

Historic Preservation Board



Minutes

Hybrid Platform
57 E 1st St

Date: August 2, 2022 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Chair
Jim Babos, Vice-Chair
Bruce Nelson*
BJ Parsons
Russ Haughey

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jocelyn Skogebo

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Nana Appiah
Charlotte McDermott
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

Okay, I'm going to call this Tuesday August 2, Historic Preservation Board meeting to order at 6:01pm.

2. Approval of the minutes from the June 7, 2022 Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Chair Benzing

The second agenda item is to approve the meeting minutes from the June 7 Historic Preservation Board meeting. Were there any comments on those meeting minutes for those in attendance? Do I have a motion to approve the minutes from June 7?

Boardmember Haughey

I move to approve.

Chair Benzing

Do I have a second?

Boardmember Parsons

I second it.

AYES: Benzing-Nelson-Parsons-Haughey

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Skogebo

ABSTAINED: Babos

Chair Benzing

Before we get on to item number three, which is items from citizens present. I'd like to introduce our newest Boardmember Russ Haughey. Do you just want to say a little bit about yourself, and then we can all introduce ourselves as well?

Boardmember Haughey

Sure. I've spent most of my career as a Wildlife Biologist. I worked at the Desert Botanical Garden as Superintendent, a long time ago. I got a degree in Wildlife Biology and then a Masters in Zoology. And I worked for the Air Force for a while as a Natural Resource Planner for Luke Air Force Base and the Goldwater Bombing Range. That was a very interesting job, because there were a lot of historical resources out there that were still very well preserved, because it is a bombing range, and people don't go out there. Then I worked for Arizona Game and Fish for probably 25 or 30 years, as a Game Ranger and Habitat Specialist. I also worked nights at Mesa Community College teaching Biology. Then I taught at Scottsdale Community College, full-time teaching Biology there. And I also taught Biology at ASU.

Chair Benzing

Boardmember Parsons, we'll just go in opposite order, do you want to go this time?

Boardmember Parsons

I'm fairly new to the Board as well. I moved here about three years ago from Chico, California, northern California. We say "that's where the nuts come from" as it's very agricultural. Almonds, a lot of rice, a lot of walnut trees, that sort of thing. But it is very historical too, as well. I was able to participate in a lot of community aspects. I'm sure some of you remember the original Robin Hood movie. Well, that park was Bidwell Park. That was the forest that was generated there. A lot of turn of the century type homes. I listed a lot of homes that were 1860s or 1850s. So, I'm really motivated to keep preservation as far as the communities go. Just happy to be here. Thank you.

Chair Benzing

Boardmember Nelson, would you like to do a brief introduction?

Boardmember Nelson

Hi, this is Bruce Nelson from the Washington-Escobedo Community. Documentary Filmmaker, Historian and all-around good cat. Good morrow everyone.

Vice-Chair Babos

Jim Babos. I've been on the Board, I think, two and a half years. I'm a licensed Architect. I have my own firm. I've always enjoyed history, so this seemed to be a logical fit. I've learned a lot about Mesa, the historical properties, and the whole process and hopefully will help expand what we're doing moving forward.

Chair Benzing

I'm Brandon Benzing. I'm also a licensed Architect. I've been on the Board about six and a half years. I do a lot of renovations, East Coast and overseas, that have been on historical properties. That's how I came about being on the Board. I had worked with the original City Center Plaza design when it was out for a competition and just got connected that way. It seemed like a logical fit with the little bit of preservation I had experience with. Again, the same sentiments everybody else, looking to keep growing the program. With that, we will move into item number three, which is items from citizens present.

3. Items from citizens present.*

Chair Benzing

Mr. Linoff, if you'll state your name and address just for the record as usual.

Vic Linoff

Sure. Vic Linoff, 628 North Center Street. I want to welcome the new Board member. I think you're up to a full complement now, which is taken a long time. Just for your benefit. I'm here because I've had a long association with this Board. Ron Peters and I helped create the ordinance and I chaired this Board for the first 11 years. That's why I've got what I have now. Now I'm president of the Mesa Preservation Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization that works closely with this Board on preservation issues.

