

# HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

JUNE 15, 2004

A Special Meeting of the Coronado Historic Resource Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 15, 2004, at the Coronado Police Department Emergency Operations Center, 700 Orange Avenue, Coronado, California by Chairperson Keith.

## ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Keith, MacCartee, Draper, Wilson, and Herron

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Ann McCaull, Associate Planner  
Linda Hascup, Secretary

## ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

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

## HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION BUSINESS

**Commission Discussion Regarding the City Council's Consideration of Adoption of a Resolution Amending the Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan; Introduction of an Ordinance Repealing Ordinance No. 1960 and Adding Chapter 70.22 to Title 70 of the Municipal Code Regarding the City's Demolition Permit Process for Residential Structures Seventy-Five Years or Older and Amending Section 70.20.050 of Chapter 70.20 of the Municipal Code Regarding Demolition Permits; and Adoption of a Resolution Establishing a Fee for Demolition Permit Applications**

Chairman Keith said the purpose of this Historic Resource Commission meeting is to discuss the adoption of an amendment to the Historic Preservation Element at the City Council meeting later in the day.

Ms. McCaull, Associate Planner, said the City Council is looking at a regular ordinance based on the previously approved urgency item at their last meeting. The regular ordinance incorporates additional language suggested at the time of the urgency

ordinance adoption pertaining to fines and penalties. The new provision imposes the requirement that if the code is violated, the violator must return the structure to the condition it was in prior to the demolition or alteration. In addition to the Demolition ordinance, there will be several changes to the City of Coronado Historic Preservation Element for the City Council to consider, which will make the element consistent with the ordinance. She said the primary changes are dealing with language that used to say that the process was voluntary. The language now says that the program is primarily voluntary. Ms. McCaull said the last item the City Council will consider is a resolution for the establishment of a fee for the processing of a demolition application. The fee of \$300 is based on the expected cost to the City of processing the application, including the expense to publish a notice in the newspaper and mail to individual property owners.

### COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner Keith said this meeting gives the Commission an opportunity to review the ordinance and either endorse its approval as is, or with changes or additions.

Commissioner Wilson said she was prepared to endorse the ordinance and it is sufficient as proposed.

Commissioner Herron said she thinks this is a reasonable ordinance and in keeping with the directions of both the Historic Resource and Planning Commissions. She said she hoped that Coronado keeps abreast of what is going on in other communities with respect to historic preservation.

Commissioner Draper thanked Page Harrington and Doug St. Denis from CHA for their input to the process. She was completely in agreement with the other Commissioners regarding the process the new ordinance is putting in place. She said the Council's concern with the potential loss of historic resources in the City is encouraging.

Commissioner Draper said she would have liked to be able to add Federal benefits to the program, but they apply to income producing properties rather than homes. She mentioned that there is a provision in the City code that says that an historic district can be established if 75% of the property owners in the district agree, and that could be looked at in the future to expand the program. She said she feels it is important to support the ordinance and to finalize it and make the demolition process a part of the City codes.

Commissioner Wilson said that at the last Council meeting several people came forward on this issue because there was information that a specific property was possibly in danger of being demolished. One initial idea was to have a whole quadrant of historic importance declared so that the City could say that any house within that

quadrant, if it met the requirement of 75 years, etc. could not be torn down. The City council also appeared to be concerned and appear to want to take this step forward. She said there are several houses that we would hate to see demolished and there are certain areas of the City that could be looked at for stricter preservation.

Chairman Keith said the Commission may want to look at issues to address for the next meeting. She said she plans to ask staff to bring back more information on establishing historic districts and whether they give any more validity to an area. She said that a number of years ago some areas in Coronado were zoned larger so the lots could not be subdivided, such as in Country Club (R1-A CC-1 for example), which is a great way to discourage homes from being demolished in order to split the lot. However the State Assembly passed AB 2282 that requires an increase in density in one part of town if another area is down-zoned. She said it is obvious we don't want to increase density in any area in Coronado just to down zone some portions, so that might not be a workable solution. However, a historic district, which could have different zoning than the surrounding area is an exception to the State Bill. Ms. McCaull said that a historic district may also contain non-contributing structures. And if there is a district there is an inventory, so that would also trigger CEQA, etc.

