



## Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

Date: June 12, 2012

Case No.: 3.1074 – HSPB # 7

Application Type: Certificate of Approval – Landscape Revision

Location: 538 North Palm Canyon Drive – Francis Stevens School

Applicant: City of Palm Springs

Zone: CBC (Central Business District)

General Plan: Open Space – Park / Recreation

APN: 505-325-003

From: Glenn Mlaker, AICP, Assistant Planner

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### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is for a certificate of approval for continued maintenance of existing landscaping to include trimming of trees, shrubs, and hedges with replacement of line kind if needed. In addition, repairs and replacement of damaged hardscape; curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and parking lot paving at the Francis Stevens School a Class 1 historic property.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Historic Site Preservation Board approve a certificate of approval for continued maintenance of landscape and hardscape areas at the Francis Stevens School subject to recommendations as presented.

### **PRIOR ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT**

On November 7, 1984 the City Council voted to designate the property at 538-550 North Palm Canyon Drive, the Frances Stevens School and Palm Canyon Theater as a Class 7 historic site. Later, the City Council converted all Class 7 designations to Class 1.

On May 21, 2012 the Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC) reviewed the proposal for continued maintenance of landscaping and hardscape and recommended approval of the request with the following comments:

1. Site plan as presented does not accurately reflect existing conditions and written recommendations should be followed.
2. Any removal of damaged trees to be replaced with like kind with sizes based upon City standards.
3. Landscape repairs to include trimming, thinning, pruning, and replacement of missing plants.
4. Repair to damaged hardscape (curb, gutters, and parking lot) approved.
5. Any major repair to parking lot to address ADA accessibility; path or travel, new ADA parking stalls with possible new planter beds to meet City shade requirements.

## **BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

The property located at 538-550 North Palm Canyon Drive was designated as a Class 7 historic site in 1984. Later, the City amended the Historic Resources ordinance and Class 7 sites were renamed Class 1. Section 8.05.185 of the City Municipal Code states that any exterior alteration of a Class 1 historic site must first receive approval from the City Historic Site Preservation Board.

The first two rooms of the school were completed in 1927, and Palm Springs' first bond issue later provided additional classrooms, a library, indoor plumbing, cafeteria, an apartment for the Principal, and a large auditorium that served as the City's first theater. The City later purchased the facility as a cultural arts center known as "Everybody's Village" and it was dedicated by President Gerald Ford in 1974. The building suffered a fire and was restored by the City of Palm Springs in 2002. The School was nominated and approved for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources on November 7, 2003.

## **DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

The Francis Steven School site consists of two main buildings set in a traditional Hacienda layout around several landscaped courtyards. The buildings front along North Palm Canyon Drive between East Gran via Valmonte and East Alejo Road with a large parking lot accessed from North Indian Canyon Drive. The corner of the site is anchored by a fountain with two large turf areas used for special events and art festivals. Mature tress, shrubs, and bushes are present throughout the site resulting in a park like setting.

The City of Palm Springs Parks Maintenance is requesting a certificate of approval for continued maintenance of landscaping to include the trimming of trees damaging the building down spouts and roof eaves. Recent tree removal was warranted due to hazardous conditions from a past wind. In addition, portions of the parking lot have been uplifted by large tree roots breaking curbs and gutters restricting water drainage.



Trees and Shrubs Against Building

Parks Maintenance is seeking approval for the removal or trimming of problem trees, shrubs, and hedges to be replaced with like kind. The most recent site plan prepared in 1997 before the "Rain Maker" fountain was installed depicts areas to be included in the continued maintenance. Any removal of trees or shrubs would be replaced with the same plant material in compliance with City size specifications.

The existing parking lot contains several islands with mature trees with large root systems which have uplifted curbs, gutters and sidewalks. As a result of this damage, the natural flow of water has been disrupted causing water run-off ponding. The City seeks approval for the repair of this damage to the parking lot curb, gutters and sidewalks. The mature trees will not be removed; however some branch trimming and root pruning may be necessary.