So, with that said, I know you want to know about neon. Well, in typical fashion, the neon does not move fast. We now have all of the technical drawings for the location, which is along MacDonald Street. Initially between First and Main and then Main and First Avenue. Before we can decide on any specific locations, we've got to know where the whole infrastructure is. That took a while to get from the city. But now that we have it, we're beginning to work on those technical issues. Once they're resolved, then we can actually move forward with some speed on getting a few of those signs up, to begin to get public attention and support for what we're doing.

But more important, if I can, I want to talk to you about a new issue that has come up. I'm bringing it to you because of the nature of the site. It would never come to you otherwise, because it is not listed as a local property. Even though we would consider it National Register eligible, it's never been listed. This Board would never get a chance to review it. What I'm going to talk about, I know you can't discuss, but I will get to you why this is urgent and needs your support. I'm talking about the Kiva Motel. Everybody knows the Kiva sign and while I'm talking let me just pass this photo around (note: photo of motel was displayed on camera). We have talked about the Kiva sign for a long time. That is one of the most iconic neon signs that exists in Mesa and the entire valley. For those that don't know, Chicanos Por La Causa, has been assembling properties in the area, including the El Royale, which was a very old trailer park and had a lot of issues, the Knights Inn, and the Kiva motel. Unfortunately, not a lot of attention was given to the motel itself, which we believe is probably the oldest lodging property still on Main Street. With all

the attention on the sign, nobody was paying attention to the motel itself. So, we learned that the plans that Chicanos Por La Causa had was to demolish the motel. The sign will be safe, they have already agreed that it will be donated to the Mesa Preservation Foundation. So, whatever happens on that site, the Foundation will have the sign. However, we have been putting a lot of pressure on CPLC to consider saving the property itself. Again, the Foundation does not want to own any of these signs. We want them to stay where they are. We had a meeting last week, Nana was there, and Maura was there with a representative from CPLC to talk about it. They were not aware of any of our interest except the sign. I think we got to them early enough for them to consider the arguments we were making for saving the sign. Since then, we have been in contact with most of the City Council. Councilmember Duff has already sent some letters and I think met with CPLC and maybe the Mayor. Once the significance of that property is brought to people's attention, then there's the realization that there is great value to saving it. What CPLC wants to do is put in essentially affordable housing. Along with a component of market rate housing, with a lot of density on the site. What we were suggesting to them was, they need to get a rezoning and probably some other permits from the city. That gives the city some clout to encourage preservation of the property. We talked about things like where the density could be retained by going higher. If they were to save that piece of property, and they were going to put 300 units, I'm not sure how many they are, but instead of doing it on two floors, or three floors, you go up to four floors, or five. Their response was cautious, but I would say generally positive. We weren't dismissed out of hand with regard to the future of it. The urgency comes because they have been planning for some time to tear it down in September, next month. We don't see that urgency because other than clearing a menace out, there's no urgency to tear anything down while they're going through all of their applications for permits, and that sort of thing. So, that's the basic background. I think maybe Maura could help the Board, there has been a survey of the property that was done for the light rail, and there's some other information available, and that I think should be made available to the Board. I know you can't discuss it or plan. But I would strongly encourage the Board to get involved, if nothing more than writing a letter to the Mayor, City Council, and Chicanos Por La Causa about the importance of this property. I think, and I'm not much of a betting person, but I think maybe the odds are close to being in our favor. It's really hard to say. We hope there'll be some follow up meetings. But now we know the Council is involved and so that's what I wanted to do. Maybe later in your meeting, when you create future agenda items, hopefully it'll still be there in September, or you can find another mechanism by which you can get involved as soon as possible.

I'll be here afterwards. I just wanted to let you know about this. It's really a significant property. We are doing everything we can to save it. The sign without the property has no context and it's just an interesting historic sign and it too, is one of the oldest in the city. So that's it.

Chair Benzing

All right. Thank you for the update. Okay, moving on to agenda item four. Historic Preservation Officer updates. Dr. Appiah is this on you?

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.)

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, we have a couple of things. The first item is the next meeting in September is supposed to be on Tuesday, September 6. Which is the day after Labor Day. So, we want to ask the Board if you want us to cancel the meeting and then reconvene in October, or if you want to keep the meeting on September 6th. That's a question that we cannot discuss during my update. But we can get an email from you guys, so we have some consensus of what you want to do.

