

CORONADO HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

December 3, 2003

A regular meeting of the Coronado Historic Resource Commission was called to order at 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, December 3, 2003, at the Coronado Police Department Emergency Operations Center, 700 Orange Avenue, Coronado, by Florence Draper, Chair of the Historic Resource Commission.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Draper, MacCartee, Keith, Ryan, and Walsh

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: John Swanson, Assistant Planner
Linda Hascup, Administrative Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 5, 2003 were approved as amended.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Swanson had no separate report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

Chairman Draper asked if there was representative to the City Council from this Commission. Commissioner Keith advised that there is not a representative to the City Council on any of the other Commissions. The Secretary confirmed that the HRC does not have an appointed representative.

Chairman Draper requested that the election of Commission Officers be put on the next agenda. The question was raised if it was time yet and the Secretary provided the information that each Commission generally holds their annual business meeting and election of officers at the first meeting of the calendar year, according to municipal code.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Presentation from Public Services Director Scott Huth on Modifications to Refurbishment Plans for Star Park

Mr. Huth provided a handout showing photos of the existing war memorial rock, grapeshooter gun, and proposed new wording for a plaque to place on the grapeshooter. He pointed out that the base of the war memorial is raised, which has cause some trouble with the refurbishment. It is now proposed that the base be lowered so it is flush with the turf to make the memorial accessible to the many visitors with special needs, who would have to struggle up the stairs. He said there may be a requirement to make the memorial accessible with the refurbishment. Lowering it to grass level makes it accessible without having to build a long ramp, which would take up grassy area. He said the same fifteen foot diameter of the base would be maintained. Mr. Huth said it is his understanding that the rock goes two feet into the ground, but it may need to be imbedded deeper once the higher cement is removed. They will need to shore up the rock in a manner that isn't visible.

Mr. Huth explained the change proposed for the plaque that will go on the "grapeshooter". He said they wanted to use the most accurate information possible. He said there is no dispute that the gun was donated by General Pendleton and that it is a "grapeshooter", a precursor to the machine gun. There were other 'facts' proposed in an earlier rendition of the plaque, but there was a lot of supposition involved in arriving at those facts. He showed the plaque that was manufactured for the other gun. The Commissioners were very happy with how it looked. Mr. Huth said the gun would remain on the base as shown, but the base will be bricked to match the monument.

Mr. Huth showed the laser replication of the old park. He said it didn't turn out as clear as was hoped; it was somewhat fuzzy around the edges and certain details didn't show. He asked if the Commission they had comments to make. The Commissioners all agreed that they very much like the way it looks and don't think it needs to be changed at all; the etching has an antique sort of look. Commissioner Keith asked if a jeweler could etch in a couple of lines where the Hotel Del's roof should show. Mr.

Huth was concerned that any modification to the face of the plaque would leave it vulnerable to the elements. He said it would be sealed under a hard surface, but

humidity could still get in. They will be able to replace the protective surface when it gets scratched.

Commissioner Keith said she had the concern that the memorial rock might not have enough support if the base was lowered, however she thought it was a good idea to remove the height barrier of the base. She said she goes to the park for every memorial ceremony and she sees less and less people each year who are able to go up to put their flowers on the memorial because there it is so difficult for people to step up onto the pedestal. She would not want to see a ramp take up any more grassy area and would recommend the chain link and shell casing bollard be retained because it will identify the memorial as well as enhance the park. Ms. Keith said she has spoken with people who would prefer to not have any additional obstructions in the park and would support keeping as much open space as possible. Regarding the gun plaque, Commissioner Keith said she supports the more correct wording, saying that it is better to use the most accurate information available. The majority of Commission members agreed. Mrs. Keith also commented that the new flag pole looks fabulous at night.

Mr. Huth said it was interesting to find that the streets around Star Park aren't exactly in a centered star pattern when they were looking at the placement of the flagpole. They ended up situating the cross bar to take advantage of the prevailing wind. He said they also were looking at placement of the etched photo to give the best view when looking at it. Mr. Huth said keeping the park a park is exactly what they want to do, which is the intent of grouping together the improvements to leave more open space.

Regarding placement of the etched photograph, Mr. Huth said the Commission's earlier comments were taken into account to locate it closer to the curb line near Flora Avenue (in front of the apartments) so the Hotel can be seen in the background when someone is viewing the photo. He said they are looking at a drinking fountain to be in the same area; keeping the items grouped together.

Commissioner MacCartee said she liked the idea of seeing the Hotel in the background. Commissioner Draper suggested that the etched photo could go into the base around the monument to reduce obstacles in the green area, but felt that if the sign was put near other park elements, such as the water fountain, it would be less in the way of movement and the lawnmower. Commissioner Ryan said the park has become much less of a place to play than when his children grew up there, and he thought that perhaps the sign should be near the memorial to keep those elements closer together rather than putting something new in another location. He proposed the removal of the chain links around the memorial and reducing the circumference of the monument base

to only about two feet out from the rock to provide an opportunity for more plaques on the side of the base.

