

Virtual Platform

Date: February 02, 2021 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Vice-Chair
Barbara Bingham
Jim Babos
Niti Desai

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Laura Schaffer-Metcalf Ed.D.
Michelle Dahlke

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Nana Appiah
Arianna Urban

GUESTS:

Vic Linoff
Isabella Arellano

1. Call Meeting to Order.

Chair Benzing called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Approval of the minutes from the January 05, 2021 Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Chair Brandon Benzing:

the first order of business is to approve the meeting minutes from the January 5 meeting. Did anybody have any comments on those meeting minutes? Do we have a motion to approve?

Motion: Board Member Jim Babos

Second: Board Member Barbara Bingham

Vote: 4-0

Ayes: Benzing, Babos, Bingham, Desai

Nays: None

3. Items from citizens present.*

Chair Benzing:

Item number three is items from citizens present. Arianna, do we have anything at the moment?

Arianna Urban, Historic Preservation Coordinator:

Yes, we have a very exciting special guest with us today. Her name is Isabella, and she is part of the Mayor's Youth Council and reached out because she's interested in historic preservation. And of course, I was very excited about this and invited her to the meeting to be a part of our Historic Preservation board meeting. So, if you just want to introduce yourself; we're just so happy to have you here Isabella.

Isabella Arellano, Mayor's Youth Council:

Hi, I'm Isabella Arellano, and. I'm a junior at Mountain View High School. I'm learning in getting to talk with Arianna about historic preservation, and it's super exciting. I think it's something that I'm definitely interested in. I'll try to stay on as long as I can.

Chair Benzing:

Well, it's great to have you, so thank you. You're welcome to join any time you want.

4. Discuss and provide updates on the 2020-2021 Historical Writing essay and video contest.

Chair Benzing:

So the next item is just to get an update and discuss anything on the historic writing contest for this year. I don't know if we have received any submissions as we still have another month.

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we have not had any submissions. If we get one I will of course sent it out. But until then, we're just waiting. If I may ask a question of Board Member Babos was Were you able to get the flyers over to the library folks?

Board Member Jim Babos

I was able to do that the day after our last meeting. Heather [Wolfe, Library Director], said she would distribute them to all of the branches of the library any time a youth book order goes out, it would go in there. I was also trying to get it listed with Peach Jar, which is the Mesa Public Schools electronic newsletter, I'm having a lot of trouble doing that between being busy and hitting dead ends. But, I'll keep on that and try to get it this week if I can. That will still give them three weeks if they want to enter the contest.

Chair Benzing:

Yeah, even if it doesn't get in, it seems like it'd be some good information to have for the next year, how to possibly go about posting in Peach Jar. Okay.

5. Discuss the 2021 Historic Preservation Board retreat including potential dates and the agenda.

Chair Benzing:

Item number five is to discuss the historic preservation board retreat for this year. So I know last year, we had one in May, or it was two years ago now?

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we had our last retreat in February of 2020.

Chair Benzing:

It seems like forever ago, since everything has been online. But, we were talking about holding another one, planning it virtual and if tides shift and we're able to do in person, we can change at that time. Now we have Niti and Jim fairly new to the Board who didn't get to participate in the last retreat, and then potentially we'll have another new Board Member by then as well. It will be good to get everybody together, talk about the trajectory of the program, and share any thoughts on how to advance the program. I know last year, we had some good discussions which lasted

about two hours, and then we had lunch and toured the Mesa Historical Museum. Obviously, that is not in the cards as of right now, so it will probably be about an hour or an hour and a half long virtual meeting, as it's hard to have the same chitchat and small talk when not in person. So Arianna, I know when we talked last a couple weeks ago, you had a few dates in mind that worked with the city schedule.

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we're pretty flexible in terms of dates at this point. We traditionally have it on a Saturday, and, like you said it would it really would probably just be an hour, or an hour and a half to discuss the upcoming activities for the year. Alternately, we could plan it out for perhaps later in the summer when we could do something in person. Or, we could do this retreat virtual and plan for one in-person in the fall as well.

