

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, January 10, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Robert Manning.....Chairman
Robin Craig-Hunt..... Vice Chair
Bridget Trawhon..... Member
Kenneth Wheeler.....Member

Members Absent:

Codie Vasquez.....Member

Staff Present:

Kelvin Knauf, Director of Planning & Community Development
Wendy Lloyd, Planning Secretary

City Council Members Present:

None

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 8, 2022, regular meeting

Member Wheeler motioned

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Consider and possible action on application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City of Orange to demolish the structure located at 705 Orange Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated this is a structure that has some roof damage and of course with roof damage there's damage to the interior and mold. The owner has no desire to make repairs to the structure and they have actually signed a consent to demolish form with the city to give the city permission to demolish it. Before we can do that, it's in the historic district and you would have to authorize a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated when it is demolished, is it completely demolished to the ground and cleared out. Mr. Knauf stated yes slab and everything. The fence and the part that we can say for sure goes with the house, the fence goes and everything. If you have 2 properties side by side and there's a question to who owns the fence then we don't touch it. Vice

Chair Craig-Hunt stated there's a carport that connects the 2, so how are they going to handle that? Mr. Knauf stated we will just have to talk to the demolition firm about that but if it is part of the structure then that part has got to go. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated it's also part of the other house though. They are connected and the other one belongs to the other family member. Mr. Knauf stated we will have to work with that adjoining property owner. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated it's just so sad. He was asked to sell that house so many times. We would have bought it but he never wanted to sell.

Chairman Manning stated so this is the City of Orange. Mr. Knauf stated yes we are the applicant because he signed the consent to demolish we went ahead and submitted the application from the city. Chairman Manning stated so the owner has abandoned the property. Mr. Knauf stated yes. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated so then who owns it after that. Mr. Knauf stated well the owner still owns the property. They own a vacant lot. The city doesn't take possession of the property. When we demolish a structure on a property, we don't take possession of the property. We are only abating the nuisance. The 5th and 4th Amendment of the Constitution prohibits us from just taking properties without just compensation. But we can abate nuisances which is what we're doing here. The property owner will still maintain ownership of the vacant lot once the building is all cleared off. Chairman Manning stated the cost of demolition, is that recouped through a lien or is that just what the city does. Mr. Knauf stated it's just what we do because what was happening is we were filing liens and then the liens would build up and up with interest to where the property would be upside down and people couldn't sell them. So, in order to encourage people to sell them and a new buyer to come in and build we don't assess a lien. Chairman Manning stated just curious what is the cost? Do we have people we work with? Mr. Knauf stated yes we go out for bids. There's 29 properties that we are going to be going out for bids on this month. In fact, we are waiting on a court decision before we actually issue the bids. One of the 29 is on appeal so we are waiting for the appeals court to rule on that and then we will actually go out for bids. We usually get 3 to 5 bidders and each property is awarded separately so that the lowest bidder on each one is awarded rather than all or none. That way it kind of spreads it around a little bit and gives everybody more of a fair shot and that way we are assured of getting the cheapest. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated so there's that many structures all in Orange. Mr. Knauf stated yes they're scattered throughout the city.

Member Wheeler stated is there any historical significance to the house. Mr. Knauf stated no other than it being in the historic district. There's no historic marker or anything like that. Member Wheeler stated when was it built. Mr. Knauf stated I really don't know. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated well it goes back and it was a Mazzola house. It's all part of the Mazzola family because the aunt to the house we're in lived in the one to the left that you don't see there. Member Wheeler stated and the brother lived in the one to the right.

