



HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES

7:00 p.m., Monday, April 28, 2008
Los Altos Community Meeting Chambers
One North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, California 94022

CALL TO ORDER

Vice- Chair MARFATIA called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair BAKER, Vice-Chair MARFATIA, Commissioners DREWES, LONEY and HAMBLIN

Staff: Staff Liaison DAHL and Assistant Planner LACEY

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Val Carpenter thanked the Commission for their hard work and noted that the City was actively working to fill the two vacant Commission positions.

Chair BAKER arrived.

MINUTES

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER DREWES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MARFATIA, to approve the March 24, 2008 meeting minutes as amended.

THE MOTION CARRIED 4-1 WITH COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN OPPOSED.

DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC INTEREST ITEMS

1. 735 Campbell Avenue

Assistant Planner LACEY presented the staff report and answered questions, noting that there was extensive damage to the structure caused by termites and rot.

The project contractor noted that the owner planned on preserving the design of the historic structure, but due to the extensive damage, everything would need to be demolished and rebuilt. It was also noted that some of the clay tile and the lentel above the front door would be salvaged and used on the new structure.

The Commission expressed concern that the structure would be removed from the HRI due to the demolition, but noted that it is a low ranking historic structure and that the contractor was required by law to fix all termite/rot damage once identified. Two Commissioners recommended trying to salvage the windows and roof tiles before demolition.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN, SECONDED BY VICE-CHAIR MARFATIA, to approve the demolition of the historically significant residence.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. Historic Resources Inventory Update

Historic Consultant, Sheila McElroy, presented the methodology that will be used for the first phase of the HRI update and made herself available for questions. She noted that while she will be using the Kalman Scale to rank the new properties, the City may want to consider switching the ranking system to the State's historic ranking system, which is more widely used.

The Commission discussed the HRI update process, remarking that there was a need to make the City's criteria and ranking system more consistent with the State standards.

Laura Bajuk with the Los Altos History Museum stated that the Museum would be able to assist with various levels of historical research if needed.

NO MOTION

Commissioner HAMBLIN left.

3. Historic Preservation Code Amendment

Staff Liaison DAHL presented the staff report and answered questions.

A member of the public spoke in support of public notification for projects on historic properties and encouraged the Commission to recommend public notification for all historic projects.

The Commission expressed support for requiring public notification for historic projects, noting that opening up the process to the public would be a good thing, the public could provide more information to the Commission and, given the relatively small number of projects that come before the Commission, all historic projects should provide public notification. One Commissioner noted that requiring public notification for all historic projects could be a burden on historic property owners but that the public notification could still be a net benefit. The Commission also voiced support for the proposed modification to the historic classifications.

MOTION BY VICE-CHAIR MARFATIA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DREWES, to recommend approval of the Code Amendments to Chapter 12.44 subject to the recommended findings, with the additional recommendation that:

- The public notification requirement include historically important and historically significant properties.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Certified Local Government Grants

The Commission discussed applying for an OHP grant for the 2009-2010 budget year to update the entire HRI, the historic property rating system and the City's Context statement. A Commissioner noted that it would be very useful to hold a study session with the historic consultant to help prepare the grant application.

Staff noted that the Commission should obtain the Council's approval before moving forward with a grant application.

MOTION BY VICE-CHAIR MARFATIA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DREWES, to present the City Council with a proposal to pursue a grant to update the City's Historical Resources Inventory and produce a Context Statement.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Los Altos Styles Guidebook

The Commission discussed working with the Planning Commission to update the City's Design Review Guidelines to include more information about historical architecture and design. A Commissioner noted that there were other more pressing issues that should be addressed first.

ITEM TABLED FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION.

6. Secretary of the Interior Standards for Historic Preservation

The Commission discussed the Secretary of the Interior Standards for historic preservation and how they could be applied during project review, with a focus on alterations and additions and the balance between imitation and complete differentiation. The Commission noted that rather than requiring complete differentiation for new additions, minor changes to differentiate, such as different textures or colors, would be more desirable for historic projects. The Commission also noted that additional information about historic preservation should be made available to the public.

NO MOTION

COMMISSION REPORTS

7. City Council Meeting Assignments

The Commission reviewed the revised City Council meeting assignments memorandum and did not request any schedule changes.

8. Historical Essay Contest and Ice Cream Social

Commissioner LONEY reported that almost 500 essays were submitted, that there were a total of 12 winners from both public and private schools, that the winner certificates had been printed, the schools notified and that the ice cream social was scheduled for May 13, 2008.

Chair BAKER thanked Commissioner LONEY for all of his hard work on the essay contest.

DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chair BAKER requested that the following items be added to the next agenda of the Historical Commission:

1. The Community Picnic
2. Certified Local Government Grants
3. Historical Preservation Ordinance Amendments for:
 - a. Re-evaluation of HRI properties
 - b. Supporting Data
 - c. Structure demolition
4. Historical Review Process Handout Modification

ADJOURNMENT

Chair BAKER adjourned the meeting at 9:40 PM.