

# HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Large Conference Room, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, California 92262  
[www.palmspringsca.gov](http://www.palmspringsca.gov)

## MINUTES

APRIL 14, 2014



9:00 AM  
REGULAR MEETING

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Chair Johns, Vice-Chair Ploss, Members Burkett, Hays, La Voie, Dixon, Williamson

**ABSENT:** (none)

**POSTING OF THE AGENDA:** Posted in accordance with applicable law.

**ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:** The Board unanimously accepted the agenda, noting that an item regarding a Class 1 historic site known as one of the Wexler Steel Houses would be discussed under staff comments.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** (none)

### 1. CONSENT CALENDAR:

#### 1.A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: MARCH 10, 2015 MEETING

Board member Ploss requested clarification on item 5.A (Discussion of survey), and her concerns expressed regarding condition of the Cork n Bottle Building. Board member Hays noted Wexler Steel House was to be on the agenda (Staff noted it will be addressed under staff comments).

**M/S/C** (Ploss / La Voie) (7-0) to approve as amended.

### 2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

**2.A. HSPB 92 – 796 NORTH VIA MIRALESTE.** Staff recommended termination of investigation due to no response from owner. The Board requested staff make one last attempt by sending letter via certified mail.

**2.B. HSPB / CC STUDY SESSION – 8.05 ORDINANCE REVISIONS.**

Staff member Lyon summarized the staff report.

Several board members noted this item was accessible from the City website, but was not in their packets. The Board continued the item to the May meeting and directed staff to resend the staff report and attachments to members.

**3. NEW BUSINESS:**

**3.A. CASE 3.3858 MAA – AN APPLICATION BY ERISHKA HARRINGTON, OWNER, TO DEMOLISH THE SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE AND ALL ACCESSORY STRUCTURES AT 221 WEST MERITO, A CLASS 3 HISTORIC SITE, ZONE R-1-A.**

Staff member Lyon summarized the staff report.

Renee Breiling of G & M Construction representing the owner clarified the demolition request was for all structures on the site.

Board member Hays asked whether any salvage or recycle of materials would occur. The applicant explained that where possible, materials would be recycled (concrete, drywall, etc.).

Board member Dixon asked about whether the parcel could be subdivided. (Staff member Lyon noted it would depend whether conforming lots could be created by such a subdivision).

Board member Ploss expressed regret that the property had not been better maintained over time.

Board member Dixon asked about the extent of code enforcement's authority to enter sites and investigate conditions.

JIM ZICARO, Director of Building & Safety, clarified the limitations of the City's code enforcement authority and noted ongoing efforts of the City to improve the vacant and abandoned building ordinance.

Board member La Voie asked if there were designating documents for this site. (Staff member Lyon noted most Class 3 sites have no designating documents). He requested photo archives of sites subject to demolition be established.

Board member Ploss asked about conditioning demolition approvals. (Director Zicaro noted demolition approvals are "ministerial actions" and not typically subject to conditions).

Director Fagg noted standard policy to photo document Class 3 sites approved for demolition would be initiated.

Chair Johns opined that this case is an example of “demolition by neglect”.

**M/S/C** (Williamson / Dixon) (6-1 Ploss opposed) to take no action and allow demolition.

**3.B. HSPB 93 – HD-5: AN APPLICATION BY SANDCLIFF GARDEN APARTMENT HOMES HOA FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION OF THE SANDCLIFF CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX LOCATED ON ROUGHLY 4.5 ACRES AT 1800 BARONA ROAD (ZONE RGA-6)**

**M/S/C** (Ploss / La Voie) (7-0) to continue the matter to a fully noticed public hearing of May 12, 2015 and direct staff to coordinate site inspections for Board members.

Board member La Voie noted the report needed clarification regarding the significance of the courtyard style configuration of the site as an early prototype of this type of development. He noted clarification on page 16 of the report regarding “permanent” patio windows (should be revised to “fixed”).

**3.C. HSPB 94 – AN APPLICATION BY GARY & JOAN GAND FOR CLASS 1 HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF THE THEODORE & CLAIRE MORSE RESIDENCE LOCATED AT 1197 ABRIGO ROAD (ZONE R-1-C)**

**M/S/C** (Ploss / La Voie) (7-0) to continue the matter to a fully noticed public hearing of June 9, 2015 and direct staff to coordinate site inspections for Board members.

**3.D. HSPB 33 (TRAMWAY SERVICE STATION) CITY OF PALM SPRINGS REQUESTING CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL FOR A PHASED LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE PALM SPRINGS VISITORS CENTER, A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE LOCATED AT 2901 NORTH PALM CANYON DRIVE (CASE 3.0635 MAA)**

Staff member Mlaker summarized the staff report.

Board member Williamson expressed strong opposition to a landscape plan that proposes lawn and water features given the current drought.

