring about a year or two ago, but and as the house sat vacant after a fire and exposed to the elements it disintegrates rather quickly. Ms. Crabill said she observed other people taking components from the house that were salvageable. Mr. Crowe said the house was

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not secure and once city staff was able to get on the property they moved quickly. Chairperson Correa agreed, adding that private ownership of a property makes it hard to enter the property.

Ms. Crabill asked if the burned duplex on 13th St. was a similar situation. Chairperson Correa responded that there is not an answer to the question and it's not in the district in any case, therefore it is not the Board's jurisdiction. Chairperson Correa suggested that maybe in the future the staff could handle things in a more coordinated and quicker fashion. Ms van Rensburg said that it is a moot point as the house is gone, but by the same token from the perspective that just about anything can be saved, it's just really sad. Mr. Crowe agreed and said that staff learned from these experiences and in the future when something like this happens Staff will strive to conduct a quick assessment and enter private property when needed Chairperson Correa agreed said that after a year or two of being open to the elements there is very little of a structure to be saved.

Motion made by Mr. Beaton to demolish the condemned dwelling at 923 Laurel St., as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Crabill.

Public Comments

Anthony Harwell, 322 Madison St., said he thought it was unusual to approve something that's already done and the approval should be given right when someone wants it torn down. Mr. Harwell suggests that if the Board did not want this to go on the record to approve the demolition of the property then maybe you should deny the request Chairperson Correa said that she understood Mr. Harwell's perspective but advised that the motion had been made. Mr. Harwell advised Chairperson Correa that the motion was made prior to hearing public comments and asked if another motion would be made. Chairperson Correa responded that was up to the board members to make another motion.

Ms. van Rensburg asked what would be the ramifications of denying a request that had already been carried out other than creating a lot of paperwork for the City and possibly proving a point that we just can't knock down historic things. Mr. Crowe replied that on the last page of the staff report the board is obligated to look at reasonable justice and equity for the property owner, meaning that the Board needs to balance on one hand the importance of saving an historic structure against any prohibitive cost of complete reconstruction. The cost for reconstruction will far outweigh the need to save the structure, and he believed that the Board was obliged to grant this COA

Mr. Beaton suggested that the Board rescind the vote, since it was made prior to public comments.

Motion made by Mr. Beaton to rescind the vote. The motion was seconded by Ms. Crabill and approved.

Mr. Harwell asked if any consideration should be made for what the projected use of the property is. Chairperson Correa responded that the board can't approve the projected design for

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the property at this meeting, eventually that will come before the board but right now the Board can only discuss what's before them.

John Nelson, Palatka Housing Authority, 400 N 15th St, said that the demolition was ordered by the courts prior to the PHA purchasing the property. Chairperson Correa asked Mr. Crowe to explain the process. Mr. Crowe responded that code enforcement has a process that must be followed when the City is trying to acquire or demolish a structure, which includes getting a judge's approval to go on the property.

Mr. Harwell asked if the COA process required notification of property owners within a certain distance for the Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Crowe answered affirmatively.

Chairperson Correa closed the public comments period.

Ms. van Rensburg questioned this property being a total loss as the entire front section of the property and the foundation looked as if was constructed out of concrete decorative block, which survive fires nicely. Chairperson Correa responded that the determination also comes from an insurance standpoint.

Mr. Beaton asked about the chronological order of events and how was this handled. Mr. Crowe responded that he did not have an exact chronology of how things went, but could go back and create one. He added that he was not aware of the total loss until recently and the code enforcement was working through their channels. Mr. Beaton asked if the Board got a copy of the COA notification. Mr. Crowe answered negatively. Mr. Beaton asked if all residents in the block were notified of the demolition. Mr. Crowe answered that property owners within 150 feet were notified. Mr. Crowe said that on the code enforcement side these things can drag out for a long time and there are some owners who are not responsive.

Motion made by Mr. Beaton to demolish the condemned dwelling at 923 Laurel St., as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Crabill. Members voted in favor, with Ms. van Rensburg voting no.

Case: HB 14-42
Locations: 220 S 4th St

Applicant: John & Patti Vogt
Request: Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to add a 12X16 wooden shed (South Historic District)

Mr. Crowe said the applicant requested a shed in his back yard. In similar past cases the Board has approved such sheds when they were screened from public view so as not to present a negative visual impact from public right-of-ways or contagious properties. The site plan showed existing vegetation in the rear yard that will serve as a screen. A review of the Secretary of Interior Standards indicated the shed was an incompatible structure. There were certain things that could be done to improve compatibility, for example the vertical siding could be changed to horizontal, the windows could be more vertical, and the roof could be steeper, but Staff's

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concern was all these changes would create a cost burden that would be at cross-purposes with the need to provide reasonable of justice and equity to the property owner, particularly when the shed can just be hidden from view. In lieu of requiring a more compatible structure Staff recommends approval with the condition that the proposed fence be a six-foot tall wood picket fence, painted white, with the pickets positioned close together to ensure maximum screening effect. An additional condition would require the fence to be supplemented (when determined necessary by Staff) with vegetation, including a shrub planted at the eastern terminus of the fence.

John Vogt, 220 S 4th St, said that the shed would be painted white to echo the color of the main house Mr. Beaton said he thought the white color would blend in much better Chairperson Correa asked how what the length of the fencing was. Mr. Vogt answered that the fence would be 24 feet long. Ms. Crabill asked if Mr. Vogt looked at any sheds that might fit in better with the area. Mr. Vogt answered that he looked at the aluminum sided ones but was trying to stick to the natural finishes, and the wood sheds offered are vertical rather than horizontal siding.

Board Discussion

Public Comments

Jeff Passeno, 614 River St, said that he would coming before the Historic Preservation Board for a shed request and just wanted to hear the discussion. He added that he brought a picture (file) of a 1920s-era shed with vertical siding, which might help the Board's decision.

Motion made by Mr. Beaton to approve a storage shed and fence in the rear yard with the condition that the proposed fence be a six-foot tall wood picket fence, painted white, with the pickets positioned close together to ensure maximum screening effect, and the fence to be supplemented (when determined necessary by Staff) with vegetation, including a shrub planted at the eastern terminus of the fence. The motion was seconded by Ms. van Rensburg. Motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS –

ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn made by Ms. van Rensburg to adjourn the meeting, at 4:42 pm.