

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD (HPAB) MEETING MINUTES

Date: Thursday, June 11, 2009

Time: 1:10 p.m.

Location: Pinellas County Planning Department Conference Room

Attendees: Commissioner Karen Seel (presiding), Brian K. Smith, Ellen Babb, W.H. (Wally) Clark, Gina Clayton, Joan Deming, Terry Fortner, Kim Hinder, Becky Nielsen, Robert N. Ray, Gordon Beardslee, Marcel Mohseni, David Sadowsky, and Colleen Tracy

- I. Call to Order** – Commissioner Seel called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.
- II. Minutes of Thursday, April 9, 2009** – Motion was made that the minutes be approved; motion approved and carried.
- III. Review of Committee Membership** - Brian Smith remarked on the fact that the Historic Preservation Advisory Task Force (HPAF) was created by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) in 2005 with 15 members. The Historic Preservation Ordinance No. 08-11, which was passed in 2008, then recognized the 15-member Task Force as the 15-member Advisory Board for the first two years. Two members of the Advisory Board, Bob Jeffrey and Cheryl Robinson, have moved on and these positions are vacant. Gina Clayton of Clearwater and Loretta Wyandt of Oldsmar are receptive to serving on this Board. The Ordinance is silent on how to make follow-up appointments. It says only that the Advisory Board will continue; therefore, Brian is not sure if formal action by the whole BCC is required. Dave Sadowsky of the County Attorney's Office noted that a committee usually recommends a slate to the BCC, and the BCC decides whether to accept that slate or not. The final consensus was to present an entire slate (including the two new members) to the BCC for approval.
- IV. Review of the May 28, 2009, Workshop** – Commissioner Seel said that she was pleased with the attendance of about 50 people. The attendees left with a good sense of where the HPAB is going and with a favorable impression of the Heritage Village library/archives and educational programs.

Board members then moved on to discuss the matrix entitled Issues Summary from the Preservation Workshop of May 28, 2009, created by Cyndi Tarapani. This matrix lists issues ranked in order of importance by the attendees. The following top-ranked concerns were discussed by HPAB members.

Add Historic Preservation into the Comprehensive Plan – This is already being accomplished.

Preservation in Schools - Commissioner Seel has talked with Cyndi about setting up a meeting with Julie Janssen, Superintendent of Pinellas County Schools. Apparently under state law, if vacant school properties go to surplus then charter schools have first rights of refusal. If the charter school accepts the property, the School Board must expend monies to bring the school up to ADA standards and other code deficiencies. The School Board is therefore reluctant to surplus any such properties. Various comments were made by HPAB members. Perhaps the School Board could possibly carve out an exemption for designated historic property and the state law could be amended to this effect. There are exceptions in the Florida Building Code for local and nationally registered landmarks; there are allowances made regarding codes. Marcel is willing to research this situation in relation to state and/or local legislation. Gina Clayton noted that Clearwater staff had met with School Board staff regarding South Ward. The idea was to establish a working relationship with the Economic Development Department to find an

affordable housing developer that would incorporate the school into any project that might occur there. However, School Board staff was reluctant to commit regarding what may happen to South Ward School at that time. Gina will accompany Commissioner Seel and Cyndi to the meeting with Julie Janssen.

Help for Historic Homeowners – This involves moving the Toolbox forward.

Adds Historic Preservation into Zoning Code – Brian commented that the Comprehensive Plan is now being changed, the package is being drafted, and then work will begin on the Code.

Tax Abatement Ordinance – Incorporate this with the Help for Historic Homeowners issue. The County ordinance is already on record, and it is a matter of the cities coming up with similar ordinances. The County could work with the municipalities on draft ordinances as the County ordinance varies on what they wish to have in place. After general discussion, the consensus was to provide a link on the web site to access the historic preservation ordinances of Belleair, St. Pete Beach, and St. Petersburg since these cities already have local ordinances.

Grant Writing – This topic was not discussed and the HPAB moved on to the next subject.