The Commission members discussed the suggestion by the City Council to the Commission to develop a list of homes that are significant rather than just having the age criteria of 75 years. Comments by City Councilmembers indicated that they felt this type of list would be an improvement to the program. Chairman Keith said the Commission is undertaking the project now and will be very careful to do a good job, so it may take a little while. In the meantime staff is looking for an alternate plan to help people possibly affected by the new ordinance decide whether their home is truly historic or not.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Carrie O'Brien, said that being a realtor as well as a developer in town she hears all sides of this issue. She said she is strongly in support of the ordinance, but it would be very helpful if at the City Council meeting or there is a lot of public around that the criteria be clarified. She said the one that creates the most concern is the one that is most undefined, "it exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's military, cultural, social, economic, aesthetic, engineering, or architectural history". She said that just sounds like a catch-all for anything. She said a lot of realtors are paranoid of selling any house that is over 75 years old right now. That phrase makes it sound like any house can be designated. The other major concern is if the one story houses will never be allowed a second story. That is going to be a huge issue for the people who own those one story houses. Ms. O'Brien said that she has tried to get people to understand that they are able to alter their houses, but they have to keep the alteration in keeping with the style of the home and they have to get the approval of the HRC to do it. She

said it would be helpful if HRC members continue to clarify that at the City Council and other meetings.

Jean Gazzo, 1265 Alameda Boulevard, said she would like to be behind the preservation of historic homes in Coronado but unless the law makes a provision for compensation for property owners whose property values are adversely affected by this law it is doomed to fail if challenged in court. She mentioned a Supreme Court decision about 4 years previously over the landmark Malibu Beach Access case in which the ruling was that property values could not be decreased without compensation to the owners. She suggested a better, short-term solution would be for the City to purchase the home and lease it out to pay off the mortgage.

Bruce Coons, Executive Director of Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO), and who lives at 4 Kingston Court responded that similar historic issues have gone to the Supreme court a number of times and it has been determined that no compensation is necessary. He asserted that the challenges would fail again as they have before. The Supreme Court has ruled that the citizens of a community ultimately have the right to decide what they want for their community.

Mr. Coons said he wholeheartedly supports the proposed ordinance. He agreed that HRC should emphasize that not all 75 years old properties will qualify as historic and that there is additional criteria to be met. He said probably the majority of the 75 year old homes in Coronado will not qualify, as has been his experience in San Diego. Mr. Coons said there has been a bill in front of Congress for a long time with a tax credit, pushed by the National Trust Organization to give tax incentives to individual homeowners. There is a similar bill before the California State Legislature. He said they have been blocked by budget committees in recent year but they have more momentum now.

Mr. Coons added that the Federal benefits Commissioner Draper spoke of earlier actually do apply to rental homes, not just condos and other income producing properties.

Sandy Short, 1211 Fifth Street, said she and her husband have a home between B & C Avenues on Fifth Street, the house currently behind a chain-link fence that is being renovated to a Craftsman. She said they and their whole family are completely behind what the HRC is doing. She said the reason they live here is because it is such a beautiful island. They hate 'billy-boxes' and hate that older homes are torn down and rebuilt into huge homes that look like they belong in Scripps Ranch or Rancho Bernardo. They are here because it is so wonderful and historic here. It would be a shame to make it look like a tract, which is where it is headed without preservation.

Daphne Brown, 326 First Street, said she agrees totally with the first speaker representing the real estate industry. They are really in a tough place right now. Their

clients don't know whether to proceed or back out. She said it is happening right next door to her home. A large family (12 children) bought a tiny cottage that was built in the 1890's and their long sighted plan was to rebuild the home to fit their family. She said it is important for people to be aware of all of the other so they don't need to fear that just because their home is 75 years old they won't be able to do what they want with it. If that is made very clear it may help to calm some of the near hysteria.

Commissioner Keith agreed that would be one of the important things to be brought out at the City Council meeting because the rumors are rampant about what you can and can't do. Education is still the key. She hoped that information published in the newspaper would also more clearly explain how the system works; that there really is nothing to fear and that a very small minority of the houses will be affected. She said that Mr. Coons comment was excellent on that issue; if a homeowner has a strong suspicion their home is not really historic, it probably isn't. She said many of the fears are unfounded. People should contact city staff or an HRC member rather than just relying on word-of-mouth on the street.

Chairman Keith that in hearing the comments from the other Commissioners she would say the Commission is in total agreement with the passage of this long-overdue ordinance and agrees with the changes that have been made, the inclusion of the penalty clause, and the \$300 application processing fee. Also that the Commission is undertaking the project of putting together an accurate list. Ms. Keith said they realize that this is a work in progress and it will be refined as we go along. The Commission agreed by consensus.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

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Tony A. Peña  
Director of Community Development