

Historic Preservation Board



Minutes

Virtual Platform
57 E 1st St

Date: April 5, 2022 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Chair
Jim Babos, Vice-Chair
Bruce Nelson
Jocelyn Skogebo
BJ Parsons

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Nana Appiah
Michelle Dahlke
Charlotte McDermott

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Barbara Bingham

GUESTS:

Vic Linoff

(*Board members and staff participated in the meeting through the use of telephonic and audio conference equipment.)

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Benzing

We're going to call the April 5th Historic Preservation Board meeting to order at 6:02 pm. The first order of business is we have a new Board member, Ms. BJ Parsons. If you'd like to give a brief introduction, then we can go around the table and introduce ourselves to you.

Boardmember Parsons

I will make it very brief. I've lived here for almost two and a half years. Moved here from California. I've always been really involved in community. My background is in Real Estate. I used to flip turn-of-the-century homes in Denver and Colorado Springs, so this is very passionate for me. I'm thrilled to be on the Board and I'm looking forward to it. Thank you.

Chair Benzing

Great. We're thrilled to have you. A little bit about myself, I've been on the Board for a little bit over six years now. I'm a longtime Mesa resident. I'm a local Architect. I've dealt with different historical preservation projects outside of the Arizona area, both on the East Coast and some stuff overseas in Europe. And that's kind of how my passion got me to be part of the Board.

Vice-Chair Babos

I'm Jim Babos. I'm also a local Architect. I've lived in Mesa since 90, I think, originally from New Jersey. I came out here to go to graduate school at ASU. I have a fondness for history in general, and being an Architect, buildings in particular. I've been on the Board about a year and welcome you aboard also.

Boardmember Bruce Nelson

I'm Bruce Nelson. I'm a resident of Mesa. I grew up here in the one segregated community known as Washington-Escobedo. I grew up there. I've been on the Board, I don't know, nine months or something. It's new to me. I'm still not sure why they asked me to come because I'm an Artist. I get in trouble a lot when I ask questions. They check me and tell me what I'm supposed to be doing. But I am a Documentary Filmmaker and Curator. So being in one of the Heritage neighborhoods, it seemed like a good fit, I guess. Welcome aboard and we'll see what happens.

Boardmember Skogebo

Hello, I'm Jocelyn Skogebo and I'm a local Interior Designer. I moved out here from Arkansas to go to ASU and study Interior Design. I live here in the West Second Street Historic District. I've remodeled a number of homes and there's a great passion there. We're thrilled you're here.

Michelle Dahlke

We had the pleasure of meeting each other but I just wanted to remind you, I'm the Principal Planner in the current Planning Division in the Planning department. So, if you ever need anything you know how to find me. You've got my email and phone number. Thank you.

Charlotte McDermott

Good evening. I'm Charlotte McDermott. I'm one of the Assistant City Attorneys for the City of Mesa. Welcome aboard.

2. Approval of the minutes from the March 1, 2021 Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Chair Benzing

Item number two is approval of the minutes from March 1st. Did anybody have any edits that need to be made on the minutes? If there are no comments, do I have a motion to approve the minutes?

Boardmember Nelson

I'll make a motion to approve the minutes.

Boardmember Skogebo

I second that.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Bingham

3. Items from citizens present.

Chair Benzing

The next item, number three, is items from citizens present. Mr. Linoff, did you have anything you'd like to share tonight? Then just for posterity, can you state your name and address?

Vic Linoff

Vic Linoff, 628 North Center Street. Welcome to the Board. Just by way of my background, I Chaired this Board for the first 11 years through its infancy and development into a full-fledged organization. Which was long time. I just wanted to update you. We've been talking about the neon and the Neon Sign Park. I think we are very close now to be able to let everyone know of a location that's selected. We're working closely with Jeff McVay. He just contacted me yesterday and we'll be setting up a meeting, I think with the City Manager, within the next two weeks. So, by the time next month rolls around we may be able to announce the location. I don't want to get ahead of anything because I'm not sure how the city feels about the various locations. But frankly, wherever we wind up with the signs, I think that's going to be an asset to the downtown and is going to be a very big attraction. Neon right now is huge around the country. That's it. And no report on Buckhorn unfortunately.

Chair Benzing

Thank you for sharing.

4. Historic Preservation Officer's update.

Chair Benzing

Moving on to item number four, which is Historic Preservation Officer's update.

Dr. Nana Appiah

Chair, Board members, I'm really looking forward to relinquishing this title to one of my staff members in the coming weeks as I have so many titles now. On that note, I'm excited to announce that we've actually hired a new Historic Preservation Officer. She will be starting on April 18th. We were just informed a few hours ago that they've been able to work with her on a starting date. We will give you more details when she starts. Hopefully, she'll be here for next month's meeting so we can introduce her. We're excited to have her. She has a Masters degree in Historic Preservation and has worked in the metro area for a while. We will be basically introducing her to the Board in May.