Commissioner Keith said she couldn't go along with having the presence of the memorial reduced by taking away the chain around it or by putting other plaques on its base. She said she would have no objection to moving the etched photo out towards the curb as previously discussed, even though she had originally envisioned it near the large palm tree. Also, she didn't think the photo needed to be on a massive brick base. Mr. Huth responded that they could put it on a bronze pole, similar to the flag pole, which would work well, because a brick base is more difficult to build and maintain.

Mr. Huth said he understands the Commission's ideas on the wording for the gun plaque, and the desire to keep the park space as open as possible. He said he heard two concepts for the base of the memorial. One is to lower the base to free up more turf and make it more accessible. The other is to reduce the diameter of the base. He said he believes there does need to be a presence around the memorial with the chain and shell casings. Perhaps the diameter of the base could be reduced somewhat, but a certain distance around the rock needs to be maintained to give the memorial presence.

Commissioner Walsh said he agrees with the lowering of the monument base and would prefer the circumference to remain at fifteen feet. He agrees that the etched photo should be grouped out of the main part of the park and not be isolated where it can interfere with people running to catch a ball.

Chairman Draper asked if there was consensus to keep the chain, lower the base of the monument, and place the plaque near the drinking fountain and utility things out near the curb. There was no disagreement to the suggested consensus.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:
APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW

HR 10-03 Duncan Smith & Karen VanderWall-Smith – Request for Historic Designation of the single family dwelling located at 605 10th Street, in the R-1B (Single Family Residential) Zone.

Mr. Swanson, Assistant Planner, introduced the item as outlined in the agenda. He said a building permit was issued for this residence in 1925 to property owner Mark Vilim, a well known local realtor and accomplished musician, who came from a prominent Coronado family. The architect's name is unknown, but the home was designed in the English Tudor style and built by contractor O.W. Dorman. The home for many years

was referred to by locals as the “Chaplin House” as Charlie Chaplin lived in the gabled house at Tenth and Olive during the polo seasons of the 1920’s. In the 1940’s the home

was purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Marjorie Austin. Dr. Austin was the physician for the Hotel Del Coronado and one of only two physicians in Coronado at that time.

Applicant, Karen Vanderwall-Smith, 605 10th Street, said that she and her husband recently purchased the home and had it restored. Her husband is currently on active duty in the Middle East so was unable to attend the public hearing. They kept the original doors and windows. Ms. Smith explained that the English Tudor style of the house isn’t English Tudor in the strictest terms; it’s the style that Americans have adopted as “English Tudor”, which was popular early in the century. She added that her research was fascinating. She found out quite a bit about the people who lived in the home. There was much information on Mark Vilim and his family. He was quite a prominent developer of homes in Coronado since the 1920’s and also restored several homes. She also found that Dr. Austin actually lived at the Hotel Del Coronado for about a year and a half as their physician, which was a common practice at that time. Regarding Charlie Chaplin’s occupancy of the house, Ms. Smith said she couldn’t find any concrete evidence other than the reference in Dr. Brandeis’ book on Charlie Chaplin’s occupancy of the house, but thinks it is most probably true that he rented the house as had been reported. Ms. Smith explained that there were no major changes to the outside other than removing an added-on wooden staircase from the rear. The front window had to be replaced because it was falling apart and couldn’t be repaired, but the replacement was done in a compatible style and the architecture wasn’t disturbed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public wishing to speak at this time.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner Keith said she is very happy the applicant has applied for designation of this home as it is certainly deserving. She said she has some personal knowledge of the home during Dr. Austin’s time. Her friend, the daughter of Dr. Austin, lived there. Ms. Keith admitted that she got in trouble there one time by locking her friend in the upstairs bathroom during a birthday party and the fire department had to be called to get her out.

Commissioner MacCartee said it is important that this historic home is located on such a prominent corner. That is one of the reasons she is very happy for this application.

She said she wouldn't want to denigrate the Chaplin rumor. It was told to her over 20 years ago by Kat Carlin who helped Dr. Brandeis write the book on Coronado; it is

possible it is an urban myth, but that is what gives a community this size a real sense of history.

Commissioner Walsh said the applicants should be congratulated on the wonderful restoration and concurs that it is well worthy of being designated.

Commissioner Ryan concurred with the other Commissioners, but advised the applicant that there is no guarantee that that a Mills Act will be offered any time soon. He commented that funding for the Mills Act is woefully under pressure. He said it may be several years before there will be enough funding for any newly designated properties to see the benefit of a Mills Act contract.

COMMISSION ACTION

COMMISSIONER KEITH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE HR 10-03 REQUEST FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF 605 10TH STREET, WITH THE ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION STATING THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- A. THE PROPERTY MEETS THE 75-YEAR AGE REQUIREMENT;
- B. IT DOES EXEMPLIFY OR REFLECT SPECIAL ELEMENTS OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY;
- C. IT IS IDENTIFIED WITH PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN LOCAL HISTORY;
- D. IT IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING EXAMPLES IN THE CITY POSSESSING DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, WOULD BE VALUABLE FOR THE STUDY OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION, AND HAS NOT BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY ALTERED;
AND,
- E. IT IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WORK OF A NOTABLE BUILDER (O.W. DORMAN).

COMMISSIONER WALSH SECONDED THE MOTION.

AYES: Commissioners Draper, MacCartee, Keith, Walsh, and Ryan

NAYS:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

The motion passed 5-0.

HR 13-02 City of Coronado – Preliminary Review of Application for Historic Designation of City Parks

Chairman Draper introduced the agenda item, and made a couple of corrections to the information provided. Commissioner Keith said that since the application is to be accompanied by a video, which is not available at this time, it would be difficult to consider the entire application and requested that the item be continued until the video is ready. The other Commission members agreed that a continuance was necessary.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Commission Discussion Regarding the Public Outreach Program

Historic Plaques – Commissioner MacCartee said that the final proof was available for the Commission to approve. The design was circulated among the Commissioners. Commission Action: Commissioner MacCartee made the motion to approve the final design. Commissioner Keith seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Newspaper Articles – Commissioner Ryan said he was disappointed that the first article was run without a photograph. He said the photo is important to get people's attention when they read the paper and said he would like more follow-up to make sure the photos are printed with future articles.

Commissioner Keith volunteered to write the next article on her historically designated home at 801 Tolita Avenue.

Commission Discussion Regarding the Historic Preservation “Mills Act” Program and Fiscal Restrictions

Commissioner Draper said she understood that the City Council had requested a workshop with the HRC regarding Mills Act issues. She asked if one has been scheduled yet. Mr. Swanson advised that a date hasn't been designated yet.

Commissioner Keith advised that she wasn't sure if she could participate in this discussion due to the fact that she had entered into a Mills Act Contract with the City. She said she would step down until Ms. McCaull is able to get the City Attorney's opinion.

Chairman Draper suggested that the HRC might need to put some pressure on to get the workshop scheduled. Also, they would need to have some guidance on whether a home can be altered and still have a Mills Act contract, which was one of the questions brought up at the City Council meeting. There was also the question of if and how to prioritize Mills Act applications

Commissioner Ryan said he doesn't want to discuss details of what type of homes get Mills Act contracts, he only wants to discuss funding. He said the historic preservation program will be dysfunctional without the ability to provide the incentive of Mills Act contracts as an incentive within a reasonable time frame. The waiting list is now a number of years long. He said the Commission needs to look at a way to get the City Council to agree to discuss additional funding. Commissioner Ryan said the program needs at least \$20,000 or \$25,000 a year to be effective. Chairman Draper said that considering the size of the City's annual revenue, \$20,000 doesn't seem like a lot of money. Commissioner Ryan said that a joint meeting could be valuable to educate the City Council.

Commissioner MacCartee said that the historic preservation ball is being dropped in this town and it's time to make a stronger effort. She said there isn't a group that gets up in arms whenever a historic home is demolished right now and the public needs to be educated before it's too late. Commissioner MacCartee stated that there is a need to educate the town and get them excited about what is happening, and get the ground swell going.

Commissioner Walsh said that he would support going to the council and making a position presentation to increase the funding based on the idea that property values and taxes are going up.

The Commissioners discussed getting together with the Board of The Coronado Historical Association to see if their support could be gained in this effort. Chairman Draper said that since Ann McCaull is the liaison with CHA she can set up a meeting and take care of the proper public noticing.

Chairman Draper pointed out that the City's fiscal year is July 1 to June 30, with the budget vote occurring in April, so the timing is right for these discussions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nancye Splinter, 1027 G Avenue, said she is the one who spoke at the City Council meeting regarding the Mills Act eligibility of the altered house at 1236 Alameda. She explained that not only was the home altered, but it would take \$15,000 from the available Mills Act Funding for homes that were more accurately preserved. She thought that a discussion between the City Council and the Historic Resource

Commission would be beneficial regarding criteria required for a historic property to be eligible for Mills Act benefits. Ms. Splinter said she and her husband are purists where historic homes are concerned and don't believe that added on porches or roof decks are appropriate, or what the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation intended. She believes there has to be more prioritization and tighter criteria for what gets passed on to Council. She said what she heard during the Council's discussion was that they would like to get more input and help with prioritization in making their decisions. She said she hoped the HRC does "keep their dander up".

On another topic, Ms. Splinter suggested there might be an opportunity to include incentives for historic preservation in the new effort being undertaken by the Residential Standards Improvement Project.

Commissioner Ryan responded that he takes a more liberal approach to preservation and isn't as discriminating as Ms. Splinter. His mission is to save historic structures, even if a part of a building is changed he still wants to save it.

Commissioner MacCartee pointed out that the HRC group will make a stand to support any historic house that is in danger of being destroyed, even ones that have been altered. She said she doesn't believe there should be any prioritization; the applications should be acted upon in the order they are submitted. Chairman Draper said the Commission voted to take homes in chronological order rather than using some other method of prioritization because to do otherwise would have other political repercussions.

The Commissioners concluded saying they would like to get together with the CHA as soon as possible and to have an educational workshop with the City Council in the near future.

MISCELLANEOUS

None.

FUTURE ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.

Tony A. Peña