



HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES

7:00 p.m., March 25, 2002
City Council Meeting Chambers
One North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, California 94022

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair McChesney, Vice-Chair Foerster; Commissioners Carpenter, Hull, Humphries, and McDonald. Absent: Sandoval

MINUTES

Corrections: The year on the “50th Anniversary” exhibit was corrected to Aug. 18, 2002 with the exhibit ending on January 5, 2003. Approval of the minutes of the February 25, 2002 meeting, was moved by Commissioner Carpenter, seconded by Commissioner McDonald.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Members of the audience may bring to the attention of the commission any item that is not on the agenda. Speakers are given up to three (3) minutes. State law prohibits the Commission from acting on items that do not appear on the agenda.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Chairperson’s report: There was a discussion of the General Plan and the City of Los Altos landmark process. The definition of a landmark here might benefit from clearer language. 316 Main St. could retain its plaque as a site; however, the building might be eligible for declassification—if the integrity is compromised.

Commissioner Sandoval needs to review for the Commission his analysis of the building.

Commissioner Reports:

1. Vice-Chair Foerster speaking for the General Plan Historic Elements comments mentioned that the City of Sacramento has a good historic element in their general plan. The sub-committee of Hull, Foerster, and Sandoval met once to review historic preservation ordinances and elements of other cities’ General Plans. Chair McChesney reported that Mountain View is rewriting theirs and that more information will be available later.

2. Essay Contest Report: 866 essays were received. The winners will be honored at the Ice Cream Social on Tuesday, May 14, at the Los Altos History Museum garden or patio; Program at 6 pm.
3. Discussion of Historic Ordinances received from other cities; and cities still important to collect and review.
4. Commissioner Hull reported on the joint sub-committee meeting with the Planning Commission. Kate Disney and Phoebe Bressack represented the planning commission; Humphries and Hull presented the Historical Commission's power point presentation on the HRI, incentives for historic preservation, etc. The meeting was productive and both commissions brought good ideas to the evening (historical commission staff liaison was also present.).
5. Commissioner Humphries and Hull had worked with the library on labeling for the Historical Commission videotape collection (the documentation tapes from the Los Altos History Television shows). She updated the Commission on the excellent support from the library, particularly Susan Yip, on the project for buying additional books and resources for the public on historic preservation and maintenance of older buildings and homes. The need for a clear flow chart for homeowners remodeling or purchasing and remodeling homes was reiterated. The website will probably be the lead way for the Commission to assist citizens; the brochure or pamphlet will probably be quite similar to something that can be printed out from the website. Perhaps, the information will be presented graphically in a different manner on a copied hand-out (perhaps, a two-fold, card rack size pamphlet...) yet the content and copy will be similar. Also, the website and printed matter needs to be flexible and updatable.
6. The Historical Commission expressed concern that the Commission's portion of the City's website is out of date. Commissioner Hull had contacted the City, and as a result, David Ramburn at the City of Palo Alto who has the contract to maintain the City of Los Altos' website. A motion was made by Commissioner Hull that the Historical Commission identify the internal contact within the City of Los Altos, send a memo requesting that changes to the Historical Commission's web site pages be handled in a timely manner, and offering Commission volunteer time and resources to maintain the Historical Commission's section of the web site. The motion was made by Commissioner Hull, seconded by Commissioner Carpenter and discussion followed. The motion was amended to include Commissioner Humphries' plan to use the website more proactively in the future; so that citizens who want information on maintaining and preserving a historic home or building can print out information from the City website. Motion re-made by Commissioner Hull; seconded by Carpenter; vote was unanimous. Chair McChesney will prepare a memo based on the motion, and forward it to the appropriate city staff person.
7. Commissioners Carpenter and McDonald spoke briefly about the "Homes and Gardens of Los Altos: The Architectural Heritage Show," (Reception and opening May 9 – ends August 18, '02) and the related "Home and Garden Tour." McDonald has been working on Nan Geschke's research team for the

“Garden” exhibit. Carpenter presented on the team that is researching and developing the “Los Altos: Celebrating 50 Years of Community” exhibit. The team has broken into decades from 1952 to 2002 and there will be links between wider national events and culture and events in Los Altos. Links between the second floor “Crown of the Peninsula” topics and the History House exhibit will also be made (The History House opening to the public in 1977 was a 25th Anniversary of Incorporation project.) Educational programs or services to support the exhibit will need to come from the Museum’s Education Committee or other partners; the exhibit committee correctly is focusing on the exhibit script and storyline and artifacts and images that bring the timeline alive.

8. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair: Chair McChesney nominated Vice-Chair Foerster to serve as Chair; seconded by Commissioner McDonald; unanimous. Commissioner McChesney nominated Commissioner Carpenter to serve as Vice-Chair this year; seconded by Commissioners Hull and McDonald; unanimous. Vice-Chair Carpenter recommended that Chair McChesney and Vice-Chair Foerster be thanked by the Commission and the staff for their service this past year. Unanimous!

HISTORY MUSEUM REPORT/STAFF REPORT

Attendance at the museum is going well; in the “President’s Pen’ column in the museum newsletter, Bob Grimm, reported that nearly 12,000 visitors and rental clients had been served in the museum’s first full year of operation for the public. Staff commented that in Spring 1999, the museum association had 75 active volunteers and the present force is about 175 active volunteers. This dramatic and necessary change is how 10,500 general visitors were served—about 25% of visitors served have come on special tours scheduled outside the Thursday through Sunday, noon to 4 pm public hours.

OTHER MATTERS/NEW BUSINESS/WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE:

Commissioners Hull and Carpenter will attend parts of the California Preservation Foundation’s conference in Santa Rosa. They took registration forms.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Carpenter moved to adjourn, seconded by Chair Foerster. The Commission adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

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