Prepare Historic Preservation Ordinance – Commissioner Seel asked if there was something else that the group should be working on. Terry Fortner mentioned that with 2012 in sight, the various ideas suggested for celebrating the Pinellas County Centennial could be held up as goals for Centennial events. It was noted that other lower-ranked issues such as Architecture and History Book/Brochure and Design Review could be rolled into Help for Historic Homeowners/Toolbox items along with the Federal tax program. Ellen Babb said that she will be meeting with Jim Schnur, past president of the Pinellas County Historical Society and professor at Eckerd College and University of South Florida (USF), St. Petersburg. Both of them will meet in late July with a book publisher about a possible Centennial Book on Pinellas County history. The book may also serve as a fundraiser for Heritage Village. Brian mentioned that the lower-ranked Survey of Historic Districts and Sites issue has already been accomplished; it is now just a matter of maintenance. Terry Fortner, Marcel Mohseni, and Commissioner Seel discussed the necessity for educating government staff about historically designated properties in relation to building codes, and so forth.

- V. **Review and Action on County Comprehensive Plan Policies** – Marcel conducted a general overview of requested changes by various HPAB members that he incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan Policies. These proposed changes are highlighted in **gray**.

5.3.24 Policy:

Pinellas County shall continue to conduct oral interviews to gather information about historical cultural resources with the County.

6.1.1. Policy:

Pinellas County shall work with owners of all Florida Master Site File (FMSF) listed properties, in particular members of the Ozona and Crystal Beach communities to gauge the level of support for nominating these properties and those of Crystal Beach and Ozona for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and for listing on the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Overlay Zoning District (HPO).

6.1.3 Policy:

Pinellas County shall continue to assist municipalities, as appropriate, with nominations of eligible sites for listing on the National Register and shall coordinate with municipalities in the review of existing National Register historic boundaries and contributing properties as necessary.

6.1.4 Policy:

Pinellas County shall prepare National Register nominations for all individually eligible resources as determined by State Historic Preservation Office.

6.1.7 Policy:

To promote local historic preservation incentives available to municipalities, Pinellas County shall work and coordinate with municipalities that have adopted a local historic property tax exemption ordinance similar to the Pinellas County Historic Property Tax Exemption Ordinance contained in Section 118-161/173 of the Pinellas County Code.

6.1.8 Policy:

By 2010, Pinellas County shall amend the Historic Preservation Ordinance adopted in 1992 in order to meet the program requirements of becoming a Certified Local Government (CLG), and provide technical assistance to increase the number of municipalities participating in the state CLG program.

Commissioner Seel asked if there were any comments. Motion was made to approve the changes in the policies and it was seconded; the vote of HPAB members was unanimous.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

- A. **Toolbox Subcommittee** – No report was given. It is necessary to find someone who has the expertise and time to embark on this. Commissioner Seel will once again see if Bob Jeffrey can make any recommendations. It's worth a try to obtain state funding once monies are available again.
- B. **Program/Education Subcommittee** – Subcommittee activity was previously covered under agenda Item IV: Review of the May 28, 2009, Workshop.
- C. **Demolition/Finance Subcommittee** – Subcommittee meeting was held on April 22, 2009, and the attendees were: Sam Casella, Wally Clark, Marcel Mohseni, Becky Nielsen, and David Sadowsky. A summary of the meeting listed nine items. The meeting focused on two main concerns. The first is if a property comes up for **demolition**, what happens. The second involves looking at **financial incentives**.

Becky addressed the first two items.

1. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for demolition is very broad and that is the problem. Becky referred to two flow charts, the following one in particular.
2. This flow chart delineates the role of the HPAB in the overall Historic Preservation designation process. At this point, Becky stressed that nothing can be done unless the resource in question has been designated historic; that the process is fairly simple; yet there are not that many resources with that designation in Pinellas County. The consultant work is finished; the survey and inventory are already in place. The next step is to get these resources designated. In cases of designated properties, there is a bit more effort that local authorities have to go through for

the resource to be demolished. Also, in going through the COA review process, by having this group “in the loop,” the HPAB will have a role in making that decision.

