

Historic Preservation Board



Minutes

Hybrid Platform
57 E 1st St

Date: June 7, 2022 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Chair
Bruce Nelson
Jocelyn Skogebo
BJ Parsons

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jim Babos, Vice-Chair
Barbara Bingham

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Nana Appiah
Charlotte McDermott
Jeff McVay
Michelle Dahlke
Maura Jackson

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'll call the meeting to order for June 2022 of the Historic Preservation Board.

2. Approval of the minutes from the May 3, 2022 Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Chair Benzing

Anybody have any revisions that need to be made based on the minutes that were distributed? Do we have a motion to approve minutes?

Boardmember Nelson

I'll make a motion to approve the minutes from the last session which was May 3rd.

Boardmember Skogebo

I second that.

AYES: Benzing-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Babos-Bingham

3. Items from citizens present.*

Chair Benzing

I do not believe we have any cards or fans in the audience. So, we will move on to item number four, which is Historic Preservation Officer updates.

4. Historic Preservation Officer's Updates.

(The items in the Historic Preservation Officer's updates are not for Board discussion and no Board action will be taken on the updated items.)

Michelle Dahlke

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the Board. A few updates for you. I wanted to let you know that Barbara Bingham, this would have been her last meeting tonight on her first term, but due to other obligations, she's not able to serve a second term. She wanted me to express her happiness at working with all of you and she'll miss you. She hopes to see you soon and keep in touch. She wanted me to express that to you all. We're sad to see her go but we were glad to have her on the Board. She did a good job.

That leads to the status of the new Board member search. We have received some applications and made one recommendation to the City Clerk's Office for a Board member. As soon as we hear back from the City Clerk's Office, we'll give you an update on that. That will leave one more vacancy on the Board, hopefully if that one is filled, so we'll continue to research applications received for that position.

The next item here is we're going to cancel the July meeting due to a conflict with the City Council's need of this room. So, we'll just see you in August. It's a little summer break.

Then the other item here is with respect to the retreat that we are going to have in late summer, early fall. If you have any other items that you want to see on the retreat that we haven't discussed already, if you could email me individually, not as a group, then we'll keep track of that. Then when we come back and see you in August, we hope to have a full agenda for your review for that retreat.

Chair Benzing

Sounds good.

Michelle Dahlke

It looks like Mr. Appiah has some additional updates.

Dr. Nana Appiah

No. Chair, Board members, Michelle, I just want to remind you that it's actually item number six to discuss and select a possible date for the Historic Preservation Board retreat.

Michelle Dahlke

We were just going to discuss the date. This request wasn't agendaized, so Charlotte McDermott recommended we throw it into the Director's update section.

Dr. Nana Appiah

I guess I missed my chance to speak during the citizens' portion. Next time I will capitalize on that.

Michelle Dahlke

Perhaps the Board members would like to hear from you.

Chair Benzing

If you would like to discuss under citizens items . . .

Dr. Nana Appiah

No. No.

Michelle Dahlke

That's all the updates that I have for you today.

5. Hear a presentation and discuss a proposed neon sign park known as “Mesa’s Neon Neighborhood”. Presentation to be given by the Mesa Preservation Foundation.

Chair Benzing

Okay, so moving on to item number five. It's hear and discuss a presentation on the neon sign park known as Mesa Neon Sign Neighborhood, given by the Mesa Preservation Foundation and Mr. Vic Linoff.

Vic Linoff

Good evening.

Chair Benzing.

Good evening.

Vic Linoff

Welcome to summer.

Chair Benzing

It's here.

Vic Linoff

I appreciate this opportunity as we've talked about this for so long and you've never had a chance to see anything. I'm going to go through quite a few slides, but hopefully quickly, to give you some idea of the thought process. How do you conceive of finding a public display for neon? I have used very good graphics when I go out in public and do these presentations. I'm not going to go into any history of neon. That is interesting on its own and not nearly as old as people think. In fact, it's just about 100 years old for commercial use. It was discovered in the 19th century, but didn't really come into use until the second decade of the 20th century here in the United States. But you can see once it took off, it was highly embraced.

This slide of course is Times Square in New York City. It also developed very quickly as the highway system came into use in about 1927. It was the development of the federal highway system. These neon signs provided the greatest amount of light for people to see at some great distance as they were traveling. It has been around for almost 100 years. It suffered some setbacks in many cities in the 80s and 90s when communities thought neon was garish and began outlawing it in signage. But it has since come back. Mesa is one of the cities that has a neon sign ordinance, which encourages keeping neon signs and now allows for the installation of new signs. Neon is still one of the ways that in terms of public display is still used for commercial use.

This is a Broadway Street in Nashville, Tennessee, and you can see how neon brings an area or district to life. There's nothing else that has the brilliance of neon. It's available in a range of over 40 colors. It's kind of complex, but any color you want really can be displayed in neon. I want to draw your attention to the Memphis sign there. I'll get more into it in a little bit. That's a new sign. But some communities are highlighting their name in neon. Tucson does it. Mesa, and I'll talk about it, had a neon sign that spanned Main Street. We're still looking for a photograph of it. It was installed in the 1930s. In doing all this, we'd like to see that sign replicated. It's just letters. Beale Street in Memphis, this is somewhat akin to Main Street, in that there are some similar activities that take place along Beale Street. One of which is a motorcycle night, just like we have here. Neon helps bring in activities that a street might not have otherwise. It adds to the ambient light, it adds to the color and to the background. They get a ton of motorcycles when they do their event.

