

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD
CORRECTED - Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Large Conference Room, City Hall,
 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, California 92262

<u>BOARD MEMBERS</u>	<u>Present at this Meeting</u>	<u>Present FY Year-to-Date</u>	<u>FY 2008-2009 Excused Absences</u>
Sidney Williams, Chair	X	8	1
Brian Strahl, Vice Chair	X	9	0
Sheila Grattan	X	9	0
Tom DeLeeuw	X	9	0
John Gilmer	X	9	0
Barbara Marshall	X	9	0

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES:

Craig Ewing, Director of Planning

Loretta Moffett, Administrative Assistant
 Recording Secretary

1. The regularly scheduled HSPB meeting was called to order at 8:15 a.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2009 by Chair Sidney Williams.
2. ROLL CALL: Present: T. DeLeeuw, J. Gilmer, S. Grattan, B. Marshall, B. Strahl, and Chair S. Williams. Staff in attendance: Director Craig Ewing, Scott Taschner, and Loretta Moffett.
3. POSTING OF AGENDA: The Agenda was available for public access at the City Hall exterior bulletin board (west side of Council Chamber), City Clerk's office, and Planning Services' counter on or before 4:00 p.m. Thursday, March 5, 2009.
4. PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE
5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:
 - 5.A Corrected Minutes from January 13, 2008 – no Board action required
 - 5.B Minutes of the February 10, 2009 Meeting – There were three **CORRECTIONS**

M/S/C (Gilmer/Grattan) moved to approve the February 10, 2009 HSPB Minutes as CORRECTED – Vote 6 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent, 0 Abstentions – motion carried.
6. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR: Chair Williams expressed sympathy to hear of Diane Bullock's passing and commended Diane's valiant fight for life against the cancer – Diane will be missed by everyone. Chair Williams commented on the recent newspaper article on the Racquet Club and that Mr. Mueller advised that the Vineyard Bank in Corona is now the owner of the site and as of this week it is officially going into foreclosure. She also reported that Modernism Week was a tremendous success with a 25% increase in attendance over the last year.

Board member John Gilmer asked if Board members could actually visit the Racquet Club site to see the condition of the properties.

Director Ewing stated that staff will contact Vineyard Bank, confirm information as to their taking possession of the property, and will work with them toward securing the existing restaurant and the new building under construction along with whatever properties that may need attention. Staff will also work with the bank as to visiting the site and inspecting.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

7.A Case 3.0829/HSPB 70 – Application by City for Class 1 Historic Designation HSPB 70 of the West Façade of Palm Springs International Airport- HSPB 70, 3400 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Zone A, Section 18.

Assistant Planner Scott Taschner briefly described the project stating that it is exempt from CEQA review, all property owners within 400 feet were notified, and staff recommends that HSPB recommend to Council for designation of the West Façade of the Palm Springs International Airport as Class 1 Historic Site 70.

Discussion: Board member concerns included impact on front area and landscaping; FAA requirements, regulations, and authority; FAA mandates be submitted in writing for review by City and staff; security measures; potential restoration of the boxed-over steel columns back to original exposed construction; expedient response in case of emergencies, walls of glass, designation seems more honorary, etc.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RE THIS SUBJECT: NONE

M/S/C (Grattan/Strahl) moved to approve the application as presented and recommend to Council that the West Façade of the Palm Springs International Airport be considered for Class 1 Historic Site Designation – HSPB 70. Vote 5 Yes, 1 No (Marshall), 0 Absent, 0 Abstentions. Motion carried.

8. CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL REQUEST:

8.A Case No. SI 09-013 Palm Springs Redevelopment Agency for a monument sign at the Palm Springs Visitors Center (Tramway Gas Station, Class 1 Historic Site-HSPB #33/37) at 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive, Zone C-1, Section 3. (ST)

Assistant Planner Scott Taschner described the project, and referred to the Staff Report for comments and suggestions from the Architectural Advisory Committee as to a re-design of the sign keeping it within the historic nature of the Tramway Gas Station. The proposed permanent monument sign complies with the Zoning Codes and fonts have been changed to match the Palm Springs entry sign. A pole sign designed some time ago was displayed for information. Because of its simple modern design and distance (approx 100 feet) from the historic structure, staff recommends that the HSPB issue a Certificate of Approval for the proposed sign.

