

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA

## Minutes for the June 6, 2013 Meeting

The Historic Preservation Board meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robbie Correa at 4:00 pm. Other members present included Lynda Little Crabill, Elizabeth vanRensburg Gary Graffweg Larry Beaton, Laura Schoenberger and Gilbert Evans Jr. The following member was absent: Robert Goodwin.

Staff present: Planning Director Thad Crowe.

**Motion-** made by Ms. vanRensburg to approve the May 2, 2013 minutes, seconded by Ms. Crabill. All present voted affirmative, motion passed.

**Appeals Procedure-** Chairperson Correa read the appeals.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Chairperson Correa recommended starting the meeting with New Business due to the amount of citizens there concerning the Old Business case.

### NEW BUSINESS-

**Case:** 13-23  
**Address:** 500 River Street  
**Parcel Number:** 42-10-27-6850-0280-0081  
**Applicant:** Dennis Rudy  
**Request:** Certificate of Appropriateness to re-roof over existing shingles with silver Galvalume® 5v crimp material.

Mr. Crowe went over the application request stating this was an after the fact emergency request that staff gave the home owner approval to have the roof. He said he believed this home was the oldest in the South Historic District built between 1866 and 1868. He said the frame vernacular style is with keeping the metal material and recommended approval.

**Motion:** made by Mr. Beaton to approve the applicants request. Seconded made by Ms. Crabill. All those present voted affirmative motion passed.

**Case:** 13-26  
**Address:** 415 Olive Street  
**Parcel Number:** 42-10-26-6850-0200-0014  
**Applicant:** Sandra & Randall Smith  
**Request:** Certificate of Appropriateness to add picket fencing to the front and side yard and to repair the existing privacy fence in the rear yard.

Mr. Crowe directed the Board Members to the staff report; he explained this application is for a combination of fences mostly in the rear of the property. The applicant would like to repair portions of the existing privacy fence that is located in the rear of the property and they would like to add a four foot picket fence in the front of the property, which is typical for historical homes. He recommended approving this request.

Mr. Beaton asked if there are three different heights of fencing.

Mr. Crowe replied that is correct, in front of the house a four foot or lower fence is required. It appears to transition height as it goes towards the rear of the property.

**Motion:** made by Ms. vanRensburg to approve the applicants request. Seconded made by Ms. Crabill. All those present voted affirmative motion passed.

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA

## OLD BUSINESS:

**Case:** 12-63  
**Address:** 208 Main St; 310 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and 312 N 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.  
**Parcel Number:** 42-10-27-6850-0090-0020  
**Applicant:** Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Florida, Inc.  
C/O St. Mark's Episcopal  
**Request:** Demolish Structures

Mr. Crowe said due to the complex nature of this request he wanted to spend enough time to go case by case. He said in relation to the code this particular application is a request to demolish three structures which are contributing to the North Historic District. The buildings consist of the James House (208 main St.), the Parrish Hall (310 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St.) and the Rectory (312 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St.). The applicant's narrative said due to the high cost of insurance and their needs for those buildings would not be economical. They added a proposal for construction of a new building, if; the three buildings could be removed. The buildings in question are three of the four historical buildings on their property; the James House was built around 1884, Parrish Hall was around 1885 and the Rectory around 1870. He referred to the staff report by saying the Episcopal Church is the oldest Church in Palatka it was constructed around 1853, it is associated with many leading citizens within the community. The Church is of a unique gothic style there are no other examples in the city with that style except the Parish Hall it to be constructed with the unique gothic style. According to the structural evaluation the applicant submitted it stated the buildings in question are in generally good condition for their age and are in a salvageable state, staff understands the applicant's premise of cost to rehabilitate those buildings, but also noted the reason the buildings are in such a disrepair was due to deferred maintenance which was cause from the property owner.

Mr. Crowe advised the board they needed to refer to the Comprehensive Plan (comp plan) along with the Municipal's Code (Muni Code) to guide them with their decisions. The Comp Plan prohibits demolishing historical structures due to neglect from the property owner. He went over the property history, he said there were nine cases spanning from 2002 thru 2009 where they requested demolition of structures, relocating of structures and removal of chimneys and so on adding there is history with the property in question.

He said the James House has lost a lot of its exterior features. The prominent feature was the veranda door columns which were demolished in 2006. This house lost a lot of its significance by removal of the exterior elements the house is salvageable and it still has its historic core.

The Parrish Hall is a significant building in association to the community; the Saint Mark's academy was established there in 1882.

