

HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Regular Meeting

May 18, 2005

The regular meeting of the Coronado Historic Resource Commission was called to order at 3:01 p.m., Wednesday, May 18, 2005, at the Coronado Police Department Emergency Operations Center, 700 Orange Avenue, Coronado, California, by Chairperson Keith.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Ann McCaull, Associate Planner
Letty Martinez, Acting Administrative Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of May 4, 2005 were approved as submitted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was no separate report.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

Kathy Justice, 1020 E Avenue, spoke to the Commission regarding the first item on today's agenda, HAP 6-05. She said that she opposes the proposed alterations to the building at 1156 Isabella. This property, no matter how much in disrepair, is exactly how Irving Gill intended it to look. It just needs a little bit of care.

Commissioner Keith reported that three out the four slide shows have been presented at the library. She was in attendance along with Commissioner MacCartee. There were no members from CHA present. However, many members of the public attended. The last show is tonight.

Commissioner Keith also reported that she was one of the docent hostesses for the Historical Association Home Tour. A number of people expressed to her that they owned historic homes, but had not yet filled out an application. She will be delivering applications to some of these people. There were five homes on the tour, four of which were designated by this Commission.

Commissioner Draper added that almost 500 people attended the tour and, generally speaking, everyone was very impressed.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

HAP 6-05 Heitz, Deborah and Wagener, Shaw: Request for historic alteration permit for the historically designated residence addressed as 1156 Isabella Avenue and located in the R-1A (Single-Family Residential) Zone.

Ms. McCaull introduced the staff report as outlined in the agenda. This property was recently designated as an historic resource. Once a property has been designated, any exterior changes proposed to the building require review by the Commission. Additionally, if a property has been designated historic, they are entitled to apply for some exceptions to the code pertaining to zoning standards and land use regulations. The applicants are proposing some interior modifications to the main dwelling. They are proposing a return of an enclosed balcony on the second floor into an open deck. A single-story guestroom addition is proposed at the northeast corner of the property. An addition to the southeast corner of the property will contain a new kitchen. A new two-story detached accessory building is also proposed. Because the height of this accessory building is not normally permitted by the code, the applicants are asking for some relief from the typical zoning standards. The structure is also fairly close to what is considered the rear property line. The rear property line for this site adjoins the property commonly known as the "Baby Del". Typically a 5 ft. rear yard setback is required. With this proposal, it appears that there would be a 2 ft. rear yard setback with the exterior open staircase proposed.

Ms. McCaull indicated that she has received three letters from surrounding property owners within the last few days. A letter received from Jim and Molly Erskine (1135 Isabella), and Ethyl and Andy Koczon (1141 Isabella) expressed concerns that the two-story garage structure will take away the open feeling that the property currently has down Isabella to view Point Loma. Two additional letters were received from Carl Stolle (1145 F Avenue) also expressing concerns about the two-story building. A letter from the Coronado Historical Association was also just received. This letter generally supports the proposed changes to the main dwelling. However, they do note some concern with the new garage structure as it will impact the facade of the property and will require exceptions to building codes and setbacks.

David Marshall, Heritage Architecture and Planning, 625 Broadway, Suite 800, San Diego, gave an overview of the proposed physical changes to the building and the proposed garage addition while referring to the colored elevations. He indicated that there is currently no parking garage available to the owners of this property, only surface parking. The original garage was lost to another property some time ago.

Debra Heitz, 1156 Isabella, said that the possible placement of the garage at the side of the property off F Avenue was explored at first. However, she remembers that there were certain restrictions that did not allow this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Heavilin, 1144 Isabella Avenue, read a letter to the Commission that she prepared in advance. In her letter, she gave a description of the history of the house. She said that she was shocked to learn that an attempt to use a reverse corner lot ploy for zoning purposes was being proposed. The front yard setback of the three homes at this corner and down Isabella Avenue has always been 40 feet. The setback from the Isabella side is now 12.5 feet from the property line. The setback at the side of the property adjoining her yard which was always 12.5 feet, has now become a backyard and is five feet. That five feet is not even being maintained. The staircase is encroaching, and the brick wall is 8 feet tall. The balcony of the staircase is at 11 feet, which would make her lose all privacy in her back yard. Height is not an issue in the back of the house. In the front of the house, it could be quite an issue to the people of Coronado. The proposed garage is 23 feet high at the front of the property, and is three times the size of the brick wall. Dormer windows are proposed for the garage. There are no dormer windows on the