Marcel reiterated that Pinellas County has a Historic Preservation Ordinance adopted in 1992 and amended in 1994. The purpose was to designate historic significance to properties and archaeological resources as historic preservation overlay zoning districts. The idea of the “designation” flow chart is to incorporate the HPAB as a review/recommendation body to the BCC for designated historic properties. Previously this has been done through staff, the zoning examiner, and so forth. If the HPAB serves as a review/recommendation body to the BCC, this process would qualify Pinellas County as a Certified Local Government (CLG).

Discussion ensued whether a HPAB Public Hearing was actually required. As represented on the flow chart [flow chart actually refers to HPAB Public Meeting], this step is in addition to the LPA Public Hearing (Report) and the BCC Public Hearing and Action. Consensus was to keep it simple. A public hearing can be decided upon if the issue is controversial; it does not need to be a required step. Dave Sadowsky questioned whether this was with or without owner consent. He also noted the initiation step; Pinellas County initiates it, where does the homeowner sign off on it. Dave further commented that the fact that it is a public hearing doesn't mean there has to be advertising in the paper. It just means the public has an opportunity to be heard and the public has to be notified. Kim Hinder [City of St. Petersburg] observed, “We have a sign that goes up in front of the property and a notification is mailed to everybody within 200 feet.” Gina Clayton mentioned that this is the same process in Clearwater. There are two public hearings, one in LPA and one in City Council. Gordon Beardslee remarked that the HPAB recommendation probably would be more technical in nature, that is, does it meet the historical criteria to be designated.

As far as initiation goes, Kim questioned whether the application process for designation is only by the property owner or Pinellas County; or should the application process also be open to nonprofit organizations. In a situation like the Belleview Biltmore Hotel, historical societies could then submit an application possibly against the property owners' will. However, the application still could be processed. In St. Petersburg, any resident or group can submit an application for designation and it can be processed. It requires a super majority of the commission to approve it if it's not by owner consent. Comment was made to model Pinellas County's designation process on that of St. Petersburg. In the end, the consensus was to change the wording on the flow chart to include “initiation ... by property owner,” “initiation ... by the County,” and “initiation ... by others.” With these changes the flow chart was then acceptable to the HPAB. A final comment observed that the designation process usually takes about three months from initiation to approval or denial.

Marcel then moved on to the next item from the meeting summary:

3. The Proposed Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Review Process flow chart incorporates the HPAB in this procedure, which is modeled on that of St. Petersburg. This meets another CLG requirement.

A lengthy, very involved discussion centered on the following text in the COA flow chart:

Property owner plans exterior renovations or is proposing demolition or new construction of a designated historic property over \$50, 000 (under \$50, 000 reviewed by staff)

Final consensus was to rethink and rework the text and remove demolition from the flow chart. Consider another COA process for demolition. Develop an appropriate review process for decision-making on proposed demolition.

Becky proceeded onto the item dealing with the small number of resources designated as historic.

4. Present inventory consists of approximately 10,000 resources. The consultant review and recommendations have already been made. So, start with the resources either eligible for or already having National Register status and award them local designation. Those two groups of resources can filter up to the top. Suggest ranking and recommending five properties a year to the BCC for historic designation.

Remaining items were covered by Becky and/or Marcel accompanied by HPAB members' comments.