Then the second update I have is, I know it's not agendized so we cannot discuss it, but I'm really looking forward to bringing back the final Historic Preservation Design Guidelines and the zoning text amendments sometime in June so we can go to Planning & Zoning Board and the City Council. Because it's really our goal to wrap this up and finish our project before the end of the year. Those are the updates that I have for you. Thank you.

5. Discuss the 2022 Historic Preservation Essay and Video Contest.

Chair Benzing

Thank you. Okay, moving on to item number five, discuss the 2022 Historic Preservation Essay and Video Contest. I'm not sure if you all got the email from Ms. Dahlke. We had about 19 submittals for the writing which are in front of you and one video essay, that was emailed. We are looking at reviewing these over the course of the next month then coming to the next meeting and voting on the winners. I believe May 16th is the City Council meeting after that.

Michelle Dahlke

That meeting hasn't been set in stone. We'll be coordinating with the Mayor's office. But that is what we would like to shoot for. So pretty soon after you make your votes.

Chair Benzing

And I know we've talked about in the past, May being Historic Preservation Month being a good way to get in front of Council and keep promoting the program. Even though it was about a month and a half ago that we did the 2021 Awards presentation. I know that 19 submittals is a very good turnout. It's all from one school. It looks like it's from one instructor possibly they're all fifth graders from Edison.

Michelle Dahlke

There are a few sixth graders Mr. Chairman and then it's a 10th grader who submitted the video essay.

Chair Benzing

Does anybody have any objections to reviewing and coming with, I'd say, a list of your top five ranked and we then we can discuss? I think last year, if I stand corrected, we awarded three essays and one video.

Michelle Dahlke

Yes.

Boardmember Nelson

Will we be getting these electronically as well?

Michelle Dahlke

I'd be happy to send them to you electronically.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, that'd be great. Thank you.

Vice-Chair Babos

The submittals are closed right? So, the video portion is one.

Michelle Dahlke

Correct.

Chair Babos

Okay. I did look at it. It was excellent.

Michelle Dahlke

The deadline was on the 31st of March for all the submittals.

Chair Benzing

Boardmember Parsons, I don't know if we discussed it last meeting, but the idea behind the essay contest is there's a portion that you can either do historical documentation or a fictional story based in a historical setting. There's a number of topics that we usually give them to choose from each year. Then it's based on their research. Generally, they're younger, elementary, fourth, fifth, and I believe sixth grade. Some of it's based on grammar. A lot is based on content and how they've weaved the historical information to the story. But it's one of the tools that we use to try and promote preservation within the upcoming generations in the city.

Michelle Dahlke

Mr. Chairman, and Boardmember Parsons, I'd be happy to send you some examples from last year's winners and send you the criteria for this contest, so you know what to look out for.

Chair Benzing

That'd be great if you can email that to everybody.

Boardmember Nelson

Quick question. I'm trying to remember the grades. Seems like they were all like five, six, and maybe seven. Is just like the first time we've had a high schooler?

Michelle Dahlke

Yeah, I believe so. The video winner last year was in the eighth or ninth grade.

Chair Benzing

I know with the essay we go fourth, fifth and sixth. Then it's junior high to high school for the video.

Boardmember Nelson

Right. We had one from a younger person, I think, for a video last year.

Vice-Chair Babos

And last year, they were blind. We didn't know who wrote them. Correct?

Michelle Dahlke

Oh, that's right.

Chair Benzing

That is correct.

Vice-Chair Babos

So, we'll ignore the cover sheets.

Chair Benzing

Any other comments on the essay contest?

6. Discuss and select topics for the upcoming spring 2022 Historic Preservation Board retreat.

Chair Benzing

Okay, moving on to item number six is discuss topics for the upcoming Preservation Board retreat. I know we have not set a date, given that we are potentially going to meet a new Preservation Officer next month, it's probably best to wait to set that date till next month. But we can continue our list of topics if anybody wants to add any. I know we've discussed our outreach, how we can better have a presence at events. Hold our own events that might promote the preservation program. We've talked about certain trainings based on some of the historic designations or terminology that we use. Different things to that nature.

Boardmember Nelson

I have a question. Do we have some type of documents that we send out to developers that come in looking at the City of Mesa? Do we have something from us that we send them to say, "Hey, these are . . .".

Michelle Dahlke

Well, we have a really good webpage for the City of Mesa Historic Preservation Office. That has a lot of great resources that we refer people to. If you haven't had a chance to explore it, I would suggest in your free time you try to do that. It's got bylaws, it's got rules, regulations, designation information. Some of our past, like I said, essay contest winners, some of our properties that are historically designated, for example.

