

Historical Buildings & Sites Commission
MEETING MINUTES
April 23, 2020 at 5:30 PM
Remote through MS Teams

This meeting is a continued public hearing for the demolition request for the structure at 242 SW J Street (File #303-00105-20). The HBSC is reconvening to discuss public comment that has been received since the April 9 meeting and will make a decision on the land use application at this meeting.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

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

STAFF/LIAISON MEMBERS:

Brad Clark – Principal Planner
Donna Rupp - Associate Planner

COUNCIL LIAISON:

Barry Eames - absent

Guests: Sean Bassinger (Daily Courier); Casey Miller

1. **Roll Call** – Chair Warren called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. All present except Barry Eames.

2. **Action Items:**

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

Staff: This is a continuance of the April 9 meeting. Public could listen to meeting and submitted comments. 10 comments received by 5 pm April 22 and were distributed to the HBSC before the meeting today.

Nathan Miller, as applicant, supplied comments:

Housing is a continuing issue in Grants Pass and there is a need for it. There is support for downtown housing. One of the letters of support received in this packet was from a neighbor who submitted a letter in opposition to the demolition prior to the April 9 meeting. She changed her mind after reviewing the April 9 meeting and reading the materials. He addressed the comments opposed to the project and also the people who complained about not getting information. He noted that information was available on the City website and that the Daily Courier also ran an article about it. He believes the development will benefit the city and kindly asks for permission to remove the structure.

Discussion of Request:

Ward responded that there is a need for housing, but it is not the mission of the HBSC to seek to provide it. He added that the property is within the borders of downtown and the Historic District, not “surrounding” area.

Rob asked if an engineer had actually been in the building. Nathan responded that the engineer’s report was based on photos because he could not find an available local engineer.

Discussion: Arden asked if a tour could be set up for the HBSC to see the inside of the building. Nathan said it is uninsurable and he would be uncomfortable having the

commissioners inside because of the hazards. Further discussion on this idea. Brad mentioned that the UAPC has to make land use decisions with photos and does not conduct site visits; additionally there is a concern for meeting the 120 day deadline to have a decision by June 24. Nathan agreed to supply a video for the HBSC.

Arden expressed concern that the public did not have enough opportunity to comment on this decision. She said there were over 140 comments on social media. Discussion around the fact that social media comments are not currently an acceptable means of submitting public comments.

Discussion on social and cultural value of the structure, not just the physical one. Ginger commented that it held a special place in the community because of the church events that were held there, all of the family gatherings for photos and also all of the public use when it was the Boys and Girls Club.

Discussion on energy efficiency of older buildings and that it is possible to retrofit them to get good ratings, although not as efficient as new ones. Ward said it is a dangerous road to go down to use energy efficiency as a reason for removing historic buildings. He further noted that he has upgraded several buildings that were over 100 years old and they are energy efficient.

Arden said she received a letter in her home mailbox dated April 21. She read it into the record and it is available in the recording of the meeting (at 51:10) and the verbatim minutes. The letter was opposed to the demolition of the building because Grants Pass is known as being a historic town and the old church is a unique design. The author of the letter did not like the proposed design of the new housing. Signed by Tina Carr 1537 Cloverlawn Dr.

Discussion about rent burdened residents in Grants Pass. Nathan commented how adding even eight units could help to ease rent costs by increasing supply. He expects the new units will rent for about \$300 less than a comparable unit, which rent for about \$1500-\$2000/month.

After initial discussion on the choices allowable by the HBSC, the three options the Commission has available under Article 13 of the Development Code were presented by staff: Approve the application as is, Approve with Conditions, or Invoke a stay for up to 120 days from the date of this hearing.

HBSC discussed the options and deliberated on the application. Discussion included the concern over public participation; which architectural features are unique to the building (octagonal windows and spire); mitigation if demolished, to include what is in the staff report; applicant and HBSC working to provide a “win-win” outcome for all sides; a book written that includes information on the former church (*The Light That Surrounds Us*); and ideas for incorporating pieces of the existing building into the new development.

Motion

Chair Warren moved, and Vice Chair Pell seconded the motion to approve the demolition with the following conditions: Applicant to provide a video of the building as offered; Applicant to meet all conditions listed in the staff report, including criteria 4, 5, and 6. The vote resulted as follows: “AYES”: Chair Warren, Vice Chair Pell, Commissioners McConnell, Richardson and Ford. “NAYS”: None. Abstain: Commissioner Holzinger. Absent: None.

The motion passed.

3. Adjourn: 7:21 PM

4. Next Meeting: May 14, 2020