

Minutes

Virtual Platform
57 E 1st St

Date: May 4, 2021 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Chair
Barbara Bingham
Jim Babos
Michelle Dahlke
Bruce Nelson, arrived at 6:13pm

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Laura Schaffer-Metcalf Ed.D., Vice-Chair
Niti Desai

STAFF PRESENT:

Arianna Urban
Dr. Nana Appiah

GUESTS:

Vic Linoff

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Brandon Benzing: I will call the May 4, Historic Preservation Board meeting to order at 6:02pm.

2. Approval of minutes from previous meeting.

Chair Benzing: The first order of business then is to approve the meeting minutes from the April 6 meeting.

Arianna Urban: Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, Barb mentioned to me that I erroneously had her as present at last month's meeting when in fact she was absent. We'll make the change to that.

Chair Benzing: And I didn't have any other comments other than that one on the meeting minutes, they seem to capture our votes for the writing and video contest; that was the main topic of last month. Do we have a motion?

Boardmember Jim Babos: I move to approve the minutes with one minor change.

Boardmember Barbara Bingham: I second.

AYES: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf, Desai, Nelson

3. Items from citizens present.

Arianna Urban: I see Vic here, please go ahead.

Vic Linoff: Last month, I updated you on the sale of three important properties, one being the Buckhorn Baths, the others the Woman's Club and the Kiva Lodge motel. That always leads us to some concern. But, I'm happy to say that for at least two of the properties, the new buyers have committed to saving them in one way or another, the Woman's Club, the purchaser of that property, has said they want to keep it just the way it is. I guess it will be an event center, which has been its use from the very beginning. Not everybody realizes that was built as a Woman's Club and was not a house that was converted. It has always been the Women's Club. So, we're pleased to know that that will still stay the same. We have yet to talk to the new buyer of the Buckhorn but I've talked to the architect Tim Boyle and he's assured us that it will be preserved. At this point we don't know how much of it, at least the front buildings, the bathhouse, and the sign for sure. The cottages are yet to be determined. So we're hoping to have some influence that will allow the preservation of all the Buckthorn property. Chicanos Por La Causa has purchased the Kiva, and they know the significance of the sign. We're not quite sure if they intend to keep it on the property or donate it. I've had some conversations with the Mayor, who will work with the president of Chicanos to see about preserving the entire site. I don't know if I mentioned before, but the front building was built as a tourist stop in about 1925, and the sign is about the same date. So it's probably the oldest neon sign in Mesa, and then the lodging units came in the 1930s. So, they also represent the oldest roadside lodging in the entire city. We're really trying to encourage Chicanos to save that entire site. I can update you later when we get more definitive news. Thank you.

4. Discuss potential schedule and date for the Historic Preservation Board annual retreat.

Chair Benzing: I know there was a survey that was circulated earlier in the month about the retreat schedule.

Arianna Urban: Thank you, Chair and Members of the Board. The results of that survey ended up that it looks like June 26 is going to be the day that most of us are available. Everyone that responded to the survey indicated that they will be available on June 26. So we're going to hold that date for now. Pending circumstances, we will figure out where the best place will be to hold it and what that might look like.

Chair Benzing: I know Board Member Nelson had some suggestions as far as touring his neighborhood, possibly. Is that still potentially, on the agenda if things keep progressing the way they are?

Arianna Urban: Sure, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, I had a couple of ideas around that. Just because it might be a little warm to do a tour in June. I'm thinking perhaps we do a couple of hours together just as a discussion and some bagels or something in June, and then possibly in the fall, we can convene and do a tour with Boardmember Nelson.

Chair Benzing: So at the next meeting at the beginning of we can June finalize the agenda?

Arianna Urban: We will finalize the agenda at the June meeting. If there are any Boardmembers that have agenda suggestions, please feel free to send them to me and we can incorporate it.

Chair Benzing: Okay, I think it was one or two meetings ago that we circulated the last retreat agenda from 2020.

Arianna Urban: I'm happy to send that out again if it would be helpful.