Fremont Street in Las Vegas is well known. That was the heart of the original part of Las Vegas. Neon certainly has been restored. You saw daylight and what it looks like at night. There's just a really great vibrancy to neon.

Reno, Nevada is another city that uses neon very effectively. It even creates an entrance to the district with a sign like "The biggest little city in the world".

Then there are museums that display neon indoors and outdoors. Some signs are just too big to put in a building. This is a sign museum that has been proposed for Las Vegas. It hasn't been built. But it gives you a sense of what neon can look like in the public right of way.

Edmonton Canada is one of my favorites, the building on the left, I'm not sure what it is, has installed a metal grid on which signs that would normally go on poles could be and are installed on this grid. All these signs were wall type signs, double sided, that sort of thing. It really makes an interesting presentation and draws a lot of people to it. This slide is just to give you a sense of what they work with in a place like Edmonton or anywhere where signs are restored. This is often what they look like when they're first acquired. There's a lot of work and expense that goes in. On the left you see that sign being installed. One of the things in what we are proposing to do is to identify the signs, because once they've been taken down from a business, they lose their context. It's important for visitors to know the history. In Edmonton, these plaques are beneath the signs that are in that grid. They offer an expansive history of the location and the building on which they were installed.

Main Street, believe it or not, in the 1950s or so have probably more than 100 signs between Country Club and Mesa Drive. Regrettably, virtually every one of them is gone. Anything that we can acquire and save we're happy to do it. But there was a time in Mesa where neon was not in favor and so those signs disappear.

This is just an example of how something like a transit stop can be used for neon. This happens to be an old service station, but it's now used as a transit stop in Calgary, Canada. On the left, you can see how it originally looked. So, it could be placed on the light rail platforms.

Then there are parks. These are all the things we've tried to take into consideration in thinking what would be the best for Mesa. Parks, if there's enough room, really can provide appropriate space for display.

The Neon Mile in Tucson has restored several the early lodging signs of commercial businesses that were along Miracle Mile Road, which was the main highway into Tucson before the freeway. That's in partnership with Pima College and the city.

The biggest success has been the Neon Sign Park in Casa Grande. If you haven't been down there, I suggest making a trip. We are very unhappy with them because a few years ago, they entered, not a contest, but a grant lottery if you will, and tried to get public support. I think the awards were made based on public support. This little rinky, dinky town got \$144,000 from American Express for building out their sign park. They really did a very nice job. The signs are lit up every night. So, if you get down there, it's free. You're welcome to walk through it. It's just off the main drag.

Real parks or larger parks like Greenway Park in Boston is another place where neon is placed on display. There's enough room for people to stand back and get the scale and appreciate it. Here's one from Pulaski County in St. Robert, Missouri. Neon right now is one of the most celebrated things of heritage tourism. People have fallen in love with neon and visitorship to where neon is put on display really increases.

Alleys, if you can find the right ally. This is Printer's Alley in Nashville. They provide the intimate kind of space in which neon displays very well. Fremont Street is over the top and nobody wants to go that far here. Although it would be nice to have Main Street covered with that elaborate display. But next to Times Square of course, Las Vegas is the center of neon. Amsterdam, another city where an alley, it's a pedestrian alley, works very well. China even does it. Dallas has it on a somewhat small scale. But it really pulls an otherwise kind of a dead space into a use. The best of them all is Pueblo, Colorado. If you get up there it's called Pueblo Neon Alley. The installations here were all done privately. A lawyer who has an office in that alley had collected signs, wanted to find a way to display them and started putting them on the buildings. You can see in the foreground this isn't really a luxurious alley. You've got dumpsters and cars around. But this has become so much of an attraction that it's now an event space. There are events, many weekends a year, in and around this alleyway. Our intent is to, not only preserve historic neon, but make it something that brings people into the city. The heritage tourism aspect. You can see that it's not real fancy. This little part of the alley looks very much like some of the back of the buildings along the north side of Main Street. Here are some of the events that take place just in that little alley. Otherwise, there would have been no activity there at all.

Museums are another consideration for displaying neon. There are a couple of them. This is the Hot Rod Museum in Pomona. The signs there are primarily dedicated to things surrounding the automobile, or the highways. Philadelphia has a small storefront neon sign museum. The ones in the windows are signs that were never outdoors. They were meant to be displayed in the window or within a building. This is the one in Cincinnati. This is probably the premier sign museum in the country. Their visitorship is very, very high. It becomes an activity center. This is one of the events that takes place within that building. Another way of displaying is just to have them encased in frames. This is for a collection, privately owned in Cincinnati, Ohio. Glendale, California has an expansive display of neon art in a very modern building. You get some idea of how that might look. These are just some other photographs of it. Some are done privately. Some are done through non-profits; some have municipal affiliations. This is one of the newest in Arizona, it's called the Ignite Sign Art Museum. It's in Tucson. I urge you, if you have an interest and you're down in Tucson to go see it. However, you won't find it. That's just the way it is. It is a very difficult place to find. It's kind of on the west end of Tucson. But a fellow by the name of Jude Cook, who has been in the same business for years, is the one who built this all on his own dime. He's been involved in

restoring signs for others. But this one he did all on his own. It's a fabulous place to visit and he's a great guy.