The Rectory is associated with many leading citizens and was built by Judge James Burt; it was the home of Reverends Albion Knight, Tucker W. Taylor and W. Pipes Jones and among others. The Structure report did say this building was in the worst shape of the other buildings. The upstairs is unusable, in the 1920's an addition was constructed where the roof was raised but that addition was not properly constructed which led to leaking problems.

Mr. Crowe said the criteria for this application came down to one meaningful sentence which was "In the case of the proposed demolition of an existing structure, the removal of such structure will not be detrimental to the historic and architectural character of the district, or that, the balancing interest of the city and preserving the integrity in the district and the interest of the owner approval of the demolition is required, by considerations of reasonable justice and equity". He then said if the buildings were removed it would affect the district because of their age, architecture and local significance. It would present an issue with the district and their continuity of historical homes on the west side of North 2<sup>nd</sup> St. The loss of those structures (which are on the main

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA

historical corridor to the Bronson Mulholland House) you would see the educational building which is a very modern building.

Staff considered balancing from their perspective of the district and of the property owner; showing evidence that if they retained the Parish Hall and Rectory buildings that would constitute a real physical developmental factor which would deny reasonable justice and equity. Staff requested repair estimates for the buildings proving the cost for repair would exceed reasonable limits along with detailed cost comparison if retaining the buildings, new multiuse building construction and information on a practical level what would that do to the church's ability to function on that site. Staff did not receive the requested information; with that note staff concluded they needed more information from the applicant.

He said based on the criteria he mentioned it was clear the District would be harmed by the removal of the structures. He said it was not clear what the practical and economic impact would be; staff did not have enough information provided by the applicant to make a determination. Staff recommended approving the demolition of the James House (208 main St.) since it in a state of disrepair, appearance and historical significance features were removed. He recommended denial for the request to demolish the Parish Hall (310 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St.) and Rectory Building (312 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St.), based on the fact that staff did not receive the requested information to show proper consideration of hardship.

Mr. Evans Jr. asked for clarification on what staff request from the church in order to make an informed decision on the properties.

Mr. Crowe said the first would be repair estimates that would indicate the cost for each building of bringing them up to current code compliance allowing the buildings to be functional and useable. Second would be comparing between utilizing in terms of cost and practical issues for church functions versus a new building.

Ms. vanRensburg asked why the Church asked to have this item tabled until this specific meeting date, what were they planning to do, provide or invest.

Mr. Crowe said when he spoke with the Senior Warden who at that time was representing the church said he wanted to get with the Neighborhood Association to see if they could come up with some potential solutions.

### **Public Comments:**

Christy Sanford, 312 Dodge St; asked if there were any liens on the property from all of the code violations and if not then why not. She said the church had an arson fire destroy two of their homes where they requested demolition which are now gone without an investigation, because they wanted a parking lot and they still have not made a parking lot. Now there are three more of their buildings that are on the chopping block. She said if you have a reluctant landlord to make repairs what will happen.

Annie Svetlick, 511 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St; passed pictures of the James House to the Board showing what the house used to look like prior to the church demolishing portions of the home. She said she felt the same as Ms. Sanford what will happen if they are allowed to destroy those beautiful buildings.

Coenrrad vanRensburg, 310 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St; President of the North Side Neighborhood Association, said the Association discussed this problem numerous times and all of the members agree the buildings should not be allowed to be demolished. He recommended making them a president, if someone wants to renovate, start demolishing, walk away and then asks to demolish the whole structure they should be held accountable for their actions. He said he met with the church prior to the first tabled meeting, he asked them if they would be interested in researching other avenues to repair the structures; their response was they wanted to talk to the neighborhood. Since then, the church has not contacted the Association.

Michael Gagnon, 703 Emmett St. President of the South Side Neighborhood Association, said he is a contractor capable of renovation historical structures and he believed the structures could be saved. He said with the church coming back year after year for the same request, and by allowing them to destroy a house like the James house is criminal.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA

Robert Svetlick, 511 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St; said he renovated many historical homes in the Florida Keys. He said in 2008 he made an agreement to take over the James House and since he owned a joining parcel he was going to relocate the house onto that property and renovate it, but then the housing market fell and his business ran out of money making him not financially able to renovate the home. He said there is nothing wrong with the house; it is structurally sound and able to be refurbished back to the original appearance. He said the city has allowed this pattern, that if someone wants to demolish something they were given an ok. He commented on how the water front used to have beautiful historical structures and they were allowed to be demolished. By allowing the history to be removed the city looks like a dead zone. He suggested the city should take action with the church by declaring eminent domain, take over the property and restore the buildings, or ask the church to sell the property, but told the board something needs to be done to preserve what is left of the few remaining historical buildings in the city.