Boardmember Nelson

Right. But there's nothing that we send to a developer? Just send them the link, that says, "Hey, take a look at this when you come into town". Do we do that?

Nana Appiah

Chair, Board members, that's been one of the goals of the Historic Preservation program. I know in the past, we've gone to talk to the Realtor Associations. Also, we try to educate the community that whenever you see somebody selling a house you need to find and basically inform the Realtor that this is a historic district. They need to contact the Historic Preservation Office. Because Mesa doesn't have a Realtors Association it's difficult to do that. But we've been trying as much as possible to convey that whenever you see the possibility of a house being sold and all that.

Boardmember Nelson

I'm asking if a developer comes into town and wants to do something, do we send them a link to say we recommend you go to the Historic Preservation Board page, or whatever it is, and take a look at that? Do we inform them about that or do we not?

Nana Appiah

Chair, Boardmember Nelson, so when they come in it depends on the district. For example, if you're going to district six, basically Greenfield Development, then there is already a lot of information. You're talking about engineering standards, you're talking about Greenfield, and all that so unless it's really specific to a historic district, we don't really communicate that information to them. But most of the time, they are all familiar with our website, like Michelle is saying, and all the other things to look for.

Chair Benzing

That seems like something that we could discuss as far as like a welcome packet. Something brief.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, like Site 17 was changed a bunch of times. I was on a Zoom, and they were talking about the two historic districts. I thought, well, we haven't heard from them, or do they know? And they were like, we'd like to know more. So maybe it's a topic that we should talk about it at the retreat. So how we can put together some type of welcoming. Here it is and these are some places, you know, that's all I'm asking for.

Chair Benzing

Let's put that down on the agenda for the retreat then. I know, at least at the last couple, we've always talked about the website and taking more of a critical eye. Talk about things we've heard are kind of stumbling blocks for people as they try to navigate our information and they might not find. We always take a critical eye and kind of see where we might possibly be able to update or offer some advice to make the inner workings of it better. Because there is a lot of information on the website. It's always been kind of the key to everything is dragging everybody back to that. So that's probably should be a topic too. Just seeing where we might make it even more efficient than it currently is.

Vice-Chair Babos

I apologize for missing last month's meeting. I did read through the minutes. I know there was discussion about the CLG and what it does and so on so forth. The one thing that was brought up and I'd like to make sure is on the agenda and I don't have any problem going over what the Board's supposed to do, what we can and can't do, proper procedures. Then if you want to hit on the CLG and some of those other things, but especially with the new members, and it's not bad for a refresher for us to the rules and regulations of the basic operation of the Board. I think that'd be a good idea.

Chair Benzing

Okay, do we have any more? Does anybody else want to add something? I think we'll at least have another month before we set a date. We can keep this topic on there in case anybody thinks of anything over the next month.

7. Hear reports from Board Members on museums, exhibits, committees and/or events related to Historic Preservation.

Chair Benzing

Okay, then, moving on to item number seven is hear any current events from Board members based on museums, exhibits, committees, and any other related Historic Preservation items.

Boardmember Nelson

I guess I better tell you. May 7th I will be unveiling some portraits. It's called Matriarchs of Washington Park. I've been putting together an exhibit and so it's May 7th at the Alston house. I will be unveiling about 12 to 15 portraits. It looked at women that persevered racism in Mesa. The criteria that I looked at were women who were born in the 1920s and earlier, because I did the Veterans exhibit and that was the cut off. So that'll be May 7th. If you happen to be around the Alston house it starts at 10 o'clock. It'll be about four o'clock and we'll unveil the portraits, and I will tell some of their stories. The exhibit is growing. Then in June, we'll have more portraits and more stories hopefully. I'm talking to Save the Family, maybe doing something there. Then ASU is talking about doing it in the fall, it will be the bigger exhibit. I've just really tried to give like a biography of some of the women and the struggles they had things and that they overcame at a time. So that's happening. Hopefully, some of you will come out to see it. Understand if you don't, but I'm telling you it's there.

Chair Benzing

Great. Let's see last week, the American Institute of Architects Archive Committee had their annual historic event. It was a Zoom. It was based on women in Architecture. Three women who were prominent, mostly in Tucson, from the 30s up until the 80s. They are posting it at some point on the American Institute of Architects Arizona website. I have not checked to see it's up there. It was a great program. They were three business owners. Design leaders at the time. It's just a very interesting take to see how it progressed. All three were licensed, there were many other that weren't licensed at the time. But at the time, the first two were the sole licensed women in Arizona to practice Architecture. That was a very good presentation presented by three current prominent Arizona Architects, women Architects. If anybody would like to check that out, again, it's going to be posted. I'm just not sure if it's up yet or not.