Locally we've acquired right now, I think about 20 neon signs that would have otherwise gone to the landfill. Thanks to the city they are stored in a secure yard. So secure, they won't even give me a key so I couldn't go in there and hug my signs.

Jeff McVay

I don't think anybody questions our sensibilities there.

Vic Linoff

Yeah, well, I can't even get into it. It's a secure place. They are all anchored, tied together, so that they're protected from the elements and storms and things of that sort.

This is a new one in Dalles Oregon. Love it. It's in a historic building. In its concept it's very similar, not the exterior of the building, but to The Post, the old Federal Building. This is a very tacky thing that I put up a couple of years ago. I'm not that skilled at photoshop to be able to put all those in, but it kind of shows what could happen. This is the interior of the museum in Dalles Oregon. The space is very much like the Federal Building. With high ceilings and those high walls, it's a perfect place on which to display these signs. First was the concept. This is how it kind of looks today. They got it open not long ago.

As I pointed out earlier, sometimes cities will get involved and produce signs that promote their city. This one obviously is from Memphis and it's really a remarkable sign. Nashville has a couple on their main street. Of course, Vegas does also. When Tucson created the Miracle Mile Neon Sign Presentation the city produced this sign for Tucson and it's extravagant. We'd like Mesa, if we can get an image of it, to reproduce the sign from 1930. It was installed and was up for about four years. Then it got vandalized to where it wasn't operating so they decided they would move it closer to town. This was probably around Mesa Drive. It just said "Mesa" and the sign was three feet high, and I think it was about 34 feet long. It was a big sign, but we can't find a picture of it.

Neon produces the opportunity for events, tours, things of that sort. This one is from Glendale, California. I'm just showing some of the related activities that can take place when you have a neon sign display. This is the National Sign Museum. They do very well. It also engages businesses within the community to be sponsors. Here you could see for the one in Dalles, Oregon, some of the people that have invested in making sure that the museum could get open.

This is one of the signs that we were able to acquire. It must be mounted on a wall. This was Bill Johnson's Big Apple. Unfortunately, when they had the auction the sheet metal bull was sold. But the neon was left. It's really a neon rope with brands in neon. We've got it and we just have to find a wall on which we can mount it. Some things were donated. There is a group called the Arizona Vintage Sign Coalition. It is working closely with us. We're ahead of everybody else in the valley. We are willing to accept signs outside of Mesa, because as I said once they're down from their original location, they've lost their context. The Log Cabin Motel and the Sun Valley Motel were saved from demolition, but nothing was done to them. They were donated and we have those in the storage yard. But they're in pretty rough shape. The "Sun" part of it was restored. It's down in the warehouse district now in Phoenix.

Thanks to the enormous help of Jeff and the City Manager's office, I think we are moving forward. What you see here is the area in which we have kind of concluded maybe the best for displaying the neon. It's on MacDonald, north of Main Street and up to Pepper Place. This is the Arizona

Museum of Natural History. The Post is the new name for the Federal Building, it's over here. There's a lot of area in the sidewalks on which these could be installed. We are continuing to acquire them if that's the only way to save them. But we have enough to display in this area. But these areas are also being considered as we acquire more signs over time. I think once we start getting them up, and people are aware, some will donate signs. People often will buy these signs not really realizing how big they are. "Oh, my God, I didn't think it was the length of my house." "What am I going to do it?" "It's not going to go on the living room wall." So, many of the signs are in the backyards.

This slide we are unveiling for the first time with fancy graphics. The scale is not correct. But it gives you just a little bit of a hint and a sense of how these signs might be placed on MacDonald. Not this close. This is just a very rough rendering. We're waiting for the engineering drawings from the city that tells us what's in the ground. There's a lot of technical things that must take place before we can actually install these signs. But if you want an idea of how it might look, this is the first 3d rendering that we've put together.

The question is, how do we move ahead in the future? There are several places you can do research online, roadarch.com. Debra Jane Seltzer is one of the pioneers of documenting neon around the country. She has produced a lot of papers and spoken at very various groups.

Here's the summary. Neon sign museums, collections on public display, and event spaces, these are all the various ways they've come together to save these signs. This kind of represents how much activity is going on around the country. Some of these are very big places, but all of them have been successes wherever they have been installed. So, just some thoughts from others. It's kind of interesting, who has been quoted here. You've got a San Francisco Bay reporter obviously, supporting the idea of neon, the Preservation Action Council of San Jose, and even a developer has recognized the value of displaying neon. So that is just a real quick kind of overview. When we get the engineering drawings and all of that, we'll be able to come up with more definitive renderings for the display. With that, I'm happy to answer any questions, unless I went off base saying something.

Chair Benzing

It is an item that's open for discussion and questions. So, feel free whoever wants to go first.