Chair Benzing: It seems like that's a good structure to start with and it generally covered all the topics.

5. Review and discuss the applications received and select the 2021 Historic Preservation Awards recipients.

Chair Benzing: Arianna, you want to go through them one by one or how would you like to go through the applications?

Arianna Urban: Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, I think doing a one by one discussion would be appropriate. There are no there are no fixed number of awards that that are traditionally given out. So, all four applications are fully eligible for your consideration. I think we'll just go one by one.

Boardmember Babos: Arianna, are there categories for the awards?

Arianna Urban: Yes. When I introduce each application, I will call out the categories. And yes, that's a very good point, to consider each application under the lens of the category that they were nominated for, thank you. Let's go ahead and start with the Hidden House at 159 North Macdonald, nominated under the category for restoration, preservation and rehabilitation. This is this is a traditional rehabilitation project for a single family home in the West 2nd Place Historic District. A portion of this residence is one of the oldest homes in Mesa. So we're very excited to see this come up.

Chair Benzing: I actually had the privilege of going through this house in 2019, when it was a part of the historic homes tour, and I think it's a wonderful nomination. It's a great example of how to revive not just the home, but also among the homeowners and everybody that saw this home on the tour, there was a great energy about it. It's great for the neighborhood; it raises awareness to how beautiful these homes are, and that just a little bit of care can make them excellent. This home in particular just changed so much from what it had been, necessarily dated, but the strength of the historic nature of the building had gotten lost over the years. This remodel really brought it to the forefront and really highlighted the beauty of that home in the neighborhood, and just what the rest neighborhood could be. To me, it's a wonderful nomination.

Boardmember Barbara Bingham: I'd like to add to that, because I was able to tour the home prior to this renovation, and then again in 2019, and is such a huge difference. It was a beautiful home before, but it was lacking that little bit of appeal. This renovation has just really turned it around. I think it's a great nomination.

Boardmember Babos: I'd also like to comment I went by the house this week and I was very impressed with the street façade and the street detailing; I think the pictures really don't do it justice as it really fits very well into the neighborhood. In reading through the nomination, they talked about the two story addition, and as I drove by, I couldn't see the two story addition, it wasn't until I turned the corner and got almost all the way past the house looking back that I could say it. So, I really think she did a terrific job. In my opinion, it's a labor of love, and she did it because she wants to live there. The cabinetry, the fact that they were able to save some of it is spectacular; the fireplace with the mahogany looks great. And even a little detail like the canopy that they added over the entry door, while it's not original, I think it kind of fits quite nicely with the character of the house. So I also think it's a terrific project.

Boardmember Michelle Dahlke: I was just going to echo the other comments from other Boardmembers. Coming from a planning and zoning person, I thought the street presence is just phenomenal and very, very impressive. I know a lot of work went into this; it's just some of the small details and the little things that can make such a huge difference. I think it's a great nomination as well.

Arianna Urban: Let's move on to the Washington-Escobedo Neighborhood Advisory Committee. This nomination is for the effort to designate the Washington Escobedo Heritage Neighborhood. The category it was nominated under is the Local Preservationist.

Chair Benzing: I don't know that there's much more that can be said about the Washington Escobedo Neighborhood and what they've done to highlight their history and their neighborhood, and just the efforts they put forth to do everything they've done. They gained the Heritage designation, which was something that we started because of their neighborhood, and giving some acknowledgement to places that didn't necessarily fit under the guidelines for a historic neighborhood, but definitely need to be remembered. Truth be told, it's this one out of the four that are on here, that's a slam dunk and has to be approved no matter what. It's a wonderful nomination.

Boardmember Bingham: I agree with you on that. Just the community effort, and then the results of it all, were just a wonderful story. I think it's a slam dunk as well.

Boardmember Babos: I'm also in agreement. I drove through it earlier this week, and I'm ashamed to say I've lived in Mesa for 30 years and never been through that neighborhood. There are obviously some homes that are in need of repair, but the overall character the neighborhood is very nice. A lot of the homes have covered porches, so that you can sit out there and socialize. The nomination talked about the murals on the wall, the sidewalks; many of those that look great. And again, I applaud all those probably 50 people on the list that were part of it, it took somebody a lot of effort. I think this is also definitely should be approved.