Board member Dixon expressed concern with the lawn and fountain and asked if the water feature was recirculating and if there is additional lighting included? (yes, it is recirculating and no, lighting on the site will be a future project initiated by the Facilities Department) noting concern about liability for persons falling because of lack of lighting in the back area.

Board member La Voie noted the building was built as a gas station, and asked how that original use is interpreted in the proposed landscape project. (The conveyance of “Setting” contributes to the “Integrity” of a historic site).

MIKE BUCCINO of Michael Buccino Associates, the landscape architect for the City, explained and clarified the project.

Chair Johns asked about the turf / lawn area, whether synthetic turf was considered and was not supportive of natural turf due to the drought. (Mr. Buccino replied no). Chair Johns also expressed concern about public access to the proposed lawn area.

Board member Burkett asked why the City was considering this project at all? (Facilities Manager PATRICK SWEENEY noted it was a Measure J submittal from the Visitor Center staff.) Burkett expressed that the project was not appropriate given the water and drought issues currently facing the State.

Board member La Voie discussed the scale and the beauty of the minimalist design of the building. He noted that the spatial expression of the proposed landscape design with circuitous pathways and landscaping does not belong on this site. He does not support any trees across the front of the building and does not support the proposal.

Board member Ploss noted the proposed design was not consistent with the setting created by the architect of the historic building (Albert Frey). She expressed concern about animals being drawn to a water feature located in such close proximity to Highway 111 and the risk of them getting hit by cars. She felt the proposal was ill-conceived and not consistent with Frey’s original design.

Board member Dixon questioned the use of “turf and petunias” in general. She does not believe the visitor center grounds are conducive as a “gathering” place (wind, dust, remoteness, etc.) and feels it is an inappropriate use of Measure J funds.

Board member Hays felt some sort of landscape plan is a good idea but ill-conceived things like perimeter walls should be removed. He doesn’t support the creation of a lawn but feels there are ways the landscape can be used to express the original minimalist setting of the building when it was a gas station.

Chair Johns noted he is in support of landscaping at this site although not 100% in favor of this particular plan, especially the lawn. He stated he felt improved landscape at this site would encourage people to gather there and would enhance the site’s appearance.

Facilities manager Sweeney noted new site lighting is under consideration as a separate project managed by the Facilities Department. He noted recent theft of exterior lights necessitated new lighting of the site, the building, and the parking lot.

**M/S/C** (La Voie / Dixon) (6-1 Chair Johns opposed) to continue to a date uncertain with direction to resubmit a landscape plan that is:

- (1) reflective of the original site "story" (use as a gas station),
- (2) appropriate to scale of the historic architecture,
- (3) simple in its overall design,
- (4) that emulates the natural environment, (not contrived),
- (5) the approach to the building should be visually open with nothing to impede sight lines directly to the canopy. (For example, a gravel drive with landscaping on the side; not open space cluttered with trees, bushes, shrubs and rocks). La Voie noted that plantings should be on the sides of the open space and reflective of the sparsely vegetated, rocky open desert behind the building.

#### **4. DISCUSSION:**

##### **4.A. FINAL REPORT – HSPB PARTICIPATION AT THE MARCH 28, 2015 CITYWIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PICNIC** (staff)

Director Fagg noted the event was well attended and the booth had many visitors and thanked board member Burkett for attending and assisting.

##### **4.B. UPDATE ON THE MAY 2015 PRESERVATION MONTH EVENT (MAY 3, 2015)** (subcommittee Ploss, Burkett Dixon)

Board member Burkett provided an update on the event preparation including use of The O'Donnell Golf Course clubhouse for the after event and a possible added tour of the clubhouse. He provided an update report on reservations received, coverage by the Desert Sun, and marketing and promotional activities.

Burkett raised the question to staff whether insurance for one of the tours through a private residence in Old Las Palmas might be necessary.

Staff noted waivers for general participations in the event are not required but would follow up on the question on insurance.

Chair Johns reiterated desire to acknowledge Bank of America at the event for their sensitive management of the City National Bank building. Staff to contact Bank of America.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Board member Ploss noted she is going to pursue the issue of deterioration of the Cork n Bottle Building with State staff representatives in Sacramento.

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

Staff member Lyon noted recent modifications to Steel House #4 that appear not to have been part of the HSPB approval were brought to the attention of the Building Department Inspection division (Staff member Fox). Fox informed the homeowner that additional exterior modifications that may be desired must be submitted to the HSPB for a certificate of approval. Director Fagg noted PSMC 8.06 (Historic Preservation) provides for procedures for penalties for violations.

Director Fagg distributed copies of letters received by the City from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation regarding the Aberdeen project opposing demolition of the Kaptur Buildings along Tahquitz Canyon Way.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The Historic Site Preservation Board adjourned to its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2015, at 9:00 A.M, in the Large Conference Room at City Hall.