Boardmember Nelson

I might as well just dive right in. This is great. It's a phenomenal thing that we're doing this. I think it can help the city and bring some people to the city. They celebrate this kind of thing. Have a couple of questions and comments. Were you able to find the Rexall neon sign with "everybody's drugstore" sign at all? Are those available or gone?

Vic Linoff

We are in touch with one fellow that has, I think it's an "everybody's drugstore" sign, but I have not seen it. It's maybe an interior sign, but he said he will donate it to us. Most of the signs, before there was any interest, went to major companies. Paul Millet, who worked for Guerrero-Lindsey in the beginning, they went off on his own. There was a tendency, if a sign came down, to cannibalize it. When we were working on the diving lady, there were definite elements in that sign that Paul Millet had used from previous signs. It was really interesting. One of the transformers that was in the diving lady sign was manufactured long before the sign was installed. He took it out of some other sign and put it into the diving lady. So, either they wind up at landfills or they wind up being cannibalized.

Boardmember Nelson

So, you're still hoping to find those. The reason I asked that question in terms of neon and communities of color, what is the history of that? Because we're talking about history. I'll tell you things that I know and things that are rumored. Like I think those two drugstores, remember they when were built black folks could not go sit down and eat. I'm always like, we celebrate history, we talk about history, and that's a great thing but those things have value to folks of community. I've heard rumors, I haven't sort of documented it, that there were messages in signs, in the colors for communities of color in the neon. Warnings that certain things were going on if you went to this establishment. I haven't verified that. But I was talking to some of the elders when I heard about this and they said when you were traveling, like you've heard of the Green Book, same thing, that when you hit this neon sign you need to make sure you don't go there. We always talk about history, and I guess since I'm the huckleberry here that's what I'm always looking at. I'm always wanting to celebrate things, that's fine, but we need to look at that as well. I think it'd be great to. I think of listening to my documentary when they said Miss Johnson, one day was just sitting in "everybody's drugstore" and everybody was like, wow, she's actually sitting at the counter and eating.

Vic Linoff

I had not heard about messaging in the neon signs. But those are the kinds of stories that when they do go on display, and we provide those information panels, that would be very good. Neon signs are sort of like buildings. When we do tours of buildings, some people look at the architecture, but buildings are built for people. Neon signs are obviously people oriented because they're talking about businesses and things of that sort. But it also represents a highly skilled art form. If you start looking in the old magazines, like Popular Science or Popular Mechanics, particularly in the 30s and 40s there is a plethora of ads for schools that taught how to bend glass and work in neon. It was one of the new trades. In the case of neon and displaying the signs we're celebrating the art form that created them, but also their connection to the local community. That's why we're calling this the Neon Neighborhood because these were the neighborhood signs. And if there's histories, as you're describing, those would be ideal to put on them.

Boardmember Nelson

I think it'd be great because as you said the buildings are about people. Some people could come in, some people couldn't.

Any thoughts or gatherings of the red district neon? Has anything come up here in Mesa? Have we had that yet?

Vic Linoff

Red light district? There was?

Boardmember Nelson

Yes.

Vic Linoff

No.

Boardmember Nelson

I'm sure it was happening. We probably just don't know.

Vic Linoff

Yeah, I'm sure. I don't think there were any signs.

Boardmember Nelson

Well, they would have been disguised.

Vic Linoff

They might have been connected to a bar or something of that sort.

Boardmember Nelson

I think of the Green Frog. When I was a kid, I had heard rumors. My brothers would tell me about the Green Frog right downtown.

Vic Linoff

As I said, there were over 100 signs along Main Street. I kind of regret that I got into it, kind of late. The interest in neon is relatively late. So, the opportunity to save those early signs has long passed. I think if we do this effectively, we'll want to come back and use the Board to create a local Landmark District for neon. That'll just give it another measure of historical significance.

Boardmember Nelson

I think it'd be great. It'd be fun to include those stories. I will ask my brothers more detailed about the Green Frog. But when I was talking about the 50s, things were happening there. I'll point that out. I'm always full of surprises. But I think it's a great idea. So hopefully it can happen.

Vic Linoff

Well, we're working at it. It's not a quick process. I think I mentioned before, we can't even start restoring these signs until we have locations for them. Because once they're restored, they've got to be installed. If you put them back in storage, they're just going to deteriorate. All the timing must be in place and at some point, we'll do some significant fundraising. Some of these signs will be close to \$100,000 to restore and install.

Jeff McVay

Or more in today's market.

Vic Linoff

Yeah, I suppose.

Chair Benzing

Tomorrow's market is even more. We're looking at collecting bigger pieces though, right? I mean, everything we have is large scale. Is there any desire to collect smaller? Like a lot of the ones that you're talking about are smaller window signs and type things.

Boardmember Nelson

Rexall Drugs, it was a big sign. It was outside. They were pretty good size. They're probably gone. I have video of downtown Mesa with that in it and it's in black and white. I'd love to share that with you guys.

Vic Linoff

To answer that question, any sign that we can get, and we do have some interior signs. It just so happens that those tend to, if they survive, go into collections because you can put them in a house. When they're up on a pole, you've got to make a conscious decision to take them down. So, they're pretty safe. I keep reiterating that we really don't want to get these signs. We want to do everything we can to encourage property owners and business owners to keep the signs where they are. But if the choice is let it go to a landfill or save it, then obviously we'll step in and save the

sign. Not because he's (Jeff McVay) here. But we owe a great debt of gratitude to the city. The city has really been a very good partner in making all of this happen. It takes a lot of people to make these kinds of projects work. The city's done well and we're appreciative of that.

