

## Historic Preservation Commission

### June 19, 2018 Meeting Minutes

#### A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### B. Roll Call

**Present:** Chairman Pamela Sue Anderson, Commissioner Blane Conklin, Commissioner Patti Jordan, and Vice-Chair Sharon Whitaker. Alternate Commissioner Frank Darr was in the audience.

**Absent:** Commissioner Paul Emerson.

**Staff present:** Principal Planner Joelle Jordan and Planning Technician Kerstin Harding

**Also Present:** Round Rock Preservation President Shirley Margardt and Certificate of Appropriateness applicants Becky Navarro, Robert Levin, and Travis Sheets

#### C. Citizen Communication

Round Rock Preservation (RRP) President Shirley Margardt reported that work on the Stagecoach Inn had progressed to masonry repairs. She announced that Round Rock Preservation will have a booth at Round Rock Market Days on Saturday, August 4, and would hold its annual membership meeting in the Baca Center the same day at 10:30. She invited the audience to attend the meeting.

#### D. Approval of Minutes

**D.1 Consider approval of the minutes of the May 15, 2018 Historic Preservation Commission meeting.**

**Motion:** by Commissioner Whitaker and Second by Commissioner Conklin to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2018 HPC meeting as submitted.

**Vote:** Aye: Chair Anderson, Commissioner Conklin, Commissioner Jordan, and Vice-Chair Whitaker. Nay: none. The vote was 4-0.

#### E. Certificates of Appropriateness

**E.1 Consider an action regarding a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the caretaker's cottage at 405 E. Main Street.**

Principal Planner Jordan briefly described the Nelson-Crier house at 405 E. Main Street. The large brick home was built in a Queen Anne style from 1895-1900, then was redesigned in a Classical Revival Style in 1931. The building is a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark as well as a City landmark, and its Historic (H) overlay zoning covers the entire block, including outbuildings.

The owners had requested a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoFA) for demolition of the servant cottage/studio. The application included additional requests, which either have been processed administratively, require Texas Historical Commission (THC) review, or contain insufficient information for administrative or commission review, but the applicant specifically requested that the demolition item be addressed at this meeting.

The cottage/studio was constructed in phases. The northern part was the original servant cottage, built at the same time as the main house. The southern part was a garage built between 1902 and 1916, and was originally at the southern edge of the property. In the late 1960s the owner relocated the garage closer to the servant quarters and built a contemporary structure joining them. The applicant proposed to demolish all parts of the structure.

Ms. Jordan noted that there is a set of additional criteria to be considered for a CoFA for demolition, listed under Section 46-99 (h) (3).

Staff analysis determined that the northern (cottage) part of the building is the most historically significant. The applicant proposed replacing it with a new structure that will be submitted for HPC review in July. Staff asked the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for an informal review, because although it had previously determined that the outbuildings did not require RTHL review for

appropriateness, the applicant intends to apply for the state tax exemption, which has a broader scope that will include them. Staff requested the informal review for their advice and so that their review would be consistent with the THC's.

The applicant provided a report from a structural engineer that concluded the building is impractical to renovate. Round Rock building inspectors visited the site and believe that the bottoms of the studs are probably rotten.

Staff recommended denying the CoFA for demolition of the northern (cottage) section, but allow demolition of the other sections. Staff was not convinced that all other options had yet been exhausted. Denial can delay demolition of the structure for up to 120 days, but staff recommends allowing the waiting period to be cancelled if the HPC approves an alternative plan for the building.

Owner Rob Levin took the podium and said he had two disagreements with the staff presentation. He had a memo from Ogee Preservation, whose assessment of the building concluded that the north porch and the southern two sections had been added in the 1960s, and that the servants' cottage had originally been simple and unadorned, except for the metal ridge cresting. He also noted that the last two sentences in the engineer's report were "Based on the age of the front section of the building the foundation is stacked rocks and cannot be stabilized. Therefore, it does not appear practical to renovate the building and should be demolished." In addition to the structure's unsoundness its location complicates the other site requirements and permit scheduling.