Board discussion and concerns included better visibility, location, matching fonts, raised or elevated sign would prevent graffiti and increase visibility, proposed sign is too low-key and bland, pole sign is more compatible with the historic building, and maintenance on the temporary sign until funds could be raised for a more appropriately designed sign.

Director Ewing explained that the HSPB role is to determine if the proposed sign has an adverse effect on the historic character of the site.

Board member Strahl moved for denial of this application because the characteristics of the proposed sign do not support the historic nature of the building and a more airy, open-type sign would be more appropriate and compatible to the building – a former gas station.

M/S/C (Strahl/Marshall) moved to approve the motion as stated above – Vote 5 Yes, 1 No (Grattan), 0 Absent, 0 Abstentions. Motion carried.

9. OTHER BUSINESS:

9.A Policies and Procedures for Referring Matters that Affect Class 1 Building Sites to the Historic Site Preservation Board – Board member Marshall

Director Ewing explained that when a property is designated for Class 1, it is subject to review by the City under Chapter 8.05 of the Municipal Code – Historic Resources. There are certain thresholds for review that are both explicit and implied in that Ordinance. Anything that is a maintenance item (minor repairs, painting, etc.), using the same colors and materials, staff handles over-the-counter.

Another area of staff concern is when more substantial changes are happening on the property, but not necessarily to the historic building or structure. It is not always clear where those other changes fall within the Ordinance. An example might be the landscaping outside a building. To designate a building, someone might want to take down trees and plant new trees – that might affect views of the building. If the designation is clear that it's the building/structure that is historic, staff does not extend that authority and review to landscaping or to walls or other elements of the property/site. Decisions might or will be made by staff that determine what changes, opposed to the site, rise to the level of requiring a Certificate of Approval and what will come before HSPB.

Staff has recently **has** sought greater specificity in the description of a historic resource. The clearer historic features of the site are identified in the designation, the easier it is to move forward with the architect, designer, property owners, etc. He further commented on the City's review authority regarding additions or changes to the site(s) that don't physically alter the designated historic resource. Unless specifically stated, the Ordinance does not prevent a wall being constructed around a historic structure. If there is a historic building and someone wants to screen it from view, that doesn't appear to be a violation of the law. Staff will look at designations and modifications on a case-by-case basis – absent clear statement of what is protected under the historic designations on record. For City-owned historic properties, the City is subject to the same laws as private property owners. Council can be approached when modifications impact important aspects of a designated property.

Board member concerns included art in public places (such as a very modern piece in front of a very old historic building), sensitivity to the whole appearance of the setting/site of a historic property is as important as the structure itself, obscuring public views of Class 1 historic sites, designation specifics need to be very clear and precise,

9.B Historic Districts Discussion and Proposals for Moving Forward with Initial Designations – Board member Gilmer

Board member Gilmer handed out information from the National Parks Service about creating and using design guidelines pertaining to historic districts. These materials can be used as examples during the process and goals of HSPB creating historic districts. Members were urged to review this information in preparation to move forward with Historic Districts in Palm Springs. This will be a future agenda item – with talking points - after members have studied all the documents and information. He spoke with Patrick McGrew who had compiled a list of potential districts that included (1) Araby Tract – 19320a); (2) Deepwell Ranch; (3) Old Las Palmas; (4) Little Tuscany; (5) Main Street aka Palm Canyon Drive; (6) Mesa – 1920s; (7) Movie Colony – 1930s; (8) Smoke Tree Ranch – (eligible for National, California, and local designation; (9) Southridge; (10) Tennis Club area; (11) Twin Palms; (12) Western portion of Warm Sands – 1920s-30s. There is no clarity of what a Historic District is, what the requirements are or would be; and the Board needs to develop good, specific guidelines when recommending to City Council.

Board member Grattan asked for discussion about where designation emanates from. She recalled that the Council appears to want assurance that movement for designation would come from the homeowners within the specific areas and that it would not be super-imposed upon them. The Board discussed and reviewed most of the 12 sites listed above about two years ago – Board needs to be very careful how this is approached and presented to homeowners.