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated I don't know what's inside the house but do they ever salvage like doors and stuff like that. Mr. Knauf stated that's up to the contractor whether they want to salvage them. We would hope that they would. I wish we had a warehouse where we could keep things like door knobs and doors and things like that. Chairman Manning stated most of the time that is part of the value of the demo company bidding is they will go in and salvage the stuff that's worth anything and they'll sell those to architectural salvage places and so that's part of how they make money. Mr. Knauf stated yes and that keeps our bid a little lower because then they can make additional like you say by selling some of the salvaged. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated I'm just curious, what happens if we say no? Mr. Knauf stated it gets taken off the bid list and it just sits there and continues to deteriorate. Member Wheeler stated is he still not willing to sell it? Mr. Knauf stated not that we know of. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated I just don't understand it. I mean he could make some money off that. I know that whole back half it has a huge hole where that tree from Bob's house fell on it and they had the blue tarp on it for the longest time. We were told raccoons were living in it. It's been abandoned for quite some time. How do they handle the neighbor, Bob's fence? Mr. Knauf stated yes we would get with him on the wooden fence. We will work with the contractor on that and either say don't touch that fence or only take it down to a certain point.

Member Trawhon motioned to approve
Member Wheeler 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider and possible action on application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Maynor Vazquez to replace the windows, siding and repaint the structure located at 86 W. John Avenue

Mr. Knauf stated Maynor do you want to explain what you would like to do to this property? You're wanting to replace the windows with like windows, is that right?

Maynor Vasquez – 86 W. John, Orange, TX: Mr. Vasquez stated new windows. Mr. Knauf stated yes but same style? Mr. Vasquez stated new vinyl but different style. Mr. Knauf stated well the regulations are we try to replace like with like to preserve the original look.

Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated do you know what type of windows you're planning?" Are like 1 pane over another pane, like 1 glass over another glass? No mullions. Mr. Vasquez stated no it's only 1 over 1. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated which is pretty much there. Member Wheeler stated those are aluminum. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated they look like they're aluminum. I don't see any reason why the vinyl wouldn't be an improvement. Chairman Manning stated I like the fact that whoever did that didn't remove the casing. I don't have issue with that. Member Wheeler stated as long as you leave the casing or the trim. Mr. Vasquez stated yes around the windows will be the same but replace the siding with a smaller siding. Mr. Knauf stated not as wide or tall. Mr. Vasquez stated yes. Mr. Knauf stated so you guys are good with like 6 over 6 panes or as long as the casing is retained. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated yes. Member Wheeler stated asbestos panels are a concern. Is there asbestos there? Mr. Vasquez stated no. Member Wheeler stated just for your safety. Member Wheeler stated are you going to paint it. Mr. Vasquez stated yes. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated yes it says here brown with white trim. Chairman Manning stated and the siding is on here, Hardie board. Are you going to keep it the same configuration, horizontal? Mr. Vasquez stated yes.

Member Wheeler motioned to approve as submitted
Vice Chair Craig-Hunt 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Consider and possible action on historic landmarks in the City

Chairman stated actually I had requested at our last meeting when went through sort of the charter of this commission and it talked about consider preservation and creation of and all of that around our landmarks. So, I didn't know how many landmarks there were so I asked if we could get a list of those landmarks and sort of the historic landmark language in the ordinance. Mr. Knauf stated yes it's part of the ordinance. Chairman Manning stated yes the ordinance around designating historic landmarks. I'm not thinking there's any proposed action. I just wanted us to see what all those landmarks for Orange were. I knew of some of these and I see some of these are Texas Historical landmarks. Do we have any that are City of Orange? Mr. Knauf stated not that I know of or not that I've been able to find. Chairman Manning stated has there ever been any energy to look at – we have the Stark Foundation, we have the Heritage House, we've got the Orange County Historical Society who's constantly working on historical significance of sites and building and places. So part of our charter is to work