original house. She is also concerned with the laundry room in the garage. Why is a water source being installed in the garage? Will the room at the top of the garage, at some later date, become some living arrangement for somebody? She is opposed to this. She is also opposed to the 23 ft. garage, which is 16 feet from the sidewalk, while the standard is 14.5 feet. She is against the pool equipment in the back which is only 5 feet from her property. She is trying to have her property declared as a natural habitat. A pool motor shaking the wall and making noise will not help her cause. She is also concerned with the whole ambiance of the neighborhood. She has not spoken with the new owners. They have not approached her. The neighbors are generally upset. These are houses from a period when people were friendly, people got along, and everything was very social. It seems to her that something is proposed to be built for the total benefit of the new owner, and not for the previous owners or for the street. She is ultimately opposed to the destruction of the fine historic home that Irving Gill created so many years ago. She asked the Commission to take all of these issues into consideration, and look for more solutions for this street and neighborhood. This is a house that was meant to have beautiful gardens surrounding it. She said that she knows the Commission will do their best, but she asked them to consider her plea.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner Wilson said she believes this garage will overwhelm the structure of the house. While it does have some design features that would, perhaps, tie it in with the house, she does not understand the need for two stories in this location. Pushed forward as it is on the lot, it becomes the most prominent aspect of this property. She does not believe that it is sensitive to the historic house next door. She certainly can see the need for a garage. However, she sees a one-story garage pushed much further back. You do not mess with an Irving Gill structure. She said she is very uncomfortable with the additions, and would not be for them.

Commissioner Herron said that she is confused as to why we are faced with an historic home such as this, particularly this one, with a proposal for a change of the front facade. She would consider this a substantial alteration.

Commissioner Draper agreed with the two previous commissioners' comments. She could possibly consider the kitchen remodel since the same materials would be used considering the overall look of the house. She could also support a guest room in the back which cannot be seen from either street. She cannot, however, support the garage addition. While she understands the owners' need for a garage, she said that this would do away with the green area, and would very much upset the neighborhood. It is unfortunate that the original garage is now owned by another property owner. However, she cannot support the proposed garage as it is now being presented.

Commissioner MacCartee said that this is one of those times when we need to not only consider this gem of a house, but also the neighborhood. She believes this is one of our treasured neighborhoods. While she understands the need for people in historic homes to live as we do today, in her heart there needs to be enough room for those in the same neighborhood. She feels that she may not be able to give on an exercise room, while she does understand the need for a garage. She would even support a one-story garage. She thinks that the design is great. This property should never have been subdivided. So many people suffered from this. The property owners, however, were aware of this when they purchased the property. She will not be able to allow this proposal in her heart and face this community. This is a resource that we need to protect. She encouraged the applicants to reapply, because they can find ways to do something

that we can all live with. She cannot support a two-story garage, and she has a lot of trouble with the alteration to the front facade.

Commissioner Herron agreed with Commissioner MacCartee. This Commission tries very, very hard to accommodate the applicants in hardship cases. This particular neighborhood is a prize of the community, and this home is part of the character of the community. She feels that there is ample amount of space on this property, and there are alternatives which will be less invasive to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Keith said, while listening to what her fellow commissioners have said, she would like to suggest that this item be continued. There is obvious concern over the two-story garage, in particular the height. The staircase and the setback are also of particular concern. There may be some disagreement on the different brick color. One of the things that she would like the applicants to look at is undergrounding. There are garages in town without long driveways that can still accommodate underground parking. She feels this route would be feasible to do without taking away yard space, but she is not sure it is what the applicants would like to pursue. If this does not meet with the needs of the applicants, they would need to come back with a one-story garage accessory building. She has no problem with the guestroom addition. It will not be seen, and it has nothing to do with the facade of the house. However, this Commission is supposed to, once a home is designated historic, make sure that the resource is there for the public to enjoy. The main concern is the preservation of the facade of the house. If someone would like to make changes in the rear, the Commission is usually sympathetic to those changes. In this case, however, this property is open on three sides. While she understands these concerns, this home is a Coronado treasure. If it meets with the Commission's and the applicant's agreement, she would like to continue this item. Perhaps the Commission and applicants can work together to come up with something that will allow the new owners to be happy living in the house, while becoming part of the community. The Commission must protect the historic resource.

David Marshal, said that whatever the garage design finally ends up being, the intent is that all of the materials are to be compatible and will all blend with the original structure.

