



City of Sunnyvale

Meeting Minutes Heritage Preservation Commission

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

7:00 PM

West Conference Room, City Hall, 456 W.
Olive Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance

ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Chair Jeanine Stanek
Vice Chair David Squellati
Commissioner Mark Johnson
Commissioner Dixie Larsen
Commissioner Mike Michitaka
Commissioner Dale Mouritsen

PRESENTATION

None.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

CONSENT CALENDAR

14-0847 Draft Minutes of the August 6, 2014 Heritage Preservation
Commission Meeting

Comm. Johnson motioned to approve the Draft Minutes of the August 6, 2014
Heritage Preservation (File #id 14-0847), as amended. Comm. Michitaka
seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS/GENERAL BUSINESS

14-0758

Discussion of Potential Study Issues for 2015

Vice Chair Squellati made a motion to sponsor "Evaluate Existing Stock of Heritage Resources", and combine the two study issues into one. Comm. Mouritsen seconded. Motion carried by the following vote: 6-0.

Amber El Hajj noted that CDD 14-10 Update to the Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines was ranked last year, but it was not ranked high enough for Planning to work on in 2014. She said that this study issue will automatically be forwarded to the 2015 Study Issue workshop. She noted that she took broad ideas from the last meeting and discussed two study issue ideas, one was to evaluate the Heritage Resource Inventory List and the other was to revisit the Landmark Alteration Permit process. She asked the Commission to review the study issue ideas and to provide any feedback they may have.

Vice Chair Squellati noted that combining the two study issues might be a good idea.

Chair Stanek responded that, in that respect, this may make it more comprehensive and they may get more answers than just single mindedly looking at the process.

Comm. Johnson stated that an approach to the study issue with limited resources could be to work with a sample of all the resources and see what the results are. He stated that the study is worded stronger than what he understood they were talking about. If it is true that the Commission has consistently taken properties off the inventory, then maybe it was too liberally applied.

Ms. El Hajj responded that they may only want to re evaluate a sample of the entire Heritage Inventory Resource list; however, it may be more difficult as they would have to treat the rest of the properties that were not evaluated under the current process. Meaning some of the properties would get historical evaluations paid by the City and the rest would be paid by the owners. She noted that this could be done; it's just a different approach and not the same idea as the proposed study issue.

Comm. Johnson responded that the reason he brought this up is because he is wondering if there was a problem with the initial evaluation to begin with and he did not think it would be feasible to re evaluate all of the properties on the list. He then noted that re evaluation of all the properties on the list may be expensive.

Ms. El Haaj said that the requests they have been receiving in the past few years

may have already determined that there may be an issue and is, in a way, already a sample.

Chair Stanek noted that the historical evaluation forms is a State form and is still used by multiple cities. She discussed some of the homes on the Heritage Resource Inventory list, and how they were initially put on the list. She also mentioned that some of the structures were put on the list based on a significant resident who had lived on the property. She then discussed historical figures who have been significant to Sunnyvale but stated that the homes they had lived in may not have even been their home and may not be significant. She then noted that with the study issue we wouldn't make individual property owner's pay for the historic review but instead thinks the City should.

Ms. El Hajj noted that when talking with the Planning Officer, Trudi Ryan, she agreed that it would be beneficial for the owners, but was unsure if the Council would sponsor the study issue. She also noted that an environmental assessment is a requirement for these projects based on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

Ms. El Hajj City responded that it would be the same because the owner would have to go through the same process.

Comm. Michitaka asked what the process is for an owner to seek approval of de listing their property, and determined from Ms. El Hajj that the final deciding body would be the Heritage Preservation Commission after the cultural resources study was provided.

Comm. Michitaka noted that the cultural resource study and environmental review would cost the City a significant amount, noting four to five hundred dollars for the 55 properties on the Heritage Resource Inventory list.

Chair Stanek noted that it is not always the original owner who wants to de list the property, sometimes it has to do with a sale of the property.

Comm. Larsen asked staff how many homes were delisted since 2004.

Comm. El Hajj noted that five structures were delisted since 2004 and most were single family homes.

Chair Stanek noted that one property was a hotel.

Vice Chair Squellati noted that there have been five properties that were removed from the Heritage Resource Cultural Inventory list within the past 10 years. He then noted that there is not a really good alternative.

Ms. El Hajj responded in the affirmative, in terms of not having the property owners pay for the historic evaluation.

Comm. Johnson noted that he feels that since the City initiated and chose the properties to be added on the Heritage Resource List, then the City should be responsible for removing the properties.

Ms. El Hajj noted that even if the resource was not significant in the federal or state level, the City may determine that the property is still significant with the Commissions' findings.

Vice Chair Squellati confirmed that if the City paid for the historic evaluations, then the owner would not have to pay for the historic evaluations in the future.

Chair Stanek said that even if the City finances the historic evaluations, the cost eventually comes from the General Fund, or a similar fund that comes from taxpayers monies.

Vice Chair Squellati added that the two study issue ideas definitely have a link to one another.

Comm. Larsen asked to clarify about the properties on the list. She asked, as an example, if 20% of them were determined to not be significant, then would the homeowner have to approach the City to de list their property from the Heritage Resource Landmark list. If so, couldn't the City ask the homeowner if they would want their property de listed from the list.

Ms. El Hajj responded that she does not have a solid answer at this point, as it is too premature to determine these aspects of the process. She said that the study issue process will determine the aspects for approval or disapproval of listing or delisting these properties.