Chair Benzing

The location is just prime. Every item that you talked about, past examples, current parks, and interior spaces, that location can offer those if it expands a bit. Who knows what happens if it gets extremely popular? If one of the private businesses wants more of an interior display, there's the south wall or the north wall. Like Milanos and that back alley. If they really see the popularity in what the city's doing . . .

Vic Linoff

Then you've got to be able to work out individual agreements with property owners. But we've even talked about a grid somewhere where we could put wall mounted signs. Don't forget we're acquiring signs from outside of Mesa. I don't know if anyone remembers Maroney's Dry Cleaners, very famous. People have a lot of very fond memories of Maroney's in Phoenix. We just got that sign. We're not competing against anybody else. If they become available, we're very likely to get them. Ultimately, it'll be representative of the entire valley.

Boardmember Nelson

Good luck with it. Nothing about Hobo Joe's or Mervyn's? I haven't heard anything about those.

Vic Linoff

Don't make me cry.

Boardmember Nelson

And the hotel downtown next to Guggy's, nothing?

Vic Linoff

Sunland had called us a few years ago about their sign and we said we'd be interested in it. Then the next thing I saw, it was gone. It's got a little monument out there now for this motel. It was a beautiful big sign with a sun figure. So even in recent years, there are ones that we've been aware of, that we haven't been able to get. But there were some wonderful signs. Keep in mind, Mesa also has probably three of the best signs anywhere in the valley. That's the Buckhorn, the diving lady, and the Kiva.

Jeff McVay

I think Ham Bone beats Kiva.

Vic Linoff

Oh, Ham Bone too. Ham Bone is a great sign. Kiva is good. We're trying also to save the entire Kiva property.

Boardmember Nelson

Good luck. I hope you find the neon from the hotel downtown. That would be great to have. To talk about the history of what that hotel represented as well.

Vic Linoff

If you're traveling or doing anything, and you hear of something, let us know and encourage people to consider donating. For the most part, the signs have all been donated.

Boardmember Nelson

Thanks.

Chair Benzing

What's the rough estimate of a timeline for all these events? Wheels are in motion; they've been in motion forever. Is there something where it's like we're going to kick off fundraising in a year?

Jeff McVay

I feel like this is a good time for me to step in. I came running over here just to make sure that Vic didn't go off the rails and he held it together pretty well. But I still have to play a little bit of the wet blanket roll. All our discussions up to this point with Vic are very supportive. As a city, up through the City Manager, are very supportive. But we have not yet gotten to the point where we can come and identify the funding source, come to City Council, and present and dedicate space. This is the path that we're going down. This is the route that we want to go. The City Manager is willing to go as far as recommending to Council that we put some dollars into this from an infrastructure perspective and even seeding the restoration of a couple signs to start with. But until we have a chance to go and present this to Council, which is where a lot of this preliminary work goes into it, we don't know that we have that full support. We feel pretty good because we gauged our Council. We feel pretty good that that support is going to be there. But we couldn't even start to talk about the timing until we've gotten through some of this preliminary planning work. I mean, we need to know where electric lines are so that we can even hook these things up. We need to identify which signs we think should be rolled out first phase kind of thing. The locations of them. After we figure that out, then we need to put some real money in. I mean, Vic unveiled a 3d rendering to you today but, Brandon, we need like your firm's photorealistic sales pitch.

Vic Linoff

This was just done over the weekend.

Jeff McVay

We've got to visually sell this. Not only to Council but to the public in general. This Board's advocacy is nice to have, but in the end, it's going to take a little while. I've been given the okay to hire a consulting firm to do some of the detailed infrastructure analysis, foundation, placement. After Mesa Preservation Foundation's has the chance to kind of do some similar analysis themselves, from a placement perspective, I've been given the authority to hire somebody. I'm assuming we're probably six months from a plan that we can present to Council. Then from there, we'll be looking at how long it takes to roll that out. There is momentum behind it. I will also mention there's going to be some preliminary design concepts done for the pocket plaza/park that is intended to be incorporated on the backside of The Post. The concepting that's being done with that is going to include a couple, three maybe, of those neon signs to show that not only do we want this on the streets associated with MacDonald and Pepper, but maybe, go beyond that. Turn the corner and use that as a guidepost that gets you then into that little pocket park behind The Post. That helps activate that space as well.

Vic Linoff

Neon forms a good backdrop for entertainment and performances and things of that sort. But to your question, the real challenge, as Jeff laid it out, it's not only the City Council, it's working through the infrastructure issues. There's always that fear, "this is exactly where we want it but there's a nitrogen line running down". Once we do all the engineering and get everything finalized, from there, I would say it would be less than a year before we would have some signs up. Things like the Dairy Queen sign that came down. That's porcelain enamel and it looks exactly the way it

did when it was manufactured in the mid-50s. That said every sign though must be examined, gone through. They all must meet modern codes. It may mean some interior rewiring, that sort of thing. But we can get some of the signs up within a year when we finally say, "we're going to put this sign right here". We can get it serviced and ready to go in a relatively short time for some of them.