Director Ewing will send the 11 points the Planning Commission considered in identifying overlay zones for neighborhoods, which has similarities to Historic Districts. Both would imply more tailored approaches to future design, development, and redevelopment of groups of properties.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS:

10.A P.S. Preservation Foundation (www.pspreservationfoundation.org) - Board member Strahl heard from the President of the Foundation and PSPF continues with their free online memberships. The Retro Martini Fundraising Party was a big success – photos will be on their website. There were about 70 citizens at the February 18 Council meeting re the Baristo Lofts project, but it was continued. PSPF comments and information are on the website.

10.B P.S. Modern Committee (www.psmodcom.com) - Board member Barbara Marshall reported that Modernism Week was a great success. They continue to monitor Council's agendas for the re-appearance of Baristo Lofts (Santa Fe Federal Building) and the Desert Fashion Plaza's Specific Plan.

10.C P.S. Historical Society (www.pshistoricalsociety.org) - Board member Sheila Grattan – The new book by Moya Henderson is available and 2009 Calendars are still available.

10.D Architecture and Design Council (www.psmuseum.org) - Board member John Gilmer – The Patrick McGrew Architecture 101 lecture last month on “Bill Cody” was sold out. The Ron & Jason Hill lecture was well attended. Peter Moruzzi's lecture “Havana Before Castro” had 375 attendees during Modernism Week. The Frey House II Tours had 266 participants – they had to hire a larger bus. The Symposium “Possessed – Obsession of Ownership” was also extremely successful – 132 attended the lecture and tour. The next lecture “Good Modernism Now” is March 21 at 6 p.m. in the Annenberg Theater, with Steven Kanner of Kanner Architects, from Los Angeles. The May 2 6 p.m. lecture will be “Practices of Encroachment: Urban Waste Moves Southbound, Illegal Zoning Seeps into North” by Teddy Cruz, architect, estudio teddy cruz, San Diego. Bill Butler will lecture about “Donald Wexler” March 28 at 10 a.m. in the Architecture 101

Series. Sidney Williams' lecture about "E. Stewart Williams" will be April 25 at 10 a.m. Tickets for all events can be purchased at the Museum Box Office or 760-325-4490.

10.E Web Site Development – Board members John Gilmer & Tom DeLeeuw – No report

11. STAFF & OTHER REPORTS:

11.A Baristo Lofts update from Council Meeting of February 18, 2009 – Director Ewing reported that the Baristo Lofts hearing by Council was continued and will be re-noticed – everyone will be advised.

11.B Update from Joint Meeting with City Council February 11, 2009 - Historic Districts, demolition by neglect, etc. were discussed and Code Enforcement will be monitoring properties that may be subject to neglect. During the joint meeting, someone suggested researching how other cities deal with the neglect issues. Staff will check on this and update the Board by email.

11.C Research into City Ordinances regarding demolition and property maintenance – covered in 11.B above.

12. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Board member DeLeeuw asked for an update on what properties have been approved by HSPB and sent to City Council, but have not been approved nor had any action by Council, and what properties are next in line.

Board member Strahl asked for an update on the Oasis Commercial Building which has already been nominated by HSPB for Class 1 designation.

Board member Marshall asked about status of La Serena Villas potential sale, future of the site.

Staff will follow-up, review with Chair Williams, bring it back to HSPB if needed, or move it on to Council. La Serena Villas are monitored on a bi-weekly basis by code enforcement and building inspectors. It appears to be about the same. The City is not privy to what is happening between the current owners and any potential buyers. The property owners have asked for additional time and the Council has granted that. There will be a hearing in April about the Stay of Demolition.

Chair Williams reported there was a 25% increase in attendance for Modernism Week this year over 2008 and over a \$2 million economic impact to the City. She reminded everyone that the California Preservation Foundation's Annual Conference is here in Palm Springs April 16 – 19. Volunteers from the community to assist during the Conference are being sought – Emily Christie at the P.S. Museum is coordinating the volunteers – those interested please call 322-4818. Volunteers will get free access to many of the events.

13. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 a.m. in memory of Diane Bullock to its regularly scheduled meeting on April 14, 2009 in the Large Conference Room at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning