I. Call to Order and Introductions:

A regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Board was held in Clearwater, Florida on July 19, 2017. Chairman Justice called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the May 17, 2017 meeting of the Historic Preservation Board were approved unanimously.

III. Public Hearing for Certificate of Appropriateness Application

The applicant, Thirsty Cantina, proposes a renovation adding 1,841 sq. ft. to the 1,046 contained in the existing building located at 1019 Florida Avenue. The current use as a restaurant will remain, with the additional square footage proposed coming from three areas: a 440 sq. ft. front deck to expand the outdoor seating area, an 870 sq. ft. dining pavilion that will sit in between the existing dining area and the new deck, and a 531 sq. ft. building addition on the west side of the existing building that will expand the kitchen/prep area.

The Board discussion began with Board Member Luisi inquiring about handicap accessibility. The applicant’s representative, Robert Knox, explained that the existing bathrooms will continue to comply with ADA requirements the grab bars for the outdoor ramp will be replaced with new ones, and there will be handicap parking in the front and rear of the building. Board Member Kolianos inquired about whether vertical or horizontal lap siding will be used, as there was a discrepancy in the drawings. Mr. Knox explained that all siding will be run vertically, and that the existing building will receive a new roof, soffit and fascia so that the new and existing buildings will blend together.
Additional discussion centered upon the purpose of the pavilion space, and whether the lack of grids in the windows was appropriate, which, after a discussion on contributing properties in the historic district and the neighboring properties, were found to be acceptable. After the discussion concluded, a motion was made by Board Member Smith, which was seconded by Board Member Parent, and approved unanimously.

IV. Safety Harbor African American Cemetery

Staff introduced this agenda item by summarizing a previous meeting with a group of volunteers trying to establish a non-profit with a mission to restore the Safety Harbor African American Cemetery. The meeting was attended by City Managers from Clearwater and Safety Harbor, Bill Horne and Matthew Spoor, respectively. The discussion focused on how the County and respective cities could partner to further the non-profit’s mission, with one follow-up item being inviting the volunteer group to present on the issue at a meeting of the County’s Historic Preservation Board.

Lou Claudio, a member of the cemetery volunteer group, then presented to the Board on the history of the cemetery. He began by displaying a map to show where it is located, which is on an unincorporated parcel within an enclave of the larger boundary of the City of Clearwater, just south of Sunset Point Rd. between U.S. Highway 19 and McMullen Booth Rd. Mr. Claudio indicated that the property is located in the middle of a subdivision and is approximately .75 acres large. The property was originally owned by the McMullen Family and later by Solomon Smith Coachman. The current ownership status is in limbo at the moment, as all members of the last known ownership entity are deceased, and as such the cemetery has suffered from a lack of maintenance over the last several decades. Mr. Claudio explained that since April of 2017, this group of volunteers has hosted a community volunteer day to clean up the site, and secured commitments from a local landscaper to provide routine maintenance, and a commitment from the University of South Florida to utilize its ground penetrating radar to help locate unmarked graves.

After Mr. Claudio’s presentation concluded a discussion followed on the volunteer group’s future plans with the site and the overall status of resolving the ownership issues. Jaqueline Hayes, a volunteer leading the effort for the restoration project, indicated that they are currently seeking pro bono services to help them get a clear title so that they can obtain ownership so that the cemetery can be preserved in perpetuity. Commissioner Justice suggested the group contact Brian Battaglia, who provides pro bono legal services for the NAACP and is currently assisting a group seeking to obtain ownership of Lincoln Cemetery in Gulfport. Additional suggestions made included contacting the Clearwater Bar Association as many firms are required to provide a certain amount of pro bono hours, and this project may be a good opportunity for a firm specializing in real estate law.

In addition to clearing title on the property, the volunteer group is seeking assistance clearing portions of the property that have become overgrown by large brush. Some grave markers are visible in the brush areas, and other unmarked graves are also believed to be in these areas, and the brush currently prevents the use of the ground penetrating radar equipment. The group is also trying to fundraise to install fencing and signage that can articulate the site’s historical significance. A motion was made by
Vice Chairman Smith for the Historic Preservation Board to issue a letter of support to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, encouraging it to assist this group in their efforts to restore the cemetery.

V. **FY17 Work Plan Updates:**

Staff lead a discussion pertaining to updates on progress made on the FY17 work plan, including announcing the approval of fiscal-year 2018 Historic Bridge Survey Small Matching Grant application with the State’s Division of Historical Resources. Updates to the historical marker program were also provided, including progress made toward submitting marker applications for the Andrews Memorial Chapel and the Tarpon Springs Historic District. A discussion ensued regarding a marker application for Phillipe Park, with a focus on the text to include reference to the significance of Count Odet Philippe and the Tocobaga Indians.

Staff then updated the Board on an opportunity to partner with the Clerk of the Courts on an event to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the Old Pinellas County Courthouse, as construction began in 1917. Andrew Pupke, Pinellas County’s Real Estate Management Director, reached out to inform the Planning Department of conversations with Gay Inskeep, the Courts Administrator and Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court, who had informed him that they are interested in participating in a centennial event. The Law Library has an annual open house, and it was suggested this could be a good opportunity for a joint event, if the Historic Preservation Board desired. The idea was welcomed by the Board members and staff will continue the conversation on planning the event.

The work plan discussion continued with planning for the October Historic Preservation Summit and finally concluding with an update on the Speaker’s Bureau presentations completed and scheduled in the near future. Before moving on to agenda item VI., Chairman Justice announced the resignation of Board Member Ric Ortega, whose other commitments had unfortunately left him unable to participate in Board activities to the extent he had planned. Mr. Justice thanked him for his service.

VI. **Public Comments:**

No members of the public were present to provide comments.

VII. **Board Member Comments:**

Board Member John Barie gave an update on new design guidelines and other land development regulations the St. Petersburg’s City Council was taking action on specific to their historic districts and individual landmarks.

VIII. **Chairman’s Comments:**

Chairman Justice thanked staff for the formatting of the Certificate of Appropriateness report and review materials presented to the Board, as this was the first time he had seen it since re-joining as Chairman, and he found it very helpful for discussion purposes.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.