Chair Benzing

Well, thank you for expanding on it. I think I should have narrowed my question because you answered it in the first little bit. It was just the next step. He just divulged more than he needed to.

Vic Linoff

Let the record show who I'm pointing at. Then there are people in a certain office in the city that must work out all the legal aspects of this.

Jeff McVay

We don't own these signs.

Chair Benzing

So, we're in the year range, to get the initial engineering analysis and just see the potential for that site that we're roughly looking at, if it's an option?

Jeff McVay

I would like to believe that, without being overly optimistic, that if this has legs and gets Council support that we could be talking about installations happening within a year. We'd like to believe that. I mean, we're slow, as the city everything takes a little bit longer. The complicated part is below the ground. Once we've solved that, we can move faster.

Vic Linoff

Well, the other issues too, is right now the foundation owns the signs, but it doesn't want to. We're trying to find the best place for those signs that might be the DMA. But the issue of insurance, utilities, all those things must be worked out. The stuff that's not so fun. Then they will go up on a periodic basis. Which I think will keep public interest high. We're not going to wait until they're all done. As we get them done, we'll install them, have some ceremonies. I'm very confident this is going to add another measure of visitorship to the downtown. Remember, we're the only place that's got three museums, a Performance Center, all within walking distance of each other and the light rail. The neon will just be another component that will attract people in the downtown. I think we'll keep them here at night. So that's good for the bars and restaurants.

Jeff McVay

Neon could be the connector. Throughout our downtown planning in the last 10 - 15 years, we've always recognized that the downtown is actually very successful individually. Right. Each museum is individually successful. It's where's the connective tissue that makes that individual success become a district wide success. This is one of those investments that could help provide some of that connective tissue, I think.

Vic Linoff

And I think you're also beginning to see, in fact it's starting to show now, many of the new businesses that are opening are installing neon.

Jeff McVay

It does help that the city has paid for all of those.

Vic Linoff

Well, fine here.

Jeff McVay

No, I mean, but that's another thing. The city and all the way up to the City Manager, again, are so supportive of this that we go out and we get grants simply to provide sign grants to businesses, if they want to install a neon sign. We've had two go up in the last week that are from the latest sign grant program. Proof Bread and Pomeroy's. There was another one I'm missing. So, there's some going up right now that are neon signs, that the city has funded.

Vic Linoff

Keep in mind this is a dying breed for commercial use. It's being replaced by LEDs. Well installed and quality LED tubing is almost impossible to tell from neon. But it doesn't represent the artisanship and the craftsmanship. To make a new neon sign takes exactly the kind of experience that it did 50 years ago, 100 years ago when they were first being produced. To know that people are willing to invest in, even the city is supporting it, a much more expensive installation if its neon is really very positive. Love you man.

Jeff McVay

Vic, you're still not getting a key.

Boardmember Skogebo

A couple of questions. First of all, I think the Preservation Foundation should be commended. This is fantastic. It's so exciting. The fact the city of Mesa is behind it is brilliant. I was just curious about The Post. What is the connection there? Is there the potential of having a display area within there? I noticed it was brought up in the presentation.

Vic Linoff

That was something I put together before it even had a name or work was started on it. I would hope that there would be room, to the question about smaller interior signs, that they could go inside the building. Some of them need to. They're not produced in a way that they're meant to be exterior signage. So that's something we'd still have to work out.

Boardmember Skogebo

Just that you had mentioned the area behind it, the pocket park. Then it happening in front of it seems natural. What's the long-term plan for the parking lot across the street from it?

Jeff McVay

On the north side?

Boardmember Skogebo

East side.

Jeff McVay

Oh, the east side. The green parking lot. I'm going to go back one step. The Post is being built out right now as a community event center. That's going to be managed by Parks, Rec, & Commercial Facilities. For when you need an event space, but you don't need a convention center. It's going to be filling in a gap for those smaller scale events. Having signs that are associated with a Neon Sign Museum/Neon Sign Park, inside of The Post is somewhat of a challenge in my mind because

they won't be as publicly accessible as they would be outside. Having said that, The Post itself and its base design has two neon signs incorporated into its design. That will be new. A very large one on the top, on the roof that's angled towards Main Street and MacDonald that just says The Post. Kind of in the same design theme as the Public Market in Seattle's Pike Street Market, very similar. Then one neon window sign identifying above the entrance into The Post. So not to say there isn't opportunities. But I think there could also be opportunities where they're put into some type of protective covering. Whether it's a glass housing or something, and attached to the rear wall of The Post facing out into the plaza. Because we're going to have an overhang that's going to serve as a stage area. I think that there are other ways that we could look at it and still have them publicly accessible.

Now, the green parking lot. The green parking lot is going to be the green parking lot until somebody comes to us with a proposal that wows us enough that we're willing to do something similar to Eco Mesa, that's under construction right now. That was a city's parking lot. As part of their deal, they must replace that parking to go vertical above it. So, until, somebody comes to us and says we got this great idea, or we decide to go out to the market with a great idea it will stay a parking lot.

Boardmember Skogebo

Ok. just seems like a good venue overflow at this point. And what about, because I live a block away, any light pollution? How has that been received in other parks, as far as what you've seen?