Ms. El Hajj further noted that the Sunnyvale Municipal code states that the owner needs to ask the City if they would want to de list their heritage resource. She also said that if a professional historian who is not from Sunnyvale determines that that the subject property is not significant, this Commission may determine that the property is still significant to the history of Sunnyvale.

Comm. Michitaka asked about the environmental study, is it just for filing purposes with the City, or is the State the final decision maker.

Ms. El Hajj clarified the CEQA requirement, and that any affected agencies would be notified and are asked for feedback. She further noted that most modifications to a single-family home would be categorically exempt from CEQA review.

Chair Stanek noted the Butcher House at Butchers Corner and asked if that home would be subject to CEQA.

Ms. El Hajj noted that this project would be subject to CEQA review. She briefly discussed the status of Butcher's Corner, as she is the project planner for the annexation. She noted that since the property is not on the Heritage Resource Inventory list, then it would not go to this Commission for review.

Commission further discussed the Heritage Resource List.

Comm. Johnson said that it would be less expensive to provide the historic evaluations to a larger amount of properties and easier to do the evaluations sooner than later.

Vice Chair Squellati was wondering if the City could approach owners and ask them if they would like to be included in the historical evaluation, and then choose those properties to get evaluated, as a way to minimize cost.

Ms. El Hajj replied that it would be uncommon practice to approach homeowners and determine what they would prefer as far as the status of their property on the Heritage Resource Inventory, as they usually make determinations based on the structure, and not on individual's preferences. She noted, as an example, that if a homeowner applied for a Variance for their home that the City would make the decision based on the property and findings, and not on the individual's needs.

Chair Stanek noted the previous study issue regarding Taaffe Frances District, and that most of the residents who attended the community outreach meeting wanted to keep their homes as a heritage resource.

Vice Chair Squellati responded that he previously meant to say Taaffe Frances District and not the Charles District.

Vice Chair Squellati asked staff if the Commission were to combine the two study issues if they have to rank it against the study issue from last year.

Ms. El Hajj said yes, that they would have to rank both study issues, including the previous study issue that was ranked (CDD 14 10 Update to the Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines).

Ms. El Hajj noted the study issue process and scheduling of study issues, and that the Commission can rank their study issues in November.

Comm. Johnson noted that it would be advantageous for the City to provide historic evaluations to all the properties on the Heritage Resource Inventory list since they have put the burden on the property owners.

Comm. Larsen agreed with Comm. Johnson and added that she is in favor of removing as many properties as possible if they should not have been on the list in the first place. Cleaning up the list and reducing it as much as it can be and notifying owners who may have properties that could come off the list, even if the homeowner objects. She noted support for Comm. Johnson's comment that that all costs should be covered by the City.

Comm. Mouritsen agreed with Comm. Larsen, emphasizing the imposition of costs to the property owner that they may have not anticipated.

Comm. Michitaka had no additional comments, and concurred with comments provided by Commissioners' Johnson, Larsen, and Mouritsen.

Vice Chair Squellati also concurred with all comments previously provided.

Chair Stanek made an addition to add the CEQA portion.

Ms. El Hajj responded that it might not be required since the historical evaluation will provide the data.

Ms. El Hajj noted that she could draft a study issue regarding the damaged awnings and building maintenance on Murphy Avenue.

Comm. Johnson responded in the affirmative.

Vice Chair Squellati noted that the back and sides of the buildings on Murphy Avenue should be included in the study.

Chair Stanek recalled a previous study in Murphy Avenue, regarding the news racks. She noted that it took some time, but in the end the owners agreed on a guideline to manage the news racks.

Comm. Johnson noted that owners may not have the same level of interest that the Commission has regarding the upkeep of the historic district.

Chair Stanek noted her agreement about up keeping Murphy Avenue and heritage landmarks; however, she does see arguments that the owners may have against it.

Comm. Larsen asked staff about the Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines, and if they apply to the properties that were currently there.

Ms. El Hajj responded that the properties are within the Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines; however they are just guidelines and are not required. She then noted that newer permits include conditions to require the maintenance of these types of issues. She said that the older businesses did not have conditions included with their permit.

Comm. Larsen asked if the City has a department that deals with these issues.

Ms. El Hajj noted that she would forward this to the Economic Development Department manager Connie Verceles and she may be able to help with this issue.

Comm. Larsen noted that sometimes owners just need a reminder that their property needs some cleaning and maintenance.

Comm. Johnson also noted that there are also absentee property owners that do not regularly visit their property and may be unaware of the issues about their property.

Ms. El Hajj further stated that this would be drafted as a second study issue.

Yes: 6 - Chair Stanek
Vice Chair Squellati
Commissioner Johnson
Commissioner Larsen
Commissioner Michitaka
Commissioner Mouritsen

No: 0

NON-AGENDA ITEMS & COMMENTS**-Commissioner Comments**

Chair Stanek noted that at the last meeting, she noted that a robot named Officer Mac would be exhibited at the Low Tech to High Tech Exhibit at the Sunnyvale History Museum. She noted that Officer Mac is currently displayed at the Computer History Museum and will not be able to attend the Sunnyvale Historic Museum Low Tech to High Tec exhibit, but the Fremont High School Robotic Club will be bringing robots.

Comm. Johnson noted the many placards in front of buildings he noticed from his visit to the City of Campbell. He noted that he would like to see more placards in Sunnyvale as they add a touch of class to the area.

Comm. Michitaka noted that his organization donated three cherry trees close to the Police station, at the corner of All America Way and Olive Avenue.

INFORMATION ONLY REPORTS/ITEMS

None

+ ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.