Commissioner Conklin asked for clarification since the staff analysis had said that the servants' cottage was relatively unaltered, but Mr. Levin said that it had been altered. Mr. Levin explained that most of the alterations had been made in the 1960s when the additions were made. He showed a few photos with the servants' cottage partially visible in the background that were taken before the home's 1931 remodel, one with a stable in the background that had been torn down before 1916. Commissioner Conklin asked staff about the additional criteria for a CoFA for demolition and whether they applied if the structure had been significantly altered. Ms. Jordan replied that significance is not just in architectural integrity, but also about its historical function. The additional criteria apply to any CoFA for demolition.

Mr. Levin expressed frustration because his group had determined that the building could not be re-used for the purposes required (public rest rooms and a ready room), and at potential delay in design and construction that a waiting period would cause. Chair Anderson explained that the Commission's purpose is to preserve historic properties, and she didn't feel like the Commission had enough information about other alternatives, such as whether it could be relocated. Ms. Jordan assured him that the waiting period wouldn't need to be a whole 120 days; if the design progressed and a site plan approved, the Commission could cut it short and approve the demolition. Commissioner Jordan said that she understood that substantial site requirements were necessary to convert the property to an event facility, but she wanted to be certain that the cottage portion of the building couldn't be relocated before approving the demolition. Ms. Jordan noted that in the past, with other projects, they had seen that projects evolve, and sometimes had approved major alterations that later turned out to be unnecessary. Chair Anderson clarified that what she wanted to see was a thorough investigation of all alternatives to demolition. She understood that sometimes there is no other options, but that sometimes they emerge, and before allowing a structure to be gone forever, she wanted to be sure that all other options really were exhausted.

**Motion:** by Commissioner Conklin and Second by Commissioner Whitaker to deny the CoFA for demolition of the north section of the structure, but to allow demolition of the middle and south sections. The Commission thus imposes a 120-day delay period that may be cancelled if the HPC approves an alternative plan.

The Commission needs more input for alternatives to demolition, either to use the front section where it stands, attached to the new structures, or explore what removal would entail. The Commission's preference is to preserve as much of the historically significant part of the building as possible, ensure that all other options for siting the restrooms are exhausted, and to ensure that new construction should be compatible with the site and the area without creating a replica.

All other items in the application of June 5, 2018 are to be reviewed administratively or have been deemed incomplete and require additional information and/or state review to process.

**Vote:** Aye: Chair Anderson, Commissioner Conklin, Commissioner Jordan, and Vice-Chair Whitaker. Nay: none. The vote was 4-0.

## F. Presentations

**F.1 Consider a presentation regarding updates to the City’s Preservation Plan for adoption in 2020.**

Planning Intern Nicole Haggerty explained that staff is starting a review of its Preservation Plan as part of its Comprehensive Planning process, with anticipated adoption in 2020. The previous Comprehensive Plan was the first to include a Historic Preservation chapter, and the Commission will discuss updates at its August work session. The new Preservation Plan will be part of the Comprehensive Plan, but will also serve as a stand-alone document.

The Preservation Plan is a requirement of the Certified Local Government program, and is a formal document describing policies and procedures regarding the community’s historic resources, assesses existing conditions, and makes recommendations for the future. Several of the recommendations from the Preservation Plan adopted in 2010 have been wholly or partially implemented, including clarifying preservation language in the zoning ordinance, establishing administrative review for some CofAs, implementing an education and awareness program, and adopting the International Existing Building Code. The inventory of historic structures and sites was partially completed as part of the Downtown Master Plan, and private citizens have created a nonprofit preservation advocacy group. Less progress has been made in financing the city’s preservation programs and identifying public and private funding sources for owners of historic properties to make improvements.

She asked that the Commissioner consider the city’s preservation accomplishments of the past decade. At the August work session discussion will focus on recommendations for content to the Preservation Plan as a starting point for public outreach and discussion. The Preservation Plan will be subject to the same overall public input process as the rest of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Jordan clarified that the Preservation Plan is distinct from the HPC goals and objectives, although there will be some overlap. The Preservation Plan is more for broader policy considerations.

**I. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Kerstin Harding  
Planning Technician