Mr. Marshall added that he is having difficulty visualizing a garage that is architecturally compatible with the house and is only one-story. The nature of the design for a garage for a house of this type was a certain style. This style happened to have a peaked roof with a high point. If the architects were to come up with a flat roofed, single-story garage structure, he is not sure if it will look right architecturally. In this case, we could end up with something smaller, but maybe a jarring differentiation from the original house.

Commissioner Wilson said that she has an objection to the enlargement of the bay window, because it spoils the symmetry of the front doorway.

Commissioners Herron, MacCartee and Draper indicated that they do not have a specific problem with the bay window enlargement. Commissioner Draper feels that it is in keeping with the whole exterior look. The garage is the issue in her opinion.

Commissioner MacCartee made the suggestion that perhaps it would be beneficial for the applicants/architects to contact the surrounding neighbors. If everyone involved gets together, it not only creates a good feeling, but everyone would have some input.

It was decided that HAP 6-05 will be continued until the applicant is ready to come back before the Commission.

MISCELLANEOUS

None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion regarding proposed Revolving Fund for Historic Preservation

Commissioner MacCartee introduced Attorney Sharon Sherman who helped the commissioner formulate some of her report. Commissioner MacCartee asked the Commission to change this item to the Coronado Cottage Revolving Fund. Commissioner Macartee is very concerned that there is no current way to save the cottages of Coronado. If the Commission could come up with some very good reasons for people to stay in cottages, perhaps there could be a cottage revolving fund. This would entail a cottage or funds that are donated to the cause. These funds would only be used to purchase cottages as they come up for demolition.

Sharon Lynn Sherman, 657 Pomona, said this item is timely and would be tremendously good communication to the City that Coronado is not just about houses like the one we just heard. We are losing the cottages on B Avenue between 7th and 8th. Broaching the idea of the "Revolving Fund", the people of Savannah have a program by which either people leave their homes or leave money to purchase historic structures and put restrictions on them. These homes are then sold to people who are enthusiastic about saving them. This has been extremely effective in Savannah. Even though we are on a different economic layer, the people that she spoke with in Savannah were very encouraging about Coronado doing it also. Even if it takes ten years, there would be a vehicle in place that people could turn to or utilize for estate planning purposes. These people would know that, if they gave their property, if they gave their money, it would be by charter and earmarked for historic preservation. An entity would be developed that would ensure, once the funds were donated, there would be no other purpose utilized than what the donor had anticipated. This entity would be established along the same lines, procedurally, as the Friends of the Library.

Commissioner Keith suggested that the Commission begin talks with the people of the community and find out what questions people might have. She asked that this item be kept on the agenda. The Commission can then find out what people's concerns are, and come back with input. We need to have our arms around this issue before we can go to Council and say, "Is this something you would support doing?".

It was decided that this item would be kept on the agenda for discussion and feedback at a later date.

Discussion regarding the Commission's Terms and Expiration Dates

It was discussed that any future openings for the Historic Resource Commission will be advertised in the Coronado Eagle Journal.

Preliminary Discussion regarding Historic Resource Commission's Recommendation to the City Council Regarding Mills Act Applications

This item will be discussed by the Commission at a future meeting for recommendation to the City Council.

Discussion regarding Historic Resource Commission Policies

This item was continued to a future agenda of the Historic Resource Commission.

Discussion regarding the formulation of a Demolition Review List (HR 14-04)

Ms. McCaull indicated that the list had been updated based on the feedback from the various commission members regarding lists 3, 4 & 5. There are several homes that will require photographs as the next step. This will compare existing conditions with old conditions. Ms. McCaull presented to the Commission the first pack of photos taken of the various properties. She recommended that the Commission review each photo and then identify those properties that should be kept on the list and those that should be removed.

Ms. McCaull reported on the churches in the community in response to a question from Commissioner Wilson at the last meeting. Sacred Heart, Christ Episcopal, Graham Memorial, and the First Church of Christ Science are on the "most significant" list.

The Commission then reviewed the list of potential properties in order to determine which should be kept, reviewed further, or eliminated from the list.

Discussion regarding the Public Outreach Program (no report)

This item was continued to a future agenda of the Historic Resource Commission.

Discussion regarding the Demolition of Cottages and what the Commission can do to encourage their preservation (no report)

This item was continued to a future agenda of the Historic Resource Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Tony A Peña
Director of Community Development