Boardmember Dahlke: I totally agree. This is an important area of town that we should cherish, and this is something that will help preserve it and make it more visible, not just the history of it, but the importance of the homes in it. It's very impressive. I know all of you have been rooting for

this for a long time on this Board from what I've heard. So I bet you're all pretty happy about it the nomination.

Chair Benzing: Very much so

Arianna Urban: Members of the Board. Are you guys ready to move on to the next one?

Chair Benzing: Yes.

Arianna Urban: Okay. The 12 West Main building is nominated under the category for adaptive reuse.

Chair Benzing: So, I never saw this building before it had the arcade built in front of it. I have had the pleasure of going and eating there a few times, and to me, it's a great example of some of the revitalization that needs to happen on Main Street with these older buildings. The ones that have been, (you can tell by the not the original photo, but the second photo which was the previous conditions for the past 20-30 years) of just how much of that historic curb facade was lost. With the new exterior renovation, the fact that they were able to amend what they needed to as far as using more of a patio, and inverted the arch to bring it back in, but still harken back to the old arch and exposed some of the brick above, I just think it's a wonderful adaptive reuse on Main Street. As far as the exterior, just trying to give a nod to the past, I don't necessarily know that the person that didn't see the previous photo would notice that, but that's why the arches are there. It is a nice gesture that they tried to tie it back. And I think it starts to give that character to Main Street that has been lacking. Since a lot of these facades that were originally distinct, were covered up and made uniform. So, I firmly support this nomination.

Boardmember Bingham: I'm going to date myself here, but I actually did go to Strauch Stationers back in the day. So it is quite a change. I have to say, in the beginning, I was like oh my gosh what are they doing, but I think it's such an exciting change. And I really think that it is like a little foresight into what are we want our Main Street to look like. So I think it's great.

Boardmember Babos: I agree with everyone else, I never saw the original building either. But I think mimicking the concave shape, or the convex cape, with a concave shape, really is a nice nod to the past. Just the fact that they're putting outdoor patios on Main Street is something that's severely lacking down there and I think that will be a huge benefit. I've not been in it, but looking at the photographs, the exposed brick inside is a wonderful feature. And again, I think it's also a very nice project and well done nomination.

Boardmember Dahlke: Adaptive reuse is one of my favorite things under the umbrella of historic preservation. This is really great, it's just added so much character and I think it will inspire so many more interesting things that happen in the future on Main. And I can tell you, there's a lot of young people moving into Northwest Mesa, and they're all telling me how much more they're enjoying going downtown. And they're really focusing on that and not going to Tempe or Scottsdale. So this is something good not only for Historic Preservation, but the City's revitalization and as a whole downtown.

Chair Benzing: I think this nomination and first one for the Hidden House, they're both significant for being physical structures. Obviously, there's an energy about on the Washington Escobedo Committee that has energy to it. But with these two as physical structures, you can just feel that energy and excitement when you talk to people about them. You can go visit them and feel what these two projects have done for their specific areas. So, it's very nice. Does anybody else have anything to add to 12 West?

Arianna Urban: Okay, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we'll move on to our last application. This is for the new construction at the Grove on Main, the project surrounding the Temple Historic District at the corner of Mesa and Main Streets. This was nominated under one of our new categories this year for infill construction in historic contexts.

Chair Benzing: I would like to comment last on this one since I was involved in some of the early discussions as this was going through the Preservation board, and I'd like to get some of the people that weren't around for those discussions to give their input first on this one.

Boardmember Bingham: I think I came on the Board just about the time that this was kind of at the height of its discussion. And I think, although controversial, I have driven by there and I think they've done a really nice job of recreating that corner from what it was. So, for infill construction, I think they've done a great job. I think it's a good nomination.