Curb Uplift and Water Run-Off Ponding

The Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC) reviewed this proposal at their May 21, 2012 meeting and recommended approval 7-0, with several comments which are listed below with Staff response:

1. *Site plan as presented does not accurately reflect existing conditions and written recommendations should be followed.*

The City conducted a site plan survey in 1997 as part of the installation of the "Rain Maker" fountain. A newer site / landscape plan is not available.

2. *Any removal of damaged trees to be replaced with like kind with sizes based upon City standards.*

Parks Maintenance goal is to save all existing mature trees, however if a tree would need to be removed due to wind damage or other unforeseen circumstances the tree will be replaced with like kind. The City will use existing standards for replacement plant sizes.

3. *Landscape repairs to include trimming, thinning, pruning, and replacement of missing plants.*

Parks Maintenance agrees to limit work as described.

4. *Repair to damaged hardscape (curb, gutters, and parking lot) approved.*

Repairs to the parking lot, gutters, curbs, and sidewalks will be completed so as to protect existing landscaping.

5. *Any major repair to parking lot to address ADA accessibility; path or travel, new ADA parking stalls with possible new planter beds to meet City shade requirements.*

Parks Maintenance does not anticipate a major renovation of the parking lot.

## **REQUIRED FINDINGS**

### Definition of an Historic Site.

Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of an historic site as follows;

#### *(a) Historic Site.*

An historic site is any real property such as: a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar architectural elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect and:

*That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or*

1. *That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*
2. *That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or*
3. *That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or*
4. *That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value; or*
5. *That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
6. *That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

Staff has evaluated this application for the proposed continued maintenance of landscape and hardscape areas at the Frances Stevens School and finds that the project will not be detrimental to the overall historic nature of the site subject to conditions.

The distinctive architectural elements of the building and site will not be compromised and the continued maintenance of landscaping to include tree, shrub, and hedge trimming, pruning, replacement and or removal will protect the school structure from future damage. In addition repairs to parking lot curb, gutters, and sidewalks will not be a detriment to the overall aesthetic look of the property. Those elements of the site which date to the early twentieth century will not be altered. Staff has concluded that the continued maintenance will not affect the historic designation of the site, and recommends that the HSPB issue a certificate of approval with the following conditions:

- 1) Approval be limited to the continued maintenance of existing trees, shrubs and hedges.
- 2) Any replacement of landscaping be restricted to like kind plant material conforming to City size standards.
- 3) Repair to parking lot curb, gutters, and sidewalks be approved.
- 4) Any major repair to parking lot beyond maintenance requires review by HSPB.
- 5) Landscape plan for courtyard area behind theater to be reviewed by AAC with recommendation to HSPB.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review per Section 15301(L), (1) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

## NOTIFICATION

There are no public notification requirements for this application.

