



CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

AD HOC COMMITTEE

November 16, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

(Thanks to Mark Chakwin for taking the minutes, and his heroic effort to approximate every thought.)

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting came to order at 16:00.

2. **Roll Call** Members present and Introduction of Members. a. Bill Kampe, Robert Huitt, Don Murphy (Planning Commission), Mike Gunby (ARB), Maureen Mason (HRC), Jean Anton (at large), Rudy Munoz (at large)

3. **Charter Overview** a. Agenda Report establishing this committee

Bill Kampe made introductory remarks overviewing the considerations for the forum. (1) Historical determinations (2) Historical preservations (3) Character of the town. He also touched on the key themes, the eight point were the next steps to consider, the HPO Action Topics.

4. **General Public Comment.** The meeting was open to public comment.

Ms. Sally Moore commented on proposals for placing a sculpture at the pump house site. She noted the high cost (possibly as high as \$30 thousand dollars) and even selective refurbishing would cost \$18 thousand. She observed that the proposed sculpture motif, a Chinese laborer might not be considered the most representative Chinese depiction or the most welcome by the Chinese community and those who have followed the Chinese history on the Peninsula.

Mr. William Peake noted that Mr. Munoz was not yet confirmed by the City Council in his position, and asked if that was a concern for this meeting. Mr. Kampe noted that the Council meeting on Wednesday, November 18th will consider Mr. Munoz and as no other members objected, it was considered a positive step to welcome Mr. Munoz for this meeting as well.

Mr. Tony Ciani noted that the approach to historical preservation actions has been reactive and not proactive. So many times historical preservation actions were taken as a response to a request for modification or alterations. He suggested that the committee lean toward a proactive approach that is not house-by-house (case by case), but first have the City Staff proactively screen and nominate properties and present this list to the city so all residents would know in advance and a better sense of the overall situation, and how properties would be dealt with, would be better understood by all.

Mr. Mark Brodeur, the City's Community & Economic Development Department Director, noted that the city already has approximately 1,100 properties on the HRI (historic residences inventory). Many owners approach the city and actually want to be removed from that list. The city believes



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that there is a need to seek a consultant to perform an accurate Inventory, or historical property survey to establish an accurate picture of both the quantities and types of properties that constitute the current and possible future HRI for the city.

Mr. Ciani followed up by noting an accurate standard and knowledge in advance would prepare owners in advance. Having this information would be helpful and very important.

5. Review of Past Work, including: (see Attachments) Committee members commented on past work, note areas of agreement, areas of concern, and suggestions for focus on next steps. Source materials are:

- a. Minutes of Feb 10, 2014, meeting
- b. Brainstorm List of 11/05/2013: Problem Identification
- c. Brainstorm List of 12/09/3013: Action Topics
- d. Historic Context Statement Next Steps
- e. Report to Council
- f. References

Mr. Murphy noted that past discussion of the three goals included simplification. Currently the process includes a \$400 fee, historical screening through the HRC, but no requirement for lawyers or outside representation. The process has several steps, but is not inherently complex –do we need to simplify it further?

Mr. Kampe responded that the question of can we simplify the current \$400-dollar approval process is a legitimate question. He added that the city's lawyer, Mr. David Laredo Esq., stated that the process does need two vital and important components: clear criteria and clear documentation. It is not clear whether we will need or use a consultant or not, however one point is clear –not 100% of the properties over 50 years in age will actually be considered historic resources and the applicants need the information that will help them understand where their property lies.

Mr. Murphy acknowledged that the overall process may be efficient, but perhaps could be made easier.

Ms. Mason noted that a change in the ordinance specifically 23.76, which currently doesn't cover design reviews. Revising this to facilitate HRC review of design review and development would combine two processes.



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Mr. Huitt agreed with the previously-mentioned points, and noted that no matter what process approach was agreed to the most essential aspect was to have clear criteria. The processes can be confusing because of the current mix of unclear criteria. A “magic solution” might be to focus on providing criteria that are clear and consistent. This would apply to the historical screening step and to the modifications of (historic) properties step separately. For the full process, having criteria that are clear and that are known to all is essential to the solution.

Ms. Mason noted that City Code 23.76 will be coming up and wondered whether the committee would want to modify this for selected criteria.

Mr. Huitt noted that modifications now might not be possible, but now it may be essential to make use of –to consider—both the State and the (Federal) Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines. He further observed that Pacific Grove’s historical preservation program is unusual. The city places much value on so many structures. The “collection” discussion focuses on a large collection of most of our old buildings that well preserved. However, this makes it difficult as well. How do we apply a two-tier concept?