Boardmember Babos: I think it's a very nice project. I have trouble with the idea that it's an infill project because they literally took four and a half acres, I think and recreated them as a new project. I think they did an outstanding job in trying to bring in some of the character of the neighborhood. Personally, I think the four-story buildings along Main are appropriate in an urban context, but I don't know that they necessarily fit the character of the area. And I do think it's a great project, I just don't think of it as anything related to historic preservation because it's a completely new four-and-a-half-acre project from the ground up. That's my opinion on it.

Boardmember Dahlke: It does seem kind of hard to put it in context because of that all the new stuff is going on with it as well. But, I think it's a good nomination, though, I think it's appropriate. And it's just part of the changing dynamics of the area, even though it's hard to get used to in some instances.

Chair Benzing: From my side, I'm going to side with Boardmember Babos. A lot of my perspective when this project was going on was looking at if the items on Main Street were appropriate based on what we as a city we were trying to achieve with downtown redevelopment. A lot of the pushback from the Preservation Board dealt with how we were combining properties in the parcels directly south of the property, for the smaller townhouses and the duplexes. And the effort for Historic Preservation, when it was all decided upon, was going to be more a record of what was there. There wasn't much that was preserved. It was more combining lots to enlarge development, and, understandably, some of it was to achieve some of their goals with underground parking. I just don't know if it falls under a category for infill construction. I have a hard time awarding it because I think it sets a precedence that we don't want to put out there of, you know, calling properties run down in order to build new and larger developments, rather than properties like the

Hidden House, or even the 12 West project where they've been able to do adaptive reuse. That's just my two cents on it, being involved in a lot of those discussions.

Boardmember Bingham: I was troubled by the number of homes that they demolished to complete this project. And I think a lot of it happened in a way that the Board wasn't really able to participate in. So although I think it looks fine, I think the way it was accomplished, I still do have some struggles with it. I wasn't sure how far where to go with that conversation, but just kind of adding to what you were saying.

Chair Benzing: I just don't feel it fits nicely in one of the historic preservation boxes. As an infill construction, it's to remember that this is a ground up, brand new project that takes some cues from the historic neighborhoods, but it is definitely not integrated within it. It's an extension, almost, of where the historic neighborhood stops. I don't know if anybody has any other comments on any of the four nominations. Should we take them each to vote then?

Arianna Urban: Yes, Chair Benzing I think we'll go one by one.

Chair Benzing: So we'll start out with the Hidden House which is under restoration, preservation and rehabilitation.

AYES: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf—Desai

ABSTAIN: Nelson

Moving into the next one, which is the Washington Escobedo neighborhood Advisory Committee, for local preservationist.

AYES: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf—Desai

ABSTAIN: Nelson

We'll move on to 12 West which is nominated for adaptive reuse.

AYES: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf—Desai

ABSTAIN: Nelson

And then the final nomination is for the Grove on Main, nominated for infill construction.

AYES: None

NAYS: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf—Desai

ABSTAIN: Nelson

So we have in total three awards this year, going to the Hidden House, the Washington Escobedo Neighborhood Advisory Committee, and 12 West Main. So congratulations to those three award winners.

Boardmember Dahlke: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question? What do we do as a response to the Grove? Do we provide some sort of reasoning for not approving the nomination? Or how does that work?

Chair Benzing: That is a good question. Do we normally provide a letter?

Dr. Nana Appiah: Chair, Members of the Board, my recommendation is because we didn't receive the level of applications, if we can find a way of recognition, it doesn't have to be an award per se, but just a participatory significance or something to appreciate the effort in making a nomination. I think that will be good.

Chair Benzing: Okay. I agree with that. I think we all kind of are in agreeance of it being a nice project on Main Street. It just doesn't fit within the categories of a preservation award. Is that something Arianna that you'd like to draft up the letter? Would you like me to draft up a letter for some of these?

Arianna Urban: Chair Benzing, I'll go ahead and draft up the letters for the for the winners and for the Grove as well.

Boardmember Babos: I just want to reiterate, I do think it's a very nice project. I just don't think it fits in with the categories, as Chair Benzing said.