Chair Benzing:

So we're just looking at for everybody's input on what they feel they would like to do as far as the retreat, so let's open it for discussion.

Board Member Niti Desai:

I think it would be nice to have it sooner. I think we can always revisit having it in the summer, but it would be nice to have it sooner rather than later.

Board Member Babos:

I missed last year's retreat, as I was away that weekend right at the beginning of my term. Are we allowed to meet together? For example, as a small group outside, or is the City not allowing that?

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Board Member Babos, are you asking in terms of a quorum or in terms of City COVID protocols?

Board Member Babos:

Oh, COVID protocols.

Arianna Urban:

Yeah, unfortunately we're not able to facilitate any in person meetings at this time.

Board Member Babos:

Okay, yeah. Aside from that, I thought if we could meet outside, maybe in front of the old library and that would be a nice setting to get together for an hour and a half and talk, but if the City is not going to allow that, it's a moot point. I'd be flexible whenever we have a virtual one.

Chair Benzing:

It will be a formal meeting, because once we get more than three Board Members together we have to post it as a public meeting. Last last year was an open public meeting, and we posted the agenda, to meet the State regulations. I do agree with you, that with everybody it would be better in person. So, hopefully things shift in the next two months, and there may be that opportunity. If it's looking like we may be able to have an in person meeting in June, and we plan the virtual one for May, we can just punt for another month and meet together in person in June.

Dr. Nana Appiah, Planning Director:

Members of the Board, we can look into various options. Depending on the timing, if we shifted a bit further to May, which is not really that far away, we could possibly be in a position we might be able to meet in person. So that's one of the things we can look into. And by the time we are able to meet in person, we can look into the possibility of finding a bigger place to meet which will allow us to space ourselves out in that meeting. So those are our options. But if the Board would like to do a virtual meeting, then we can look forward to planning that as well. So, those are our things to consider.

Board Member Barbara Bingham:

Well, I would go for the virtual meeting, if that's the only way that we can meet because I do think it would be good for the newer Board Members. That way it won't run too long and can get everybody up to speed a little bit. So, I'm flexible.

Chair Benzing:

Arianna, do we have anyone in consideration for the open Board Member Position?

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing, we do have someone under consideration and they have submitted their application. Right now, it is under review by the Mayor's office.

Chair Benzing:

Do you think they may be installed by the March meeting? Or, does it sound like April or May?

Arianna Urban:

I can't say for sure, but I can't imagine that it will take too much longer.

Chair Benzing:

Okay, so it seems like the safe bet is to at least plan something for April, if not May. In looking at the calendar, Easter ends up being in April this year. We could start planning it then for the 10th or the 17th of April. I don't know what how everybody feels about, doing the Saturday after a Tuesday night meeting; if anybody has an issue with that.

Arianna Urban:

We can tentatively plan for the 17th of April, if that works for the Board Members.

Chair Benzing:

I think so. We can also revisit it next month just to verify with those absent this month. Maybe by then some new information comes to light, as far as City COVID protocol. That might make it worth pushing it back another month. But, if we do have to do it, virtually, let's shoot for April 17. And then let's also try and do something the end of the summer, where we do a little tour or something and have a little recap of goals and things of that nature.

Board Member Babos:

Chairman Benzing, would that be a morning meeting?

Chair Benzing:

That's what we did it last year, but that's also flexible now that we're virtual. Do mornings or afternoons work better for anybody's schedules? Right now let's tentatively put it as a morning meeting on the 17th, and then we can revisit next month for everybody. We should put on the March [Board meeting] agenda to discuss [retreat] agenda items, we can bring the last year's retreat agenda and just look at that and see if we want to modify it, or just keep the items the same.

6. Discuss potential schedule and activities to recognize Historic Preservation Month (May), including the annual Historic Preservation Awards.

Chair Benzing:

Item number six is to discuss potential schedules and activities to recognize Historic Preservation month, including the annual Historic Preservation Awards, which are coming up in May. And I know we have a few a handful of submissions that have gathered over the course of the last year. I correct me if I'm wrong, Arianna, but I believe it's three at the moment.