Joslyn Douglas, 223 Madison St; said the church does not have the money to repair the buildings, but the Diocese of Florida has the money; they just don't want to spend it.

Jake Sheehan Jr., 218 Madison St; said he lives across the street from the North 2<sup>nd</sup> St. buildings he can see them from his front porch, he asked the board to really think hard regarding their decisions those buildings are in a historical neighborhood and if they are allowed to demolish them then a part of history will be gone and it can never be brought back.

Mandy Tucker, 406 Bronson St; said the church had not made an effort to have a cost analysis done, she believed the property could be sold, turned over to the city or even to the North Side Neighborhood Association. If the buildings are allowed to be removed it would be detrimental to this side of town and that would be a waste.

Christy Sanford, 312 Dodge St; warned the board that when the older two buildings that burnt down they were appealed by the church and it went to the City Commission and at that time Don Holmes ruled those buildings were not specific examples of historic structures because they weren't on the National Register as individual specimens. Back then she said the residents were not so savvy with the words supporting or contributing, she asked the board to keep that in mind when making your argument that those words do count.

Randy Hedstrom, 281 East River Road, East Palatka; said in the last six months he was placed on the church vestry. He said he did turn in an estimate of \$700,000.00 from D.K. Church Construction for the repairs of the questioned buildings to Building & Zoning a week prior to this meeting. The church would love to restore the buildings, if they could afford it, but the church absolutely does not have the money. The church members have looked into grants, but could not find anything, they have asked the Diocese but they don't want to put forth the money. He said they are currently working with Mr. Westbury to locate a person who is a grant writer. Saint Mark's Church is falling apart and it alone takes all the money the church has just to maintain it.

Ms. vanRensburg asked why they didn't get more than one quote and did the vestry feel the same about restoring the buildings and if so why not pull their request for demolition.

Mr. Hedstrom replied the church cannot afford to pay the estimated repairs which were not a guaranteed amount, once the contractor starts doing the work and finds other problems, the cost can go up, along with the costly insurance policy and the hurricane requirements.

Madam Chair said there is leeway with insurance companies when it comes to hurricane insurance. She also said with the cost to demolish those buildings, any new construction and maintenance of a new building would probably cost more than the estimated \$700,000.00.

Mr. Hedstrom replied the church currently has a small fellowship and how the economy has been they would love to keep the buildings but it's not feasible at this time. He said he would ask the members to see if they can come up with a better solution other than demolition. It is sad to see those buildings slowly deteriorate and as members get old they are not capable to do the work and for no charge anymore.

Mr. Evans Jr., asked if it was true that the church pays \$125,000.00 a year for insurance.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA**

Mr. Hedstrom replied Ms. Pines would be more knowledgeable on that, but that was the amount the vestry discussed.

Mr. Evans Jr., asked if the church ever investigated if the city would take over the buildings.

Mr. Hedstrom replied the church would be willing to do anything to receive help with the cost of the buildings; the church just cannot afford to maintain them.

Mr. Evans Jr. asked how the church can afford to build a new building if they can't afford to maintain the three they already have and does the church already have plans to rebuild if the old buildings are allowed to be demolished.

Mr. Hedstrom replied that is correct.

Ms. Crabill asked why won't the Diocese help them.

Mr. Hedstrom replied they own a lot of buildings all across Florida, which is old and deteriorating. If the Diocese paid to repair all their buildings then other churches will request money to restore their buildings and so they just say they do not have the money.

Mr. Crowe asked the Board Members to look in their packet at the letter from the Warden it is their intent to construct a new building it also states the church would save \$10,000.00 a year if the buildings were allowed to be removed. He wasn't sure how that could come up to \$125,000.00 for insurance.

Henry Harder, 108 Hiawatha Ct. East Palatka, said what Mr. Hedstrom said is true; the church does not have money to repair the buildings. He has been a Junior Warden for 15-16 years and he regrets the buildings are in this state. The idea of the city helping with the buildings would be great but the city and the Federal Government agencies are in the same financial shape as Saint Mark's. He believed Saint Mark's would be willing to explore other avenues to save the buildings.