Mr. Kampe added that the “collection” is actually not well noted (catalogued), but it is talked about quite a bit. However, it is not all significant buildings.

Ms. Anton. Agreed, but also advised that the city should not “cap” or limit the “collection” either.

Mr. Gunby agreed with comments by Ms. Mason that the key goal is to see if the ARB and HRC can trade some processes for dealing with historical structures –perhaps streamlined screening procedures, or having City Staff pre-screening criteria the properties. This could be before the properties go before the ARB/HRC. He also pointed out that the “collection” is not clearly identified and it would be helpful if it were.

Mr. Huitt noted that the term “collection” is not universally used. The city has many modest vernacular cottages and observed that the “collection” is more of a concept than a list. These properties have value and there is more historic value than just the properties like the Gatsby House (Gosby House Inn). Some properties are notable for having intrinsic historic value, but the Secretary of Interior standards, and the State’s standards are challenging to apply. (n.b. *vernacular architecture* is a category of architecture based on local needs, construction materials and reflecting local traditions).

Mr. Munoz added personal experience and observations from his local Pacific Grove neighborhood. He noted there are many properties over 50 years old that owners would like –and



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might need to renovate. He observed his own renovation experience with ambiguous results and the need to hire an architect to make a renovation work in the past processes. He added that an old building is not necessarily an historic building –details and conditions need to be examined. An expedited process would be helpful to residential owners who may be frustrated with situations where boards “can’t make a decision.”

Ms Anton added that a two-tier approach to historic properties is a good idea. It can help solve the problem in decision-making on historic properties as well. Also she recommended that the committee seek examples and experiences of other communities that have “collections” of historic properties.

Mr. Kampe noted that some other communities have multiple tiers, but no referenced collections.

Mr. Huitt agreed that it is a great suggestion to get more information from other communities. He caveated that a multi-tier approach that focuses on properties of clearer significance may lose some great properties because of a lack of attention. Everything being equal, on the other hand, will also be counterproductive since it could hide the historic “gems.”

Mr. Kampe provided personal experience with the HRC and an anecdote on his wrought-iron gate to highlight the importance of clear criteria. He noted the (State?) Historical Resources Board Recommended shifting to National Standards. This is an issue since the Pacific Grove ordinance and criteria are not aligned with the State and Federal approach or National Standards Framework. It is important that we don’t confuse the most significant historic resources (properties) and the others. We likely will need one set of standards for the most significant properties and another set of standards for the other properties. This is essential to preserve the character of our town. It could be challenging to make it possible to live in an historic house. We should consider more authority or power for our HRC and ARB but with exceptions. Expertise, consistency and documentation are very important to deliver balance preservation and fairness to our residents.

Ms. Mason noted the Page & Turnbull report and the section on integrity (p. 22) which is very important. She noted that the report is very good, and recommended it with the overlays and clear meaning. She noted the Certification of Local Government (CLG) portions for the city.

Mr. Kampe added that reviewing our city’s resources is appropriate and an assessment is very important as well. However, we also must consider the criteria and cost and focus to examine 1,300 houses. He noted that there are several questions including: should we consider only tier one houses? Should this be an ongoing action?



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6. Determine an approach to committee work plan.

The meeting was opened to the public for comment.

Mr. Tony Ciani noted that using the HRC as a one-stop venue for historical property assessment and modifications is a good idea, but those are two different decisions and they should be kept separate in order to make the best choice in each case. First decision is whether the property is significant or not, the second decision is whether to approve a modification or not. These should be separate. The HRC could have a subcommittee deal with one aspect and recommend a decision to the full HRC where the second decision could be made and the first accepted or not. He added that other cities do have historic “collections” and cited Pasadena CA as an example where areas where either architecturally or historically significant –the two aspects are different, but important in different ways. He noted the 1966 Historical Preservation Act (Public Law 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.) as a resource for consideration. Also look at levels of significance in properties and places where districts are defined by their architecture. Some buildings are not historically important but still have links to past periods. Telluride is a city that, has “Folk Victorian” homes and Queen Anne style abodes like Pacific Grove. That city also has humble “vernacular homes” as well. These are important and integral to the image of the city. They provide the background fabric or essential character that highlights or set off the major properties or resources.

Ms. Moore noted that the Page & Turnbull report cost over \$260 thousand dollars and she hopes that the committee will both read it and use its valuable information.

Mr. Huitt noted that the report is very important to the HRC and the committee recognizes that it is a “must-read” for them. It is a great resource and a good product for the committee.