  
Glenn Mlaker, AICP  
Assistant Planner

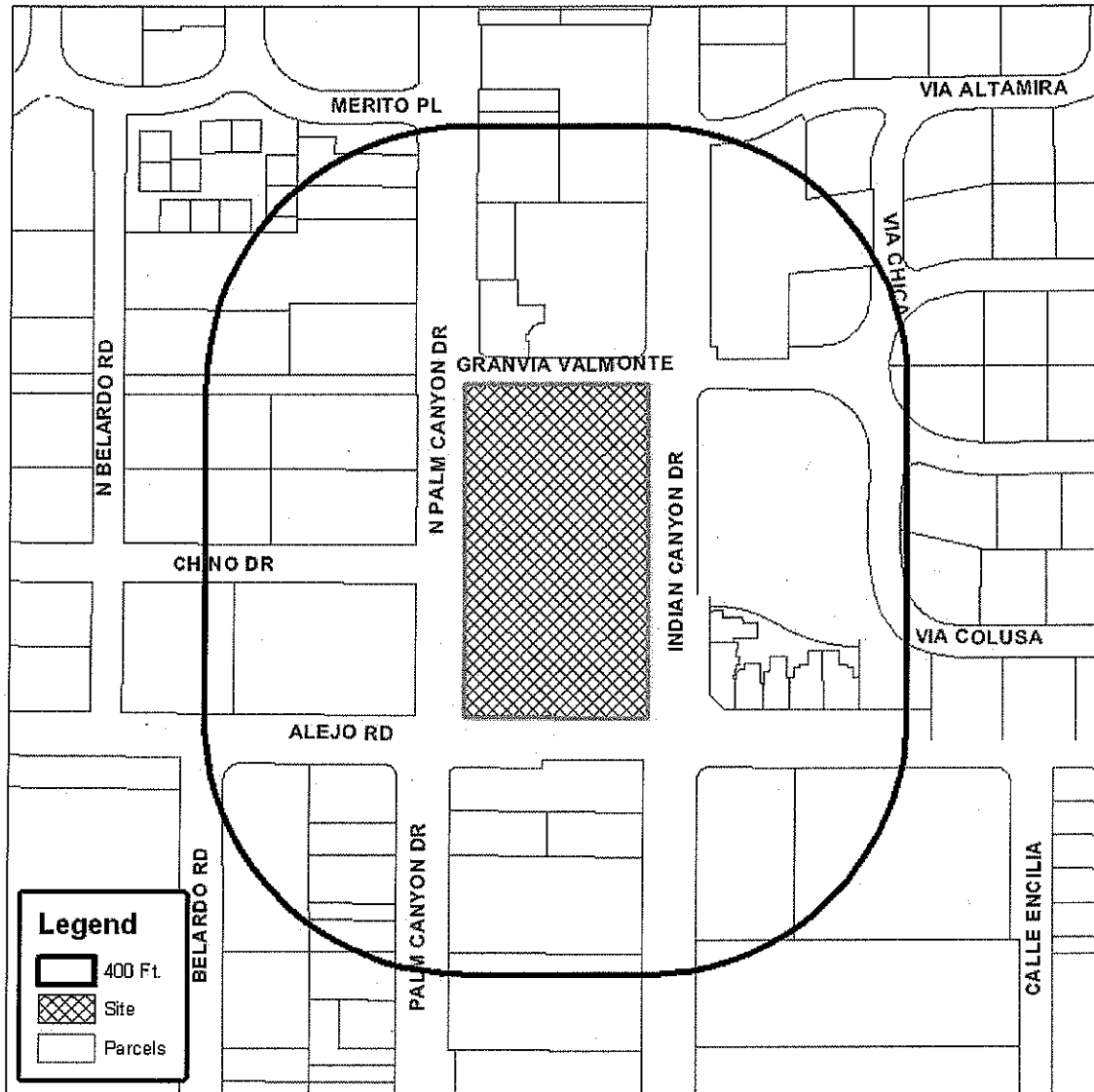
  
Craig A. Ewing, AICP  
Director of Planning Services, AICP

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan
3. Site Photographs
4. Minutes of May 21, 2012 Meeting



## Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



### CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

**CASE NO:** 3.1074 MAA – HSPB # 7

**APPLICANT:** Francis Stevens  
School – City of Palm Springs

**DESCRIPTION:** The City of Palm Springs for continuing maintenance of landscape, and hardscape areas to include trees, shrubs, curb and gutter and parking lot located at the Francis Stevens School a Class 1 historic site, 538 North Palm Canyon Drive, Zone CBD, Section 10.