Then number two, the next meeting we are going to be put in on the agenda to vote for the Chair. The bylaws require us to vote, the first meeting after July 1st. So, we will make sure that's put on the agenda for a Chair and a Vice-Chair to be voted during the next meeting.

Then the other item that we are working on, we've been talking about the Historic Preservation Guidelines and changes to the Zoning Ordinance for a while. There was a little break because the Historic Preservation Coordinator left. Now we have Maura and she's been working on these with Michelle, as well. Our goal is to bring it back to the HP Board in the fall. Maura is going through all that. We have the document from the consultant, but we definitely want to go through the revised documents again and follow-up with another community meeting as well. Then hopefully, go to City Council. We haven't had any conversation with the City Council. They are aware and we would like to go to the City Council after we talk to you about the final draft version of the document. That's the updates that I have. Thanks.

Chair Benzing

Moving on to agenda item number five, which is discuss and select the date, time, location and topics for the 2022 Historic Preservation Board retreat.

5. Discuss and select the date, time, location and topics for the 2022 Historic Preservation Board retreat.

Chair Benzing

Did we find any dates that worked for the city?

Maura Jackson

Any of them.

Chair Benzing

We typically do it on a Saturday. It usually lasts from about 8:30 or 9:00 to about noon. We usually do about a two, two and a half hour meeting. Then we usually go see one of the historic properties close to where we're going to have the meeting. It is still a public meeting, so it's still agendaized and we have to post it a week in advance. We're getting into the crunch time of the end of the year. Does anybody have any dates in mind at all?

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, my recommendation would be after August. We have a few interviews coming up for the Planning Director, who is the Historic Preservation Officer as well. So, if it's after August we may have a Planning Director who may be interested in being in attendance to work with Maura as well.

Chair Benzing

I agree with that. I think September is usually fairly open for myself. I know October, the first parts are closed up, but then you get into mid-November.

Vice-Chair Babos

If it's in September, shouldn't we have another meeting before?

Chair Benzing

Yes. We would have another meeting.

Vice-Chair Babos

So, we should have the meeting the day after Labor Day. The Board meeting.

Chair Benzing

Well, we could do this, we'd have the September meeting for sure. We could do it after the September meeting, so we had one before.

Vice-Chair Babos

Okay. Because someone raised a question about whether or not to have it at all.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, I was asking about the day after Labor Day. But with a retreat, because it's also open for public meeting, the information and things that we are going to be talking about, we can put it on the retreat agenda as well.

Vice-Chair Babos

Okay. Then I would prefer September also. Late September.

Chair Benzing

So, like the 17th or 24th?

Vice-Chair Babos

I'm not available the 17th.

Chair Benzing

It sounds like the 24th is probably the best morning. Do we want to vote on it today or do we want to get everybody's preference and then just list it?

Boardmember Haughey

I vote we go today.

Chair Benzing

Voting? Is everyone good with voting today? Does it have to go to official vote?

Charlotte McDermott

Since you're discussing it, I would go ahead and get the Board consensus and take a vote. So, motion on the date for the meeting and then a second and then a vote.

Chair Benzing

Okay. So maybe we should discuss the time. I think last time it was 9:00 to 12:00, is everyone good with 9:00 in the morning?

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, before you vote Maura has the topics. It'll be good to also look at the topics as well. We have a presentation to go though.

Chair Benzing

Do you want to go though it now?

Dr. Appiah

Yes.

Chair Benzing

Let's do that.

Dr. Appiah

And then vote on it altogether.

Maura Jackson

Chair and Board members I put together a slide of the all the topics that were sent to us. I believe that you can discuss these and decide what you want to discuss at the retreat.

Chair Benzing

Where would we be having the retreat? Are we going to do it just in one of the rooms here at the Chambers?

Maura Jackson

We suggest the Saguaro Room at the Mesa Library. But if you have other suggestions, we can certainly discuss that.

Chair Benzing

I see you have the new renovation of The Studios building as the tour, so that'd be a perfect location for that.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, I think ASU will be open by then. The Studios is one of the places they're going to be using, so I'm not sure if they are using it on Saturdays, but they may be using it on Saturday. Maura, do you have information on that?