Ms. Moore added that she hoped that the committee’s work would not simply duplicate the work and results provided in the report.

Mr. Coletti noted that the historical buildings and settings are collectively judged by the neighbors and the neighborhood. It is essential not to create an island of historic properties and let surrounding areas devolve into non-appropriate development. He added personal experience in working with the City Staff on remodeling. Overall the experience was very positive and staff were helpful. It is clear that to succeed in modifications, applicants need to understand the city’s rules and guidelines and seek to conform to them and work with the city to create an acceptable modification. The process is not fast or slow –it is appropriate and any attempt to rush the process



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risks inducing bad decisions or mistakes that can occur when an office or committee is replaced by one individual in an effort to streamline or speed a process. For this reason, the committee should not emphasize seeking to make the process more rapid. That is not the appropriate perspective, especially since the process is on balance reasonable and works in compliance with the building codes. An example of process issues was considered in mention of modifications of one historic property (Steinbeck house). Concluded that the Paige Turnbull provides excellent policy guidance and the committee needs to provide a comparable implementation plan –analogous to the Local Coastal Plan segments of policy and implementation.

Mr. Kampe notes that some properties are not historic per se, but may still hold significance for the city. Overall the process is more effective today than in the past and the ARB is working faster and the significant property ordinance is working. The city is on track to consider effective criteria. These criteria will be necessary in two areas 1) historic determination and 2) project approvals. Historic determination of a two-tier approach for significant resources and others with distinct criteria for each. We will need to work out the background data for these.

Ms. Anton agreed that this was a viable approach

Mr. Huitt noted that the criteria for historic status and for reviewing a project (historic property) will be two distinct sets. In addition, high-level or significant properties will have to be more carefully considered. This will be difficult to resolve and a challenge to link criteria to existing special handling or benefits for historic properties.

Ms. Mason added that there could be procedural issues with two tiers using different sets of standards.

Mr. Kampe stated that the Secretary of the Interiors' criteria were designed around significance and integrity. We may work for more stringent standards for top tier properties/resources. Conversely, for those historic properties that are not top tier there also needs to be standards that are appropriate to that level. Building codes for the top tier have a lot of latitude and the second tier is as yet unresolved in this approach.

Mr. Murphy noted that the tiers concept is a good idea. However, the SEC Interior's standards need to be compared to the Pacific Grove City standards and the committee may not be ready to do this. We have several different standard measures and it is currently difficult for residents to know which ones will be applied in case by case.



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Mr. Gunby also agreed with the intent to comply with Secretary of Interior standards, but caveated that in some cases houses/resources have local importance and we should use local standards. He offered a case where the ARB used local standards to preserve a model roof (Cedar shingle) that might not have worked with national standards. National Standards may not always meet our needs. Our standards are defensible and familiar and work for our residents.

Mr. Kampe noted that regulations can sometimes deliver counter purposes. He noted the tree ordinance requiring two trees to replace one cut did nothing for treeless properties. An historic policy that focuses on unmodified houses (high integrity) while ignoring modified (low integrity) may serve to reward residences that were modified and lost integrity in the past. It is important not to be inflexible and unaware of this aspect. In addition, a city is dynamic and evolving. Any policies on historic properties need to factor this in as well.

Mr. Kampe noted that meeting time was ending and summarized intent for the next meeting. The committee will produce focal topic and determining criteria for (follow on) State Historical Board approval. It will consider two-tiers with a primary tier, it will consider the potential for "collection overlays" and add in the best practices used by others.

Ms. Mason recommended the committee also take up the issue of deletions from the Historic property inventory. This is an important topic that is should be addressed.

The Committee cross talked on ARB and HRC recommended changes, but took no votes on any related issues.

Mr. Kampe noted that the council has already received and voted on the recommended changes from the prior ARB/HRC committee.

Mr. Lute, speaking from the public, noted that the zoning code has preferences for historic properties.



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7. Schedule of meetings; Next Steps; Timetable for completion.

The City of Palo Alto has three tiers of historic properties and each as a level of preferences and standards. He recommended we get examples of tiers and standards from other cities, especially those similar to Pacific Grove.

The topic of deletions was injected for discussion at the next meeting. The intended discussion topic are then:

- Framework for historic determination
- Multi-Tier
- Protecting general character of the city / “the collection”
- Deletions
- As a separate item – examples of how other cities approach preservation.

8. Adjournment. The meeting concluded at 17:30 and the next meeting was scheduled for Monday, 30 November at 4 pm.