Vice-Chair Babos

Is it on the AIA Arizona website?

Chair Benzing

Yes. Any other updates or events currently?

8. Future agenda items.

Chair Benzing

Okay, moving on to item number eight. Which is future agenda items. Going back to Mr. Linoff's comment about the Neon Park, if there is an update, that'd be great. If the city is willing to share the time, we can agendize that item. I guess I'll leave that up to the city, based on the comfort level of the information coming out of it, if it can be open for questions on discussion. Then I know Dr. Appiah said that Design Guidelines were June for the draft. So, I guess that'll be the following month, not May's agenda, to discuss those. Anybody else have anything?

Boardmember Nelson

Something just occurred to me as a future agenda, maybe to talk about. While I was on the Zoom meeting last night, I realized that Mesa was the first city in Arizona to adopt MLK Street. It's only about three feet long. But still, we were the first. And that's pretty major, I think, for our city. As the development happens over here, we're talking about expanding it. Maybe it's something we should have on the agenda. To discuss how we can explore that and exploit that to the advantage of the city. Being a historic neighborhood. Based on that maybe something we should talk about. Because it's becoming popular. I think Tucson did something and Phoenix has done something and now we got this little MLK place, kind of behind a tree. Be great to kind of do more with it. So maybe we should discuss that.

Chair Benzing

I agree.

Vice-Chair Babos

Where is it?

Boardmember Nelson

It's off of Center Street, in between University and 1st, where the amphitheater is. There's a little street right there. It's right there.

Boardmember Skogebo

It's by the COVID testing site.

Vice-Chair Babos

And what's the name of the street?

Boardmember Nelson

It's MLK Way. I think we're calling it the MLK Way. The idea was that we get something that seemed unimportant, which was great, because people were like, oh, yeah, put it over there. But the idea was, hopefully that Site 17 would develop and then the street could run through and have a bigger impact. If you ever get a chance, go by it and wave at it.

Chair Benzing

Well, it is a good month to bring it up since we're on the anniversary. So yes, perfect month. That would be a good thing to discuss, especially given Site 17, hopefully taking off in the next couple of years. Anybody else have any other agenda items?

Boardmember Skogebo

I have a question. I was wondering every time we have this list of hear current events, summaries from local museums and such. Do we have Board members that become a liaison between like the Mesa Historical Museum, so that there's a touch point?

Chair Benzing

We have had members that have been on the Board there. I don't think currently anybody's involved.

Boardmember Skogebo

I meant more, if there's something going on that we want to promote or talk about, do they reach out to us?

Chair Benzing

We've lost that connection. But that would be a good thing too.

Boardmember Skogebo

It might be something to talk about.

Chair Benzing

Our connection is through Mr. Linoff over there. But as a Board, I think we've we had a few that were in the past.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, I've been over there a couple of times. They had an exhibit, multicultural. I think I reminded folks to try to come and see it. It's still there. If you ever want to go by and check it out. So yeah, I talk to them on a regular basis. I try to get them to update us on what's happening there. So yeah.

Boardmember Skogebo

Well, I guess what I'm saying is I'd be willing to reach out once a month or whoever.

Boardmember Nelson

Absolutely. I'll give you, her contact.

Boardmember Skogebo

Okay.

Chair Benzing

Any other agenda items for June? Sorry, May? I'm jumping ahead.

Boardmember Nelson

Oh yeah, I guess for May we should probably be talking about it. Last June, we got the proclamation for Juneteenth. We're coming up on its anniversary. Maybe we should talk about doing to remember that somehow. It was great that the Mayor came out and they got this plaque and everything. Right now, I don't know that there's any events even being planned that I know of. So maybe that's something we should kind of figure out. What's going on. I'll be planning stuff, but maybe as a city we should plan something.

Chair Benzing

Definitely. Let's put that on the agenda.

Boardmember Nelson

Oh, go back, I forgot about recognizing the military. What do they call it? Honor medals or something honoring the military. They had reached out to me and gave me five people to nominate, and they will be selected. So, I gave them five. I think it's probably the first time that we've had this many folks of color that they're going to honor during Memorial Day and then again on Veterans Day with the big banners. Which is kind of cool. They'll be letting me know when that happens, two weeks out. That was really good. Hopefully in the future they'll be reaching out again because we've got about 65 different folks. I can give them five every year. It would really help.

Chair Benzing

Terrific.

9. Adjournment.

Chair Benzing

If there are no more agenda items, do I have a motion to adjourn?

Vice-Chair Babos

I make a motion to adjourn.

Boardmember Skogebo

Second.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Bingham

Chair Benzing

This meeting for April 5th is adjourned at 6:30.