Dr. Appiah: When are we doing the Council presentation for these items?

Arianna Urban: We'll have to talk to the Council staff to see what that might look like.

Dr. Appiah: So when we do the recognition at Council, it will be good to just mention the number of projects that were submitted, so that all at least get recognition for the submission.

Chair Benzing: I agree. In the past, have we given a type of certificate for the awards?

Arianna Urban: Yes, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board in the past, we actually give them a little glass sculpture, so we'll be able to get those ordered and we'll have to figure out some sort of ceremony. I know in the past perhaps, even last year, we had talked about maybe in lieu of that printing banners or yard signs that could be put up outside the buildings in recognition instead, if a ceremony isn't able to happen until the fall.

Chair Benzing: I mean, from the three that we've awarded, seems like they would need different recognition. For the Hidden House, it might be nice to do a yard sign for them. There might be something for the Washington Escobedo Neighborhood Advisory Committee we could put at the entrance of the neighborhood and recognize it for people passing by.

Chair Benzing: And then for 12 West, it might be nice, just even to give them something that's printed and framed along with the glass award that they could either put in the window or hang behind a service station or something that's highly visible that really recognizes their contribution to the street.

Arianna Urban: Yeah, certainly. That sounds good.

Chair Benzing: Does anybody have anything else they want to discuss on the Preservation Awards, While we're on that topic?

Boardmember Babos: I have a question. I don't know if Bruce is still on; as I drove through the Washington-Escobedo neighborhood. A couple months ago, he talked about the apartments that were built for the black pilots at Williams. And as I drove through where I thought they would be, there was relatively new buildings. Is that the same ones that they've remodeled? Or were they torn down and replaced? They're on Hibbert I think.

Arianna Urban: That's a good question. Mr. Nelson, you can go ahead and participate now that that the voting has concluded.

Boardmember Bruce Nelson: Hi everyone. Okay, to answer your question, yes. The first set of apartments were on Pasadena, and then the second set was on Hibbert. And so what we did was, when the builder came in with the developer, it was really great and he worked with us when we asked him to save some of them. So we saved four of the buildings. One is the office one is a community center for the neighborhood there, one is a gym, and one is the Escobedo heritage room. So, that's what's there now, at that location, but it was Pasadena first and then Hibbert came later.

Boardmember Babos: Thank you.

Boardmember Nelson: I have a question. I know you're finished with the voting and have this done. I have lots of stories about different places, am I allowed to say that or am I not?

Arianna Urban: Mr. Nelson, we'll, we'll have to move on right now just because of the agenda items written as such. But what we would love to do, perhaps in the fall, is do a retreat and a walking tour and have you as our guide showing us around your neighborhood and telling us your story. So unfortunately, unfortunately, we do have to stick to the agenda for today.

Boardmember Nelson: No problem. I was it was more specific to the places that have been nominated about those, but that's okay. I understand.

Dr. Appiah: Chair, Members of the Board, we can agendize that next time.

Chair Benzing: That would be great.

Bruce Nelson: Sounds good.

Chair Benzing: I'm going to jump back for you Mr. Nelson. The only item of really substance was discussing item number four, which was the annual retreat and we discussed that we were all set for the 26th of June and will circulate the draft agenda and discuss any additions or subtractions from it at next month's meeting.

Bruce Nelson: I apologize again for coming late. I hadn't had Zoom problems until now.

Chair Benzing: No problem at all. The agenda for the last retreat was pretty broad. If there's anything that anyone would like to add to the agenda, we'll just make sure we talk about it next

month. So, we're covered on that. Okay, moving on to item number six, which is the historic preservation officer updates.

6. Historic Preservation Officer Updates

a. Status of the Historic Design Guidelines and Zoning Ordinance project.

Arianna Urban: Chair Benzing and Members of the Board. The only update we have for you this evening is just a quick review of the status of our design guidelines and zoning ordinance project.