5. Pinellas County Government should seek local designation for any historically significant properties it owns: those eligible for or presently on the list of the National Register. The Taylor property owned by Pinellas County is eligible for the National Register, and it has been certified with Largo as a local site. Heritage Village will be eligible for the National Register as a historic site at 50 years of age (1976-2026). State-owned properties, for example, a bridge, perhaps can also be considered. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is assessing its bridges next year and mid-century bridges will be on the radar for the first time.
6. Reiterated this item that Pinellas County should work with local municipalities to help prepare local historic preservation ordinances/get local ordinances passed.
7. Summarize the importance of historic designation and that the process is simple. Marcel showed two educational materials. The pamphlet discusses the 1992 Historic Preservation ordinance, the first in Pinellas County. The flyer was never actually distributed but focuses on design guidelines for the Old Palm Harbor-Downtown Zoning District and the Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District. Perhaps the pamphlet can be updated. Send letters with revised pamphlets to targeted homeowners whose properties qualify for historic designation.
8. Revisit existing Pinellas County programs contained in the Pinellas County Code, Chapter 146.7. Incentives.
 - (a) Determine that Pinellas County's existing programs are known and the processes easier to accomplish and then facilitate use of such incentives. There have been a lot of creative things the County has done; identify them and make the process a little bit easier. Marcel noted flexibility with building codes and exemption of zoning fees.
 - (b) Marcel outlined some incentives including the use of Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) monies and Community Development Block Grant/Housing and Urban Development (CDBG/HUD) resources. These cover low interest loans (one loan for a building in Downtown Palm Harbor), façade improvements for commercial buildings (up to \$6,000 per side at that time), and so forth. Such programs have used in the past and can be used again as funding becomes available.
9. Pinellas County should consider Federal stimulus funds. Many programs receiving funds are being developed. Apply for some of these; make the case that the funding could benefit

historic preservation as well. Attachment A [to the Subcommittee meeting summary] outlines possible uses of stimulus funds for historic preservation. Pinellas County has been looking at the funding categories of Energy Efficiency and Transportation. Mention was made of the Energy Efficiency Block Grant. The Land Development Code is being updated for energy efficiency. Commissioner Seel also mentioned the Land Development Code, noting the historic preservation piece should be involved in that in a stronger way. Determine what parts of the Code are relevant to historic preservation; present them to this group for consideration.

Commissioner Seel recapped the Demolition/Finance Subcommittee items in the following order.

- Detailed COA flow chart comments/proposed changes; this encompasses Items 1 and 2;
- Reviewed “designation” flow chart regarding the issue of public hearing(s) throughout the designation process/Zoning Overlay/Considered as Rezoning – Item 3;
- Mentioned obtaining a local designation for the Taylor House as a first step for Item 5;
- Looking over the survey report from New South Consultants and identifying five properties for local designation during the next year – Item 4;
- Brian and Commissioner Seel will handle Item 6 – Assist local municipalities preparing historic preservation ordinances and identifying properties for local historic designation;
- Items 8 and 9 to be addressed in relation to the Land Development Code, update of Code for energy efficiency, and application for Federal stimulus funding program(s);
- Item 7 is the Toolbox; also, update the pamphlet [relating to 1992 Ordinance]; put on web site.

Discussion returned to the Toolbox. Kim and Marcel thought they might have an outline on the Toolbox. The estimated cost to do the Toolbox is \$16,000 to \$18,000, and Bob Jeffrey thought that was low. Gina requested a copy of the outline. Perhaps some of the work could be divided up among staffs, and something could be put together until funding is available. Gina also suggested linking the Historic Preservation and Clearwater websites. The Clearwater web site features a PowerPoint program regarding tax credits and benefits of historic preservation. Kim said that the St. Petersburg web site has been updated. Ellen noted that St. Petersburg’s web site has information on locally designated properties, the history of the properties, and so on. She asked if there will be something like that for the National Register properties and so forth. Presently when people come to Heritage Village to do research, hard copies of materials are available on National Register properties including history of the properties, National Register applications filled out, and other information. It would be great to have such a web site or even [electronic] copies of the applications; so, if people come to do research, these are available at the Village.

Commissioner Seel noted that in regard to the Program/Education Subcommittee, its latest activity was the Education Open House held at Heritage Village. [This was covered under agenda Item IV: Review of the May 28, 2009, Workshop.]

Commissioner Seel adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.