DEMOLITION PLAN

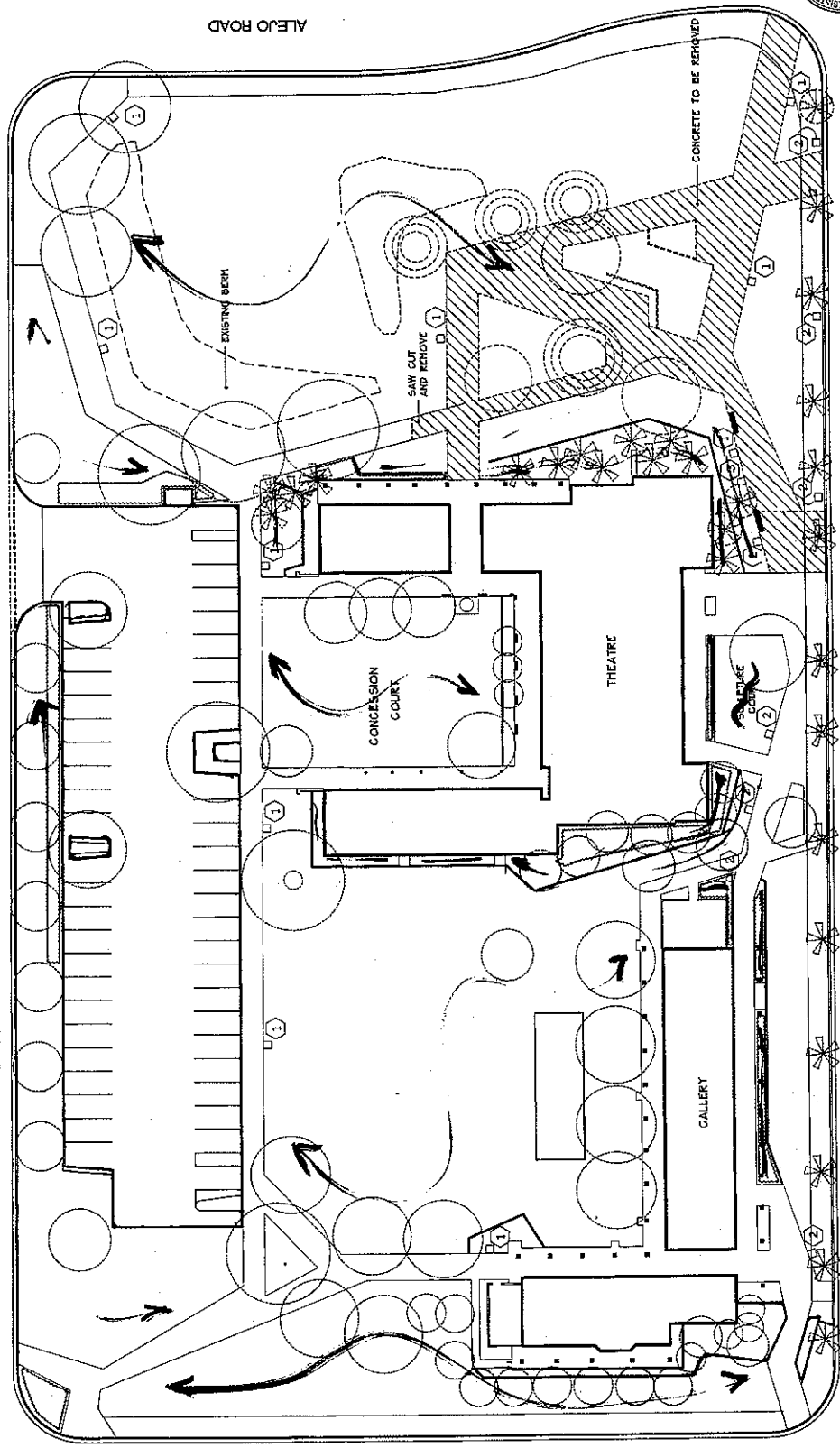
PALM SPRINGS CALIFORNIA  
 FRANCES STEVENS PARK

DESIGNED BY	DATE
CHECKED BY	DATE
SCALE	2-24-91

SHEET NO. L-1 OF

- LEGEND**
- EXISTING PALM TREE TO REMAIN
  - EXISTING TREE TO REMAIN
  - EXISTING TREE TO BE REMOVED
  - EXISTING PALM TO BE RELOCATED
  - EXISTING CONCRETE WALK TO BE REMOVED

- KEY**
- ① CONTRACTOR TO REMOVE EXISTING LIGHT AND RETURN TO CITY.
  - ② EXISTING LIGHT TO REMAIN
  - ③ RELOCATE EXISTING PHONES AND SITE FURNISHING.