Like I mentioned at the last meeting, we had received a rough draft a first draft of the design guidelines from the consultant and have finished our thorough review of that draft, returned it to the consultant and we'll be scheduling a rendezvous with them in the next week or two, to really dig in and make sure that that everything makes it into the design guidelines that we'd like to see. So after this first draft, our plan is to be able to circulate it to the Board Members, and have it have it ready for a wider review.

Chair Benzing: Could you discuss a little more about the overall community input with the draft?

Arianna Urban: Yes, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we have certainly taken that into consideration, especially the things we heard from the community at the community Zoom that we did. We have already been planning for our next community meeting when we're able to actually present the content of the guidelines and discuss it a little more in depth. We certainly understand that we need to shift our approach in terms of in terms of how we reach the community the language that we use to present to present the information

Dr. Appiah: Chair, Boardmembers, one of the things we are going to do is to go back to the community to present the content of the information. We did receive the initial draft, but we needed to help clean it up before it even gets out there. So, once the document is cleaned up, we are going to go back to the community and present the content. And also post the document online for to receive comments within a certain period of time.

Arianna Urban: We'll be we'll be doing another postcard mailing. So every single property in every single historic district will receive notice of the project and the availability of the design guidelines online. It'd be happy to print out a copy for anyone that might not be able to access it online as well. So we will want to we just want to make sure we can communicate as much as possible.

Chair Benzing: Thank you for sharing. Were there any other items in your update?

Arianna Urban: That's all we've got today.

7. Hear current events summaries including reports from Boardmembers on museums, exhibits, committees, and/or events related to historic preservation.

Chair Benzing: I don't know if anybody has anything to share. It's been a fairly low key month in that front, so for myself so I have nothing.

Boardmember Babos: Just again, another comment. Driving here I noticed they're doing work on the library, and with stairs exposed and it just looks awesome from the street, so can't wait for that project to be finished as well.

Chair Benzing: I haven't driven by that side of that site in a few months, so I'm going to have to make my way down on that side, because that was the most exciting thing about that project was that stair.

Boardmember Nelson: There was one kind of exciting happening with the Mesa Historical Museum. This late summer, early fall, they are doing probably the first exhibition about multiculturalism in Mesa. They're putting it together now, and looking throughout the whole city, trying to look at the different neighborhoods and different perspectives of growing up in Mesa, which is going to be kind of interesting. So that's happening for the probably the first time at that museum or any of our museums, something actually inclusive like that. So that's an exciting thing to announce.

Chair Benzing: Yeah, I look forward to seeing that.

Boardmember Bingham: For those of you that aren't aware of the El Charro Mexican restaurant that's been in Mesa for 60 some years and shut down for several years, it's getting ready to open tomorrow. It's takeout only, but we're looking forward to actually being back in there. So that's exciting.

Boardmember Nelson: Back in 19 52 or '53 Mr. Cleo Thompson, along with other African Americans went down and protested against them, because they were not serving or hiring African Americans in the restaurant. Just a point of information that, don't ask me why, but that information is in my head. But I knew that Mr. Cleo was optimistic, and I knew him personally. And I remember that. But it's a great organization, it's been there ever since I can remember. Just to give some insight because I just have all this stuff in my head.

Chair Benzing: Well, maybe it's a destination for a Board retreat at some point, when they open the inside. It would be interesting to know, you know, where it falls along the timeline of Mesa businesses and its longevity, especially with the building. Absolutely.

8. Future agenda items

Chair Benzing: I know we wanted to put on there, like we discussed, some elaboration on the nominee sites from Boardmember Nelson next month. Then we also have the retreat agenda to discuss and finalize.

Arianna Urban: Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, I also have been in contact with the new the new owners of the Woman's Club, and they would love to come and Zoom into the Board meeting and meet all of you. They're very, very excited and grateful to be operating the building and to be part of the community. So well, we will likely have them on the agenda as well.

Chair Benzing: Perfect.

9. Adjournment

Boardmember Bingham: I moved to adjourn.

Jim Babos: I second.

AYES: Benzing-Bingham-Babos-Dahlke-Nelson

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Schaffer-Metcalf, Desai