

Historical Buildings and Sites Commission
MEETING MINUTES
April 9, 2020 at 5:30 PM
Remote through MS Teams

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ward Warren (Chair)
Rob Pell (Vice Chair)
Arden McConnell
Virginia Ford
Shirley Holzinger
Bill Richardson – late
Nathan Miller

STAFF/LIAISON MEMBERS:

Brad Clark – Principal Planner
Donna Rupp - Associate Planner

COUNCIL LIAISON:

Barry Eames - absent

1. **Roll Call** – Chair Warren called the meeting to order at 5:30.
2. **Introductions**
3. **Public Comment:** Public comment on the hearing will be received for two weeks after this meeting due to the pandemic protocols required for social distancing.
4. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - a. Special Meeting - March 19, 2020.
After discussion, the commission did not approve the minutes because they were verbatim and too long.
5. **Matters from Commission Members and Staff**
 - a. Update on Review Hearing for Blind George’s façade improvement.
The appeal will go to the City Council on May 4. The staff report on the appeal will be available on April 27.
 - b. Alley Activation update
Per Brad - Susan has been busy working with business owners because of the loss of business due to the pandemic. There are no updates on the Alley Activation project at this time.
 - c. Historic Plaque installations complete
Per Donna – All of the plaques have been installed. A newsletter article on the plaques will be published at a later date. Ward has seen them and thinks they look nice.
 - d. Update on Local Landmarks (not on original agenda).
Ward spoke to ODOT about having the Caveman Bridge and Redwood Empire Sign added as local landmarks. He received a letter from ODOT in support of local landmark status. Ward will email Donna the letter. Donna updated HBSC that the other applications have not been processed because of the additional work for the “new normal” regarding pandemic protocols.
 - e. Other Commission Items (not on original agenda)
Arden read the HBSC mission statement as a reminder to the Commissioners of their purpose. She also voiced concerns over holding remote hearings during the

pandemic and asked if the hearing could be delayed. Brad reviewed the rules from the state of Oregon and said that per the State, Grants Pass still has to meet the 120 day rule - completing actions on applications within 120 days of the applications being deemed complete. Further discussion among commissioners and the applicant for Item 6a. The applicant did not want to delay. Rob stated that the applicant's desire to move forward should hold the most weight, even if holding in person would be easier on some people.

6. Action Items:

- a. Application # 303-00105-20: Demolition request for structure at 242 SW J. Street.

Ward read into the record standard language about the HBSC authority and if any commissioners wish to abstain from voting. Nathan Miller stated that as a Commissioner and a person with financial interest in the property, he would abstain from debate and recuse himself from the vote.

Donna shared a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed the highlights of the staff report. All land-use decisions must be based on the criteria listed in the Development Code, which is Section 13.462. The staff report that is in the packet was written using that criteria. The Commission must consider all criteria contained in the staff report. The presentation is a brief summary of that report.

The following discussions took place after the staff presentation:

Ward pointed out that per the applicable policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the property is located within the Downtown and not "surrounding" it; additionally he pointed out that the HBSC is not tasked with increasing housing density in the historic district. He further clarified, and staff and applicant agreed, that the future development will come before the HBSC for review prior to being approved for permits.

Arden asked if the people who submitted letters lived in surrounding properties. Of the four letters received prior to this meeting, two respondents lived in the surrounding neighborhood and two did not. Arden also requested clearer photographs of the building that were supplied by the applicant. He responded that he can furnish those.

Shirley commented that the name of the person who donated the spire was incorrect in the staff report.

Nathan Miller, as the applicant, presented his narrative for the demolition of the building and the creation of new housing. He stated that having residents living in the area will reduce crime, increase business in downtown and be better for the City. He researched the building and consulted with George Kramer of Preserve Oregon on possible future designs. He gave an overview of the process for coming to the conclusion that demolishing the building and placing eight new townhouse type dwellings on the lot would be the best way to develop it further. He said he has received positive feedback from local business owners.

The following discussion took place after the applicant presentation:

Ward expressed concern over creating a trend to take down historic buildings, rather than refurbishing them, in order to create high density housing. Nathan answered that every building and every block has a different story and each one has different circumstances that have to be considered.

Bill asked about the extent of dry rot in the building. Nathan responded that it is significant around the bottom of the spire. There could be more water damage in the building that hasn't been found yet.

Rob asked if the future buildings would have elevators and Nathan answered no. Rob expressed concern over the ability of older people to use the stairs.

Further discussion over parking, tree canopy, number of bedrooms in units (6- two bedroom and 2 – three bedroom) and the unique features of the building (specifically the spire and the octagonal windows).

Future development discussed concerning style of buildings blending with existing historic styles in Grants Pass.

Staff noted that the recording of this meeting will be posted on the website for the public to review and submit comments prior to the Commission making a decision.

7. Adjourn 7:14 pm

Next Meeting: Continuance for review of public comments submitted regarding demolition review for structure at 242 SW J Street **will be held April 23, 2020 at 5:30 pm through remote access.**

Future Agenda Building for Next Meeting: NOT DISCUSSED

Establish museum subcommittee. **NOT DISCUSSED**

Discuss potential design standards for Historic Residential Conservation District. **NOT DISCUSSED**