with those partners to do the same. So has there ever been any thought or energy around having a city historical landmark sites. Mr. Knauf stated not in the 8 years I've been here. Now before that, I really don't know. This last year we put up the historic district signs so maybe this year we start looking at city historic markers. That would be a pretty good idea I think. Chairman Manning stated I'm not pushing for this, it's just a thought. Maybe that has to do with like my home was built by William H. Litchfield and we talked about the signs in Vermont as you drive around most towns and there's a simple sign that just basically says the circa, the building of the house and when. That's something when I ride around old towns and I go to historic districts and think that's cool. You go through Galveston and you see those survivor markers for the ones that survived the flood. So with that charter in mind with all the other organizations within the county and not having Orange historical markers. It could be business buildings. It could be our homes. It doesn't have to be a huge expense because I know if you go for a Texas marker there's all the provenance that has to go into it. There's the expense of the sign and the post and all the regulations that go around it. We could virtually do it with partnerships with other organizations to make it cheap almost free to the owners of the property. It's just something I kind of wanted to get out there. If it's not the circa signs represented by the city with the city logo or have that look. It would certainly go a long ways. You know my home, the Starks didn't build it, it doesn't have that significance but it's an old survivor of Orange and there are many like it. So, just a thought and that would be a great way for us to work with partners if that was the Stark Foundation or the Historical Society. Because it wouldn't be us deciding whose house gets a sign. It would be hey I'd like to have one of those. It gives the commission a little bit different discussion than just coming in and doing certificates of appropriateness for tearing down buildings.

Member Wheeler stated another thing is the volunteers down at the Historical Society would love to do things like that. They love that and matter of fact, I'm in the process of getting the state marker for my house. Jerry Pennington has spent many hours researching all the things on my house. That being said, does that have to be permitted through you all? Mr. Knauf stated I would have to research that but I don't think so. If not then, then we can somehow write an ordinance to where the city because the purpose is we want to encourage and we don't want to make it difficult for people to get a marker. It's kind of like Yardi-gras decorations and stuff. We don't regulate that either. Member Wheeler stated I can ask Jerry. I know we just did one for the Depot and we did one for his house as well. This is the time when we're about to apply. There's a certain time of year to apply for the state markers. We're about to go through that process. I'm wondering was there a permit process through the city to do that. Mr. Knauf stated I don't think so. I don't think that's something we're going to push. That would be interfering with a state function and legally we can't do that. As far as the local, I think what I can do is get with Hillary over at city hall and come up with a design and run that by you like we did the signs. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated for all of these. Mr. Knauf stated no they're already there. That's the state historic markers. But for the city landmarks, come up with a design for that and run that by you and see what you think. The organizations maybe invite them to a meeting here and talk about it. Member Wheeler stated yes Jerry would be a good one to speak on that along with inviting West Orange because there's those very significant old houses in West Orange that would be nice to get them recognized as well. Mr. Knauf stated but I think it's a very doable project. I think it would be a good project that people would take an interest in. One of the things that I think during the day is go take pictures of all these markers and put them on the website as well as that map. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated that is a great idea. Mr. Knauf stated that way people that are interested in history might look at these markers and go I really want to go see that. We could have a whole web page dedicated to historic markers where you could take a tour. A lot of local people don't know about the history of Orange and it's important that they know. Chairman Manning stated my thought around this was not so much the product itself but the opportunity. We've got 3 or 4 different organizations that I would call partners of this commission based on charter. To have representatives of those organizations and this wouldn't necessarily be a charge of the city. This would be the commission of the city working with our partners together. So, the design might come from a combination of the organizations as well. Mr. Knauf stated right where maybe they buy into the design but at least we could throw something out there that they can add to. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt stated so this design what are you referring to? Chairman Manning stated a circa yard sign. Vice Chair Craig-Hunt

stated I mean the historical marker does that right? Member Wheeler stated don't get them mixed up. You've got the state markers like what they have at the school and these are just little circa yard signs that are circle and you've seen them. They say circa 1906 or they can also have whoever's home it was in 1906 or something like that. Mr. Knauf stated or City of Orange Landmark and then the year it was built, something like that with a little logo there is something I would envision. Certainly, we are open to ideas. Chairman Manning stated it's basically as I travel around say in Georgia and see all these really beautiful homes but I don't see anything about them. But I go to another town and every house or every other house has a sign or post and the signs all look the same. It's an organized city. Mr. Knauf stated you go to New England, they're all over the place.

Member Wheeler motioned to proceed with idea & pursue potential action for Orange historic landmark signs
Member Trahon 2nd

Vote: 4 – 0

Motion Carries

Chairman Manning adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.