Maura Jackson

Yes. I talked with a contact there and they said once we know the date and the time, they should be able to accommodate that.

Vice-Chair Babos

Is The Studios the old library?

Maura Jackson

Yes.

Vice-Chair Babos

I'm okay with the Saguaro Room. Last year, we had it at a Women's Club, which I thought was awesome, too. I'm likely pushing my luck, but if we could have it at The Studios, I think that would be kind of cool. I don't know if they'd be flexible.

Maura Jackson

We did consider that, but classes will be there.

Chair Benzing

I do know, and this is one item that Boardmember Nelson has brought for agendaizing before, can we add looking at the WPA inventory that we might have and put that on there as a discussion point? There are a few buildings that he had in mind that were unlisted. Put down if there's way that we might be able to recognize those are the holistic piece.

Maura Jackson

Yes, I will add that.

Chair Benzing

Do we need to broaden the "how to carry forward vision, setting goals/programs" topic? So, we can leave it broad enough where we can discuss on it. Then the "post war neighborhoods", I know there was a couple that were still in determination before we went into the pandemic, so those will get covered with that. Does anybody have any other topics they want to add? It seems like if we're doing about a two, two and a half hour meeting, the first three to four items usually take up about an hour. And then those last ones that are more about the program building usually takes at least an hour and a half at the end.

Boardmember Nelson

I cannot see the what's on the agenda there.

Chair Benzing

I'll read them out loud here.

- It's a CLG presentation.
- A quick overview of the open meeting laws, bylaws, agenda items.
- A discussion of Historic Preservation terminology.
- The purpose and role of the Historic Preservation Board for Mesa.
- Implementing and how to carry forward the vision and setting goals for the program.
- The status of the post war neighborhoods.
- Community outreach
- Comparison between Mesa and Phoenix Historic Preservation offices. That is more based on their roles and how things operate and just different things we might take away from our neighbor.
- Then the final item is the tour of the studio building.

Boardmember Nelson

So, all of those are on the agenda or are we choosing from those for the agenda?

Chair Benzing

Those are all on the agenda.

Boardmember Nelson

Okay, thank you. So, the location that we confirm that or we're still looking at other suggestions?

Chair Benzing

If we're going to do a tour of The Studios building, I think the Mesa room is the closest in proximity. I know you had talked in the past about a different location, do you have a preference?

Boardmember Nelson

I thought of, and it's not that far, the Alston house. As most of you have never seen it, or been over there or been in that neighborhood. It's just down the street, off of Center Street. It's easy and quick to get back to ASU within like five minutes driving. I would suggest holding the meeting there, and it's easy to reserve that spot. It's not very often used. Just call in and make a request and they can open it up. It might be a nice thing for you all to see that historic house in that community there.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, Maura that's the building we toured right? Maura and I toured it a couple of months ago and we believe that as much as that location would be really good for us, I think the air conditioning was not working. If I remember correctly.

Boardmember Nelson

It is working. I was there recently. They'll just turn it on before you get there, and it'll be fine.

Dr. Appiah

So, that's good. The other thing is also the logistics of using the place for the presentations that we're going to be having. But we will go back again, it's owned by the City of Mesa. They've told us it's available for us to use. Maura and I will go back maybe next week and look at the logistics

and if we can use it, then definitely we would like to use it. But we'll provide you the feedback after we go and tour it again.

Chair Benzing

Okay. Are there any reservations of using the Alston house if it fits our needs? We'll make that preference number one. If for some reason, logistically, it doesn't work, we'll go with the Saguaro room.

Vice-Chair Babos

I have a question. The status of post war neighborhoods in comparison between these and Phoenix is that more of a presentation than discussion? Because I'm not that familiar with the actual post war neighborhoods and I don't know very much about Phoenix's HP Office.

Chair Benzing

I think part of it will be a presentation.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, my understanding of the status of the post war neighborhood was, last year, I mean, even before the pandemic, one of the goals that we had as a program was to start talking to those post war neighborhoods and start organizing. Because eventually they are all becoming historic. We need to start thinking about how we'll form those districts. So as part of our education, our goal was to begin to really engage them and to preserve the integrity of those neighborhoods. So that's my understanding from our discussions last couple of years.