Sara Pines, 215 Fern St; said she is on the vestry and there is a grant writer in Washington DC that has their information and they are looking into some grants for the church building they are not willing to put out for any other structure. They tried giving the James House away intact but that fell through either because of money or nobody else came forward to take it off their hands. The insurance has an umbrella policy and the church is behind in payments, she said she had to plea with the insurance provider to not cancel their policy. She said it would be a significant savings if the James House and the Rectory building were removed from that policy, then they could proceed with a new building in their place. The members discussed what style of building they would rebuild and they all agreed to have a vernacular with board batten siding to match the church.

### **PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:**

Mr. Crowe reminded the board he was not concluding the applicant didn't have a reasonable economic hardship; they just didn't present proper documentation for staff to make recommendation.

Madam Chair reminded the Board Members there were letters in their packet, she asked staff if it should be read for the record.

Mr. Crowe said that would be recommended.

Madam Chair read the letters out loud for the record, one was from the Putnam County Historical Society and the other from Emma Louis Morris, and both were in favor of preserving the three buildings.

Ms. Crabill made comment that she had grown up in the city and she believes in saving the history, she said once the buildings are gone there's no bringing them back. If the city were allowed to take over the three buildings they too would suffer just as the 100 block buildings have been neglected for 25 years. She recommended the church be creative and come up with ways to raise monies or even ask other churches for donations.

Ms. vanRensburg said when reverting back to the structural survey conducted by Structures International, LLC, they concluded and recommended the Parish Hall, James House and Rectory building are salvageable, this

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

## CITY OF PALATKA

report was conducted two and a half years ago and if the repairs were considered an important aspect back then and the repairs were neglected, how can those buildings be in better or same shape, it all comes back to demolition by neglect which could influence other historical homes. She furthermore said as a board they need to consider if demolition would hurt the district she replied yes it would, would this make an economic hardship on Saint Mark's Church, they don't know because the church had not forwarded information showing hardship. Have they applied for big grants, façade grants or have they talked with the North Side Neighborhood Association and the Historical Society. She agrees with Mr. Hedstrom there are other avenues, but did say she didn't agree with staff about demolishing the James House because you can't just start to dismantle something and then stop half way and tear it to pieces, that then becomes demolition by neglect and if this is going to become the norm in the historic districts then there won't be a historic district.

Mr. Beaton questioned the wording of the code because in the quoted code it refers to the word "or" and if that was the case then the board would not need to consider the second portion of their request.

Mr. Crowe said the code was written poorly, typically with historic preservation law it is based on court cases and it can be pretty standard. Economic hardship is one you can't do the private property statutes in Florida says you have to respect the owners' rights to a degree and you can't put undue burden on them.

Mr. Beaton asked how to make motion as one or to make motion pre building.

Mr. Crowe recommended making separate motions.

Mr. Beaton pointed out the James house is one of the oldest structure's in the city, it appears on the bird's eye view of 1884 prior to the big fire, he asked the board to remember when making their decision that the James House is significant to Palatka.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Sara Pines said the church has had economic reverses they can't afford a full time priest the church is struggling majority of the work they have done have been done by volunteers.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED:**

Madam Chair asked for motion

**Motion:** made by Ms. vanRensburg to deny the request to demolish the property at 208 Main St. Seconded by Ms. Crabill, all those present voted affirmative, motion passed.

**Motion:** made by Mr. Beaton to accept staff recommendation to not demolish 310 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Seconded by Ms. Crabill, all those present voted affirmative, motion passed.

**Motion:** made by to accept staff recommendation to not demolish 312 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Seconded by Ms. vanRensburg, all those present voted affirmative, motion passed.

Madam Chair said there is a responsibility as a board and as citizens to assist the church trying to find solutions with saving the buildings. She asked who would be a contact for representing the church.

Ms. Pines volunteered to be that person.

<b>Case:</b>	13-27
<b>Applicant:</b>	Building & Zoning Department
<b>Request:</b>	Modifications to historic preservation ordinance (COA review exemption for ordinary maintenance, staff approval for historically appropriate exterior alterations, modified Building Code enforcement for historic buildings)

Mr. Crowe said this is an exemption for the property owner to allow ordinary repairs. This exemption will also allow staff to approve changes as long as it is with keeping of the home.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALATKA**

Also to clearly state Building & Zoning will be able to have a modified Building Code enforcement for historic Buildings he said it is already in the statutes but he wants to bring it forward.

**Motion:** made by Ms. vanRensburg to approve staff's recommendation. Seconded by Mr. Evans, all those present voted affirmative. Motion passed.

**Other Buisness:** none

**Adjourn:** with no further business meeting was adjourned at 5:17pm.