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, I believe there have been two applications submitted so far.

Chair Benzing:

I know something we briefly talked about at the last meeting, potentially for the historic preservation awards which ties into historic preservation month, is to recognize infill projects within historic districts. Appropriate infill projects definitely have an impact on the aesthetics of the neighborhood, and elevate, you know, just the overall feel of the neighborhood and raises the standards for other new properties. I think it would be nice to start to recognize some of those projects that build into the historic fabric of neighborhoods, whether it's Main Street or any of these historic neighborhoods, that elevate the whole aesthetic of the neighborhood. These high-quality infill projects give an example of homes that can be just as impactful.

Ariana Urban:

Certainly, Chair Benzing, if it pleases the Board I can add a category to the Historic Preservation Awards for outstanding infill projects.

Board Member Babos:

I think that's a great idea.

Chair Benzing:

In talking about the awards themselves, there might be a bit of a letdown in that they may end up being awarded at a virtual City Council meeting. So we want to brainstorm what we can do to highlight some of these places, whether it's a business or a residence. Things like supplying the business with a printed banner that they could place in a window or storefront for the month of May, that recognizes them as a historic preservation award winner. Especially with a business, we could also promote them on Channel 11 or other various ways within the city, and make an effort to show that there is value in doing restoration work, which can mean an increase in income and set an example for neighboring businesses.

So let me know now if anybody has anything else they want to discuss for the Historic Preservation Awards; I don't know if anybody has any opposition to holding them in May or if anybody feels it's better to postpone until it can be done at an in person city Council meeting. My opinion is that anything to keep traction for the program is better than having nothing at all. So, let's just thinking outside the box of ways we can better promote the awards this year and possibly those same approaches could even carry on as we move into post-COVID, and in person City Council meetings.

Board Member Babos:

Chair Benzing, I'm of the opinion that if someone took the time to actually fill out the application and apply for the award, that there's no harm in proceeding ahead. If there are only two applicants, maybe there's a way we could recognize both of them. Ultimately, it's still a feather in their cap and something they should be proud of; even though it's virtual and they're not in front of the Mayor and City Council, at least it's something they can still pat themselves on the back for or something they can show their friends. And that alone, I think, would help promote the whole Historic Preservation process.

Chair Benzing:

Agreed. Though I don't recall when we did them last year, there's never really a set number of awards that we give out. I believe there's right now there are four categories, and we haven't ever really said that we can only get one award for every category, it's always been the deserving projects that get the awards and recognition. So if the two are deserving, there would be two awards to present in May.

Board Member Bingham:

I like going ahead with it as well.

Arianna Urban:

If I can ask the Chairman and Members of the Board which ways you would like to advertise the nomination opportunities within the next month and a half or two months, just so it is out there that the awards are still going on, and that there are still opportunities to apply and be nominated.

Chair Benzing:

There's always Nextdoor for the neighborhood stuff, which we could advertise on for the residential applications. Businesses are trickier because I know not all of the possible ones are on Main Street. But, a lot of the local businesses that are on Main Street are part of the RAIL (Retail, Arts, Innovation, Livability) group, so maybe we can have put something out through them. They seem very connected to the historic Main Street. So that would be a good place to start.

Board Member Babos:

Arianna, anybody that would be eligible has gone through your office, is that correct?

Arianna Urban:

Chair Benzing and Board Member Babos, I would say not necessarily. The projects that come through the Historic Preservation Office are the ones within the historic

zoning overlay, and there are sites that may be eligible for an award at are not within one of the overlay zones.

Board Member Babos:

My thinking is if they had come through your office, you must have an email address for those projects, and would be relatively simple just to send out an email to everyone that had been through the [Certificate of Appropriateness] process and let them know, that there could be potential recognition for your project. For the ones that didn't have to go through your office, I don't know what we could do for them.