Chair Benzing

Right, and we have some research on them we can share with the Board before the retreat. So more of a discussion.

The comparison of Mesa/Phoenix Historic programs, I'm leaning on Maura to tap into her knowledge. It's just a discussion, more than anything of some different takeaways from her experience of what she did there versus what we're doing in this program. So, just learning experiences open to discussion.

Boardmember Haughey

I think another topic maybe, or it could be emailed to us, being new, I'd like some sort of overview of the historic properties in Mesa. Like maybe a comprehensive list of all of the listed properties, and then all the historic zones. But you know, you probably have it somewhere.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, we can do that. We can send you boundaries of the Historic Districts. Also, we have the Mesa Historic Registry or inventory that we can send to you as well.

Chair Benzing

Can we then broaden that status of post war neighborhoods to be post war neighborhoods and current historical neighborhoods? Just in case there are questions that arise in comparisons, so we're not tied.

Dr. Appiah

Yes.

Chair Benzing

Do we have any other agenda items anybody would like to add?

Vice-Chair Babos

If the Kiva hotel is still there next month, I'd be interested in hearing more about its history and value historically. I think I've been by it, but I don't know anything about the property.

Chair Benzing

It'd also be a good thing to talk about these topics that come up, that need urgency from the Board. How it falls into that purpose and role of HPB. How we can take action when we're in between meetings and different things.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, so that's good. That means that's an official invitation for Mr. Linoff to be at a retreat. So, he just received the official invitation

Chair Benzing

Well, if we have no more agenda items for the retreat, because it looks pretty full now. Can we get a motion for the retreat to be on September 24th at 9am?

Vice-Chair Babos

I make the motion that the Board retreat be September 24th at 9am. Place to be determined.

Boardmember Haughey

I second.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Nelson-Parsons-Haughey

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Skogebo

Chair Benzing

The motion passes. Moving on to item number six of the agenda, which is hear reports from Board members on current events related to historic preservation.

6. Hear reports from Board Members of current events related to historic preservation.**

Chair Benzing

Does anybody have anything that has occurred over the last two months in the heat of summer, or is occurring in the upcoming month?

Chair Benzing

I do know, we're about two months away from the AIA's Archive Committee retreat. Where we have all the different Archivists from around the state come together to see where we can store

historic materials that relate to the architectural community. So that's occurring in a couple months, which is always an interesting event. There are several members of what is now the Arizona Architecture Foundation and the AIA that are there. Different universities are there. The state Archivist is there. It's mostly to find room for documents for buildings such as Buck Horn or Kiva. That are actual architectural drawings that aren't necessarily things that are physically in place, but they're the documentation how we preserve that for the future generation. So that's always an interesting one.

Vice-Chair Babos

When is that? Where is it?

Chair Benzing

I'd had to look back and get the exact date. It's usually in September. We have not had our meeting this month. I think our next meeting is the seventh and then I believe, I'd have to look back. I can send out that date, though, I think, a couple weeks after that.

7. Future agenda items.**

Chair Benzing

So then going, I think we already covered this. Agenda item number seven is future agenda items. I think if there's any new information that comes out with the city studies for the neon sign in that little area, it'd be nice to have that, you know, whether that's at the retreat or the next meeting to have that on there. And if we could put it for discussion then we could ask some questions about what's been found and stuff. That'd be good. Other than that, I think we have covered everything unless anybody else has anything they want to add to the agenda? Oh, the only other thing is if we get an update on the ordinance and the schedule.

Dr. Appiah

Chair, Board members, under future items just to get clarification, in September we're going to do the retreat and then not do the day after Labor Day meeting. Is that correct?

Chair Benzing

So, the scheduled September 6th meeting is cancelled then.

Dr. Appiah

Yes.

8. Adjournment.

Chair Benzing

If there's nothing else, do I have a motion to adjourn?

Boardmember Haughey

I move to adjourn.

Vice-Chair Babos

I make a second

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Nelson-Parsons-Haughey

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Skogebo

Chair Benzing

This month's meeting is adjourned at 6:37pm. Thank you everybody.

Boardmember Nelson

Thank you. See you next time.

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