Vic Linoff

We've had those discussions. It can be an issue with residential housing nearby. But keep in mind these signs would be on for a more limited amount of time. They go on at dusk and be turned off somewhere, depending on the activities going on in the district, I would say between 11pm and 1 am. But they're very bright. So, it's a very important consideration. And we've talked about that.

Jeff McVay

I don't know that I have too much fear that it's going to bleed far enough north that it's going to go across the street. But we do have apartments being built right next door and it's an urban setting. In another location, we reached out the developer and said, if the neon was to go here, what would be your concerns? Because you just built, say The Grove, do you want that? To their credit, their position is that we built in an urban environment, and we want to be in an urban environment, that's part of an urban environment. So, I think that depends on context, honestly.

Vic Linoff

It's also the kind of sign if it's on continuously for whatever period, it doesn't draw as much attention. If you watch the old movies, the black and white movies, like in New York or Chicago, and you see a neon sign outside the window it's always flashing. It's that flashing that I think causes more concern for people, then if it's just on as a steady light. We don't have any flashing ones. We'll take them but we don't have any right now.

Boardmember Skogebo

Thank you.

Chair Benzing

Anyone else? Well, thank you from all of us on the Board. Thank you both for the work that you've put into this. Especially you Vic over the last 10 - 15 years.

Vic Linoff

Don't go there.

Jeff McVay

It's longer than that.

Chair Benzing

Well, I've only been on here seven, the last seven years. Thank you. It's exciting to see, at least the possibility of coming to a point where it might become a reality.

Vic Linoff

We will look to you, as I say, when we get them up, or start getting them up, to create a district.

Jeff McVay

And some fundraising.

Vic Linoff

Yeah. Lots of fundraising.

Chair Benzing

Sounds good.

Vic Linoff

Thanks for the opportunity. Appreciate it.

Chair Benzing

Okay, moving on to item number six, which is to discuss a date for the Historic Preservation retreat.

6. Discussion and selection of a possible date for the Historic Preservation Board retreat.

Chair Benzing

If you have agenda items, we can just email to Mrs. Dahlke and we can pull that agenda for the next meeting to review and finalize. It seems we're out July, we're going to take a little relief break. I just want to throw out, maybe we should look at a date in September. That seems if we are going to get a new Board member on, they'll at least have one maybe two meetings. That will give us a chance internally to review the agenda at one of the next two Board meetings. Does anybody have any reservations about looking at dates in September? We've typically done a Saturday morning. We've done it where we've back ended the retreat with some sort of little field trip somewhere, sometimes.

Boardmember Nelson

September will be good because ASU will be opening up around that time.

Chair Benzing

Okay.

Boardmember Nelson

That might be a fun field trip to do.

Chair Benzing

Would you guys look into dates that would be available in September?

Michelle Dahlke

Yes, we'll do that. And we're also looking at some locations to present to you to see what you think.

Chair Benzing

Do you think we'll have to have that date locked up before we meet in August? That things will get that booked up with the city? Or do we need to reach out via email and see what everybody's availability is, so we can lock it in?

Michelle Dahlke

Gosh, that is a good question. Maura, would do you think we've talked about this internally? What are your thoughts on that?

Maura Jackson

I think it might be helpful, but I don't know.

Chair Benzing

Well, if you come up with a few dates, if you email the Board, then we can send you back our votes for which weekends work best. Maybe we can come to some consensus before the next meeting, and then just approve it at the next meeting in August.

Maura Jackson

I think that sounds good.

Michelle Dahlke

Charlotte, do you see any problem with that?

Charlotte McDermott

If you're going to email potential dates out, just make sure when you respond back, you respond back individually. So, send out individual emails. Then you can come back to the Board with the proposed dates the Board can then vote on which date works best.

Michelle Dahlke

Okay. Thank you. In the past, do you remember the timeframe that you've had for retreats? We were thinking we have quite a lot on the agenda that we're proposing. But we don't want to take all up of your Saturday either.

Chair Benzing

I believe it's usually been about two, two and a half hours. I think it's been like 9:30 or 10 to about noon.

Michelle Dahlke

Okay.

Chair Benzing

Then we've had lunch at noon, then if we did a little field trip, it was usually after that.

Michelle Dahlke

Okay. All right, we'll put something together.

Chair Benzing

Usually about a three, three-and-a-half-hour commitment is what we've done on a Saturday morning.

Boardmember Parsons

Sounds like a list of things that will be discussed at that time.

Chair Benzing

Yes, it's agendaize the same as a normal Board meeting because it's going to be it's open to the public to attend as well. As you can tell, usually that doesn't happen. But there will be an agenda. That agenda we'll at least review in the August meeting. We can touch on that in item number eight. Okay, it seems like that's the game plan to look at dates in September, email the Board individually, and we'll get back to you on what works best.

Charlotte McDermott

I just want to make a point of clarification. Just make sure when you send an email that you just send it to the staff. That only one Board member sends it to the staff that you don't copy any other Board members so that you're not sending an email to a quorum of the Board. That's the important part to it. Just make sure if you have some proposed dates for this September meeting that you just send an email individually to, is it to you Michelle?