Arianna Urban:

I would say that, at least in the year that I have been reviewing the Certificates of Appropriateness, that outside of that one infill property that we looked at a few months ago [158 W 7th St], that anything wouldn't really be eligible. Most of them are new patios and awning installations and things like that. So I will certainly go back and take a look to see if there are significant projects that might that might be considered eligible for an award.

7. Historic Preservation Officer Updates

Chair Benzing:

Item number seven is historic preservation officer updates. Arianna, go ahead.

a) Staff approved Certificates for the month of December, 2020.

Arianna Urban:

Thank you. Alright, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, we just have two quick Certificates of Appropriateness this time. The first one is, in fact, for Board Member Bingham's house. She is planning on expanding her casita in the back to be to be a studio with an accessory dwelling unit. So this this project particularly didn't really need any revisions in the drawings. I quite liked the elevations, I think that the shed roof is appropriate and interesting and a good architectural touch. She also plans on mimicking the brick from her main residence and recreating some similar columns as well.

The next one is also a detached accessory building at 146 North Fraser Drive over in Fraser Fields. This house is remarkably intact, and has been cared for really well, and the new owners here were really excited about the house and are happy to be a part of the historic district. They want to build an accessory structure in the back of their of their property to act as a music studio. It doesn't have any windows and it's just a simple building with a with a slight tilt to its roof, and will not be visible from the street at all.

b) Status of the Historic Design Guidelines and Zoning Ordinance project.

Chair Benzing:

I'm sure by now everyone is aware that tomorrow evening Lakota is having a meeting for the community to brief them on the status of the design guidelines and zoning ordinance project and give an opportunity for questions.

Arianna Urban:

If I may, Chair Benzing and Members of the Board, it's going to be a similar format to the community meeting that we did back in August. I have sent out emails to everyone on my Historic Preservation outreach email list, it's about 150 or so stakeholders and property owners, so I'm hoping for a good turnout. The meeting information has been posted on social media and I believe Nextdoor as well. It's going to be focused on gaining feedback from the property owners about what they would like to see in the design guidelines revisions.

Chair Benzing:

Do you think we can make an announcement before that meeting about Historic Preservation Awards and Historic Preservation Month?

Arianna Urban:

I believe we could do that.

Chair Benzing:

It might be worth just putting it out there, and letting everybody know since they'll be there for the zoning guidelines that May is Historic Preservation Month and the City honors projects in the past year that have added value to that the program, and if they'd like to submit a project to contact the office.

Arianna Urban:

Yes, certainly. There's a lot of new property owners in the historic districts that are very excited about living in a historic property. So I think we're going to get some good energy at the meeting and announcing the awards and HP Month is a great idea.

Brandon Benzing:

That meeting is being run by yourself and Lakota group. Okay.

Arianna Urban:

It's being posted according to the Arizona Open Meeting laws. It's being posted as a City of Mesa meeting, and then Lakota is going to be on hand to facilitate the discussion.

Brandon Benzing:

Okay. Just when the agenda came out, it said Historic Preservation Board so I wasn't sure other than our introductions, what you might have input on, other than being present and available to answer questions.

Arianna Urban:

Yes, Chair Benzing, having your faces there and saying hello will be good. I know two nights in a row is a lot to ask of the Board Members, but if you can make it we'd like to have you

8. Hear reports from Board Members on museums, exhibits, committees and/or events related to historic preservation.

Brandon Benzing:

Item number eight is current summaries or updates from any of us for museums, exhibits, committees and anything else related to historic preservation. I myself this month do not have anything.

9. Future Agenda Items

Retreat date and agenda; review of previous year's retreat agenda.
Possible historic post office rehabilitation
Future community outreach meeting schedule

10. Adjournment

Motion: Board Member Babos
Second: Barbara Bingham

Chair Benzing:

Okay, that concludes the February 2 Historic Preservation Board meeting at 6:32. Thank you all, and we may see you tomorrow night.

Vote: 4-0

Ayes: Benzing, Babos, Bingham, Desai

Nays: None

Supporting data is available for public review in the Planning Division, Municipal Building,
55 N. Center Street, Mesa, AZ 85201