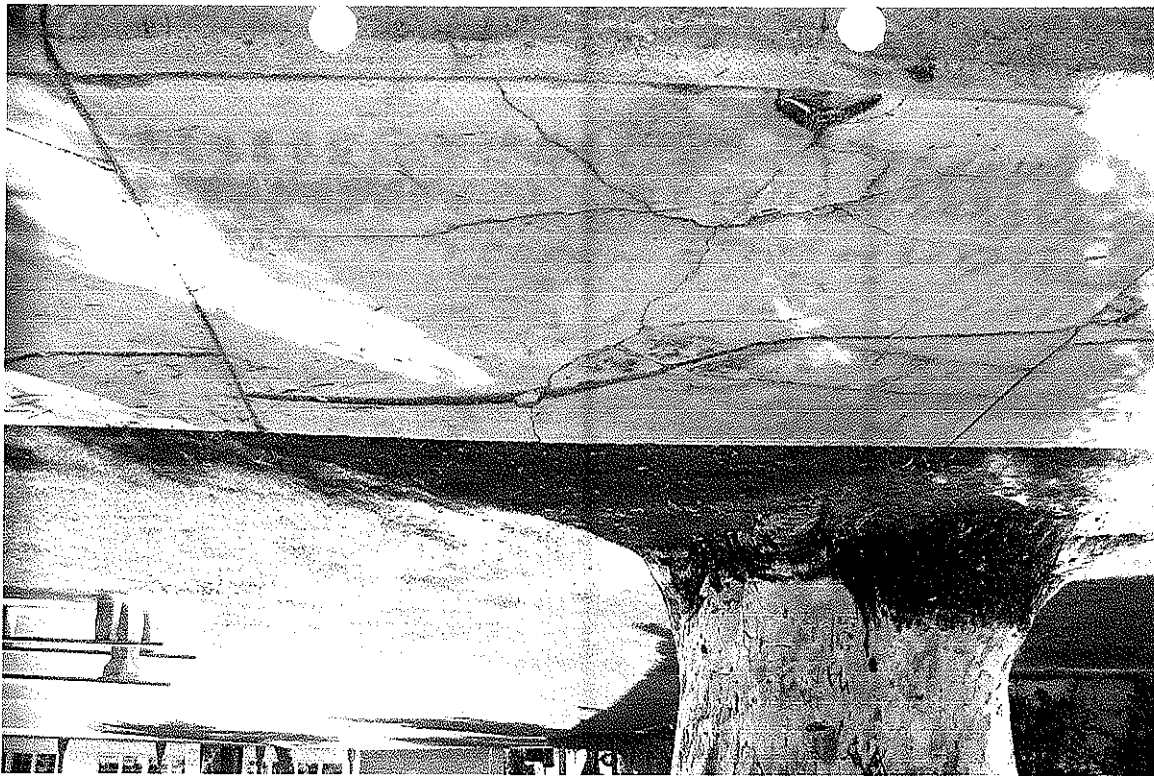
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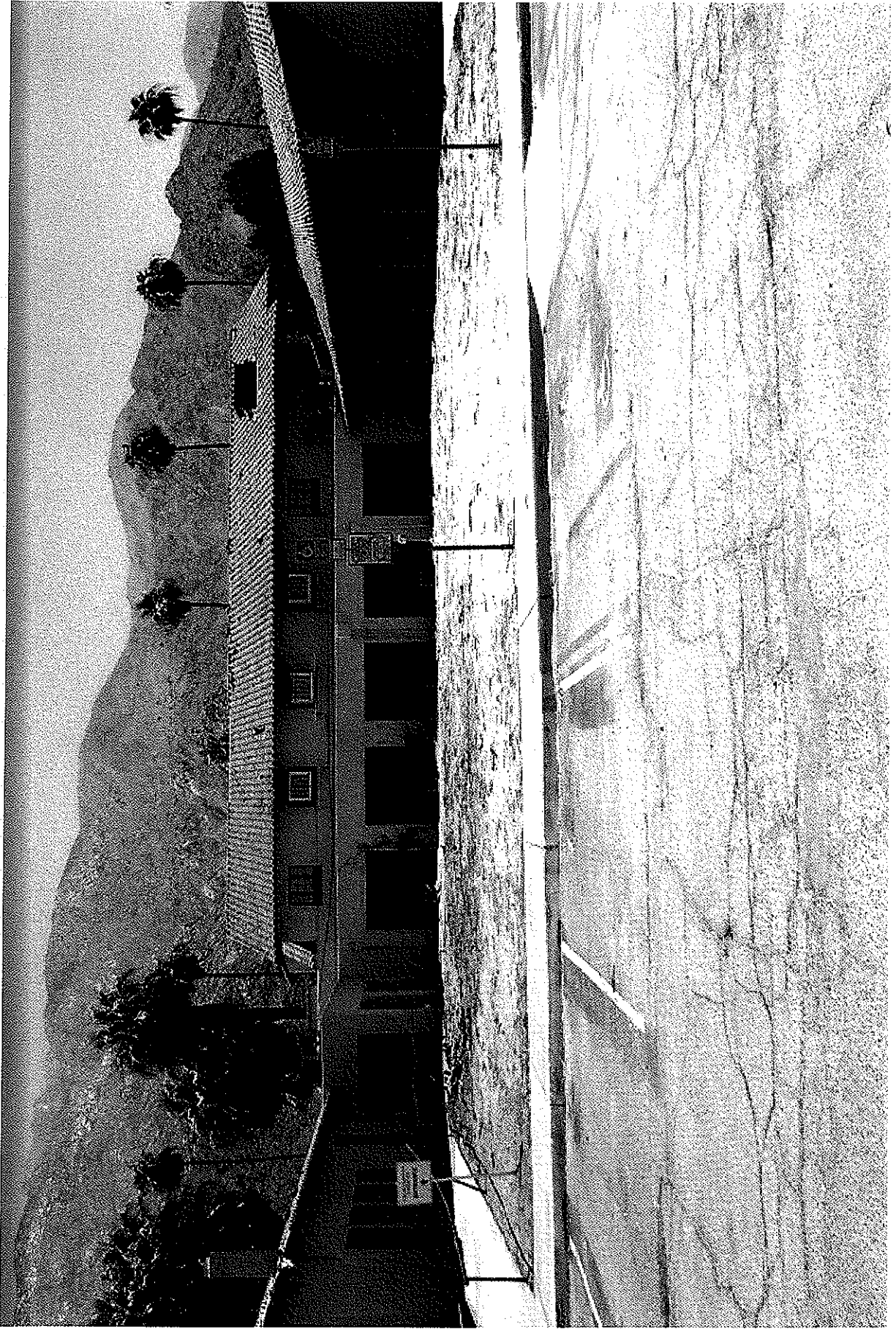
657 \* Blanket Approval For Landscape (Trees, turf, etc.) of entire site -- AND all landscape materials, manholes, curbs, gutters, asphalt repairs, retaining & restraints (like lawn) -- Submittals & Handloges -- Landscape (Turf, Trees, shrubs etc.)