Michelle Dahlke

Right, you can just send it to me then Maura and I will gather the dates up.

Chair Benzing

Similar to your quorum email today?

Michelle Dahlke

Yes. That's exactly right.

Chair Benzing

Moving on to item number seven hear any updates on anything historical preservation related.

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

Boardmember Nelson

A couple of things. The banners honoring the veterans came down. They did go up just before Memorial Day, and they came down just a couple days ago. There were four from Washington Escobedo that they took this year, which was very exciting. It's a bittersweet thing we had submitted Mr. Lloyd Boyd. His son, Jerry Boyd was the first African American Council member. He turned 100 on that Wednesday. The presentation was the following Monday. He was celebrating his birthday on that Saturday, and unfortunately, he was in hospital and then three days later, he passed away. But his banner was up there, and it was really exciting to see that his kids got to see it. So that was a really great historical thing. Probably this time, they had more folks of color than they've ever had. Just so you know. I know to a lot of people it doesn't mean anything to them, but it does in the community. So, it was kind of cool to see. So that was one thing that was happening.

Chair Benzing

Alright. Then do you want to talk about Juneteenth?

Boardmember Nelson

Juneteenth is coming. Last time we were here we were going to do some banners that never happened. I understand. I will be doing a presentation at the Mesa Public Library, opening the 16th. It's a Matriarchs of Washington Park, women who persevere through racism and misogyny in a segregated community. It will open the 16th and will probably be up for the entire month. Juneteenth this year falls on the Sunday. It's kind of strange when that happens. Last year, the Mayor did the declaration. The Zen Nights will be doing their thing on the Friday. That whole weekend, there'll be lots of activities happening. If you can come and see the Matriarchs, I will be screening the documentary, North Town, which is about the community that Saturday.

Chair Benzing

Great.

Michelle Dahlke

I do have a quick follow up on that topic Boardmember Nelson because I know that you mentioned that last time. We did speak with the Mayor's office. Unfortunately, the coordination didn't happen in time to get the banners up and do anything specific like that. But the city is a sponsor at the Zen Night's event. We're hoping that next year, there'll be a lot more time to prepare for Juneteenth with more city sponsored events.

Boardmember Nelson

That's great. It would have been nice to know that. But thank you anyway.

Michelle Dahlke

I didn't know until recently.

Boardmember Nelson

Okay. That's good and that was really a last minute, hail mary kind of thing. I was excited to have that happened. But yeah, now we have time to plan. So that's great. Thank you.

Chair Benzing

If there's nothing else, we'll move to number eight, which is any future agenda items.

8. Future agenda items.**

Boardmember Nelson

I can do this here, am I good to do this now future items?

Chair Benzing

This would be for next month's meeting.

Boardmember Nelson

So, I do this here? I'm trying to get permission and trying to work with the rules.

Charlotte McDermott

I'm sorry, is your question, can you present agenda items for the next meeting?

Boardmember Nelson

Yes.

Charlotte McDermott

Yes, you can present agenda items for the next meeting. There just can't be any discussion about those items.

Boardmember Nelson

Okay, so I'd like to put a couple of things on the agenda. I had reached out through email and never got a response back before we met. I think we have, what is it 48 hours to suggest something or something like that? And didn't get a response in time. It had occurred to me that when we had the presentation about the development of what used to be Site 17, what are they calling it now? I can't remember.

Michelle Dahlke

Nexus.

Boardmember Nelson

Nexus. They said they had found sidewalk markings from the WPA era. I went through and looked at some documents. In the Washington-Escobedo community, we call it the projects, Escobedo housing, I found that there's still four buildings there. Those buildings were built with WPA money. So those are technically WPA buildings. And I like to put on the agenda that we discuss how we recognize those buildings with some type of signage. I think would be interesting because we don't have a lot of those buildings in Mesa. It's great that we've got four. They've renovated the inside, but the outside structure is still the same. I'd like to put that on the agenda.

Another one for the agenda, it occurred to me we have the Asian district now, which we're really celebrating and really excited about it. It's really kind of cool. It just came to my mind, I was talking to a few folks, I was wondering, and I did a little research, I haven't found anything if the city ever made some kind of official apology to the Japanese community for what happened during that time. Since we have this Asian district seems like that would be an appropriate place to do some type of recognition to what took place. During that time, the rumor is that depending on what side of Main Street you lived on, you had to go to internment camp or not. Some of those families are still here. So, I'd like to put that on as a discussion, how we celebrate and recognize the losses and the contributions that they made. That's it for now.

Chair Benzing

Another future agenda item, if we have a full agenda for August we don't have to put on, would be this discussion about how we lay out, like the Juneteenth banners on Main Street, those recognition events. So, we can get ahead of the game and make these things happen instead of a month before us as a Board recognize them. So yeah, that'd be a good item to put on one of the future agendas here. Any additional ones?

9. Adjournment.

Chair Benzing

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

Boardmember Parsons

Motion to adjourn.

Boardmember Skogebo

I second that motion.

AYES: Benzing-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Babos-Bingham

Chair Benzing

This meeting is adjourned at 7:10pm. Thank you.

**A recording of the meeting is available upon request. Please contact the Planning Department with questions, 480-644-2385.