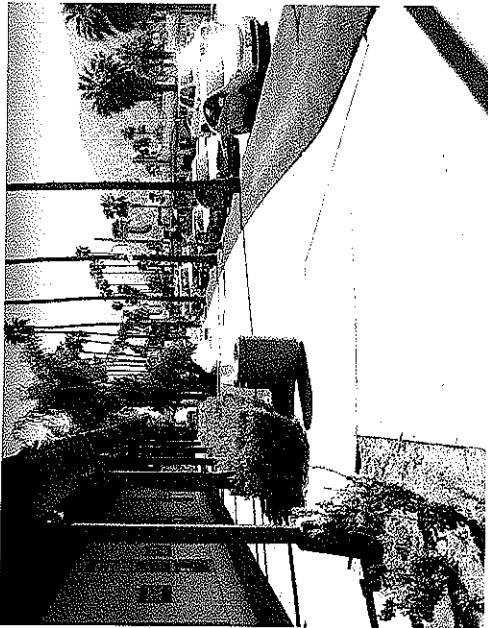












CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

**ARCHITECTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Council Chamber, City Hall  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

**MINUTES OF MAY 21, 2012**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Kleindienst called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

<b>ATTENDANCE - YTD</b>	<b>Present:</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Absent: #</b>	<b>Total</b>
William Kleindienst, Chair	X	8	2	10
James Harlan, Vice Chair	X	10	0	10
William Fauber	X	10	0	10
Gary Fredricks	X	9	1	10
Susan Secoy-Jensen	X	9	1	10
Randy Purnel	X	10	0	10
Paul Ortega	X	8	2	10
Dan Thompson	X	5	0	N/A
Donald Wexler				N/A

(Attendance record begins on January 2012 through the meeting of May 21, 2012.)

Planning Commission Members Present: Donenfeld

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Approval of Minutes for meeting of May 7, 2012 with changes to agenda items # 2, and 3 as noted.

**ACTION:** M/S/C (Kleindienst / Jensen, 6-0-1, abstain Kleindienst) To approve the minutes of May 7, 2012 with changes to agenda items # 2, and 3 as noted.

**REVISIONS TO AGENDA**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Three (3) minute time limit per person on matters within the jurisdiction of the Architectural Advisory Committee.

There were no public comments.

**AGENDA ITEM #2: Case 3.1074 MAA – HSPB #7 Francis Stevens School**

City of Palm Springs requesting approval for maintenance of existing landscaping and repairs to sidewalks and parking lot at the Francis Stevens School (Class 1 historic property) located at 538 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Zone CBD, Section 10. (GM)

Assistant Planner Mlaker presented the proposal stating that the City Parks Maintenance division is seeking approval to conduct on-going trimming and thinning of trees, shrubs, and hedges. In addition, repair to hardscape such as sidewalks, curb and gutters as a result of tree root uplift. The property is a Class 1 historic site and the AAC recommendation will be forwarded to HSPB.



Rick Minjares, City Park Maintenance Supervisor was present and stated that the proposal will not make changes to the existing landscape plan; however due to overgrown trees and past wind events damage is occurring to the historic building and parking lot. Several trees were removed due to wind damage. The City is seeking a blanket approval to conduct on-going maintenance with replacement of like kind should any removal be needed.

Member Ortega asked for clarification on the landscape plan as presented. The plan does not appear to reflect existing conditions. The inner courtyard will need to be planted. Mr. Minjares responded and explained that the plan presented does not show the existing "Rain Maker" fountain; however all other site details are present.

Member Fredrick asked if any additional trees would be removed and if missing shrubs would be planted. Thinning trees will help in the overall health and maintenance of the trees.

Member Purnel asked if desert plantings will be used. Mr. Minjares responded by stating that like kind plants will be used.

Member Fauber asked if the City has minimum standard sizes for new plantings.

Member Secoy-Jensen stated that it is difficult to review the plans being that the landscape plan as presented does not accurately reflect existing conditions.

Vice-Chair Harlan stated that the AAC should base their decision on written recommendations and not make reference to the inaccurate plan.

Chair Kleindienst supports the widening of existing parking lot tree wells that have mature trees. Any repair to the parking lot should result in an upgrade to meet ADA standards.

**ACTION:** M/S/C (Fauber / Ortega, 7-0) To forward a recommendation of approval to the Historic Site Preservation Board with the following comments:

- 2.a Site plan as presented does not accurately reflect existing conditions and written recommendations should be followed.
- 2.b Any removal of damaged trees to be replaced with like kind with sizes based upon City standards.
- 2.c Landscape repairs to include trimming, thinning, pruning, and replacement of missing plants.
- 2.d Repair to damaged hardscape (curb, gutters, and parking lot) approved.
- 2.e Any major repair to parking lot address ADA accessibility; path or travel, new ADA parking stalls with possible new planter bed to meet shade requirements.

**AGENDA ITEM #3: Case 3.2422 MAA – Martin Residence**

Benjamin Hertz, architect representing property owner Larry Martin, requesting approval for the addition of a 452-square foot pool cabana on a hillside lot located at 787 W. Stevens Road, Zone R-1-A, Section 10. (GM)