

# HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

MAY 26, 2004

A Special Meeting of the Coronado Historic Resource Commission was called to order at 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 26, 2004, at the Coronado Police Department Emergency Operations Center, 700 Orange Avenue, Coronado, California by Chairperson Keith.

## ROLL CALL:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner MacCartee

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

## ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

Nancye Splinter, 1027 G Avenue said she applauds the reason for the special meeting. She said it is a politically auspicious time to broach the subject of demolition of possible historic homes and the City Council seems to be receptive to recommendations on the subject. She said now is the time to come forward with a wish list and to back it loudly and strongly. She would ask for an increase in funding for the Mills Act, for increased Floor Area Ratio (at least up to San Diego standards), make strides in better protecting historic resources, and putting in place a demolition process. She said she would also like to have the City's definition of "remodel" for these older properties looked at. She mentioned a house that on Encino Row that backs up to her garage. She said it used to be a charming beach cottage with newly refinished hardwood floors and original work of the 1920's. It has now been gutted all the way down to the studs, which is allowed by the current code, the entire exterior is removed, as are the French doors and windows, and they may or may not be replaced in kind. There is no guarantee that the home will be returned to its historic state. Chairman Keith provided additional information that the home on Encino Row used to be owned by Captain Doris Gurley who was Richard Nixon's commanding officer during WWII.

## HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION BUSINESS

### **Commission Discussion Regarding Urgency Ordinance to be Considered by the City Council at their June 1st Meeting Concerning the City's Permit Process for Demolition of Residential Structures**

Chairman Keith said that the purpose of this meeting is for the Commission to have a chance to discuss the proposed ordinance and decide on a stand to take at the City Council meeting when it is considered.

Ms. McCaull, Associate Planner, said that City Attorney and staff have been working closely on an Urgency Ordinance, which represents ideas the Historic Resource Commission (HRC) has discussed at recent meetings with input from the Coronado Historical Association (CHA). The idea is to create a discretionary demolition permit process for those properties that are at least 75 years or older. Ms. McCaull said that this would be a significant departure from the City's current voluntary Historic Preservation program. Through the discretionary process, submission of an application for demolition of a 75 year or older structure would trigger a notice of intent to demolish, which would in turn trigger a public hearing before the HRC, publication of a legal notification in the newspaper, and mailed notification of property owners within 300 feet of the property. The purpose of the meeting would be to establish the potential historic quality of the home. The HRC would make a determination of whether the property is significant or not by resolution. If it is determined to be significant it would be deemed a historic resource without the permission of the property owner. If the property owners still wanted to pursue demolition it would trigger an alteration permit process before HRC and a CEQA review with the property owner being responsible for submitting an environmental checklist. In general adding CEQA to the process would result in more time delays for a property owner and additional expenses. The way CEQA looks at demolition of a historic resource is that it is creating an adverse impact on the environment and would trigger at least an in depth environmental review and most likely an EIR. Through the CEQA process it also provides an opportunity for the community to explore alternatives with the property owner that might be a compromise for everyone such as relocation of the building, alternative land uses within the building, density increases, etc. The discretionary process imposes permit application fees as well as associated fines if a property owner were not to follow the city's established rules of procedure.

Commissioner Draper said that most of the rules and established criteria say 75 years or have reached significance. She wanted to know if the having reached significant significance could be added to the ordinance for consistency. Chairman Keith responded that the Commission is just making general comments at this meeting and that fine tuning of the ordinance could come later. She suggested that the most important issue now is to get the urgency ordinance adopted, which would require a 4/5 vote rather than a simple majority. The urgency ordinance would be in effect for 45 days, which would give time to work on the final wording of a regular ordinance. Ms.

Keith said that since the draft isn't available to review at the special meeting, HRC can discuss making suggestions at the next meeting after they see what it says.

Chairman Keith read correspondence submitted by Commissioner MacCartee into the record. Commissioner MacCartee addressed her letter to the HRC and to City Council. She said, "I'm currently out of town and unable to attend the special sessions in person, but I wish to state that I am aware and informed of the urgency ordinance under consideration by both the Historic Resource Commission and the City Council and wholeheartedly support the efforts being made in that behalf. My views have also been also been expressed in a letter to the editor of the Coronado Eagle."

### COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner Draper thanked Page Harrington and Doug St. Denis from CHA for their input on the process. She said that next Tuesday at the City Council meeting the Commission needs to appoint a member to speak at the City Council meeting. She said the Council seems to be concerned with the potential loss of historic resources in the City and they could be reminded of why they approved the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Mills Act benefits in the past. 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, perhaps another avenue to pursue. She said she feels it is important to support the emergency 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.

Commissioner Herron said she would like to encourage everyone to speak to a City Council member and let them know how we feel about preserving what we have. She said she is encouraged that a demolition process will be put into effect. Ms. McCaull added that the urgency ordinance will be in effect for 45 days and it can be extended for another year, which would give time to develop a regular ordinance.

Commissioner Draper asked if anyone had requested a demolition permit for historic homes in the last few days. Ms. McCaull said there are three people who have made requests regarding demolition for homes that would fall within this urgency ordinance. She said that the word is out about the urgency ordinance and is being spread rapidly.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Bruce Coons, Executive Director of SOHO, said this ordinance is long overdue for Coronado. He can't think of something that is more important to the character and quality of life in Coronado. He said the loss of structures such as the ones off of Ocean Boulevard would be a major crisis and would destroy what people think of Coronado as and would destroy the economy here. People travel to see historic sites and that is what our community is, especially key homes along the water front. A community with this much character and interest shouldn't be nominated by stucco boxes. He said that Coronado is the only major city in the region that doesn't have a reasonable adversarial designation process.

Regarding increasing the lot size, Mr. Coons said there is a way around the State bill. He said that property rights are always community rights. The community has the right to say what their community will look like and be. A voter approved reduction in density can not be overcome by that bill. That is the premise that historic preservation is based on. People from other areas can come in and ruin Coronado the way it stands now. Mr. Coons said he plans to be at the City Council meeting next week.

Daphne Brown, 326 1<sup>st</sup> Street, said that Mr. Coons' words were encouraging to her. She said she worked with her husband and a committee on the down zoning of the Bayfront Zone. It was encouraging to know that the majority of the residents didn't want to be up zoned and wanted to preserve what they had. She said there were many threats from people who wanted to take advantage of Coronado, and they only live here three months out of the year, but this is our community and we want to protect it.

Doug St. Denis, 710 Adella Avenue, said she would be at the Council meeting on Tuesday. The CHA Preservation Committee has spoken individually with every

member of the City Council and they all agree that something needs to be done. One concern is that they are afraid of adding yet another layer of bureaucracy and not being friendly like San Diego or La Jolla, but she believes that Coronado is too lenient and is an easy mark for smart money. It is possible to come in to Building Department in the morning, pay \$85, and demolish a home in the afternoon.

Ms. St. Denis said that adaptive reuse is another suggestion Coronado will have to open its mind about in order to save some of the structures. In Pacific Grove B&B's are encouraged and they have four magnificent Victorians right on the water. She said asked them what they do about the legal issues or if anyone had ever sued to tear them down. The people there said no one would even think of it. Their program is not voluntary and it's something Coronado should think about.

Page Harrington, Executive Director of Coronado Historical Association, 1100 Orange Avenue, said that staff has been so easy to work with and have been very responsive. She said we may have to make some tough choices to keep the community they way we like it. She said the historic home tour this last weekend is proof that Coronado's history draws the visitors. She said almost 500 people attended, 2/3 of them from outside of Coronado. One comment from a North County resident said, "Everybody knows if you want to look at architecture you come to Coronado." Ms. Harrington said the very next day CHA received many calls from people who want their homes on the tour next year. She reiterated Mr. Coons' comment that there are more than individual property rights; there are also community property rights.

She asked if staff is looking for specific numbers for fees. Ms. McCaull said the fee would be based on recovery of the expense to the City for processing the application. Once the ordinance is written it will give a fee structure for applications. The City Attorney is working on words for fines. Page asked if the information would be available prior to the City Council meeting. Ms. McCaull said the staff reports would be available to anyone who requests one on the Friday prior to the meeting.

Ms. Harrington said that CHA is doing research on what other communities are doing and what is available as tools for CHA to use during this process. She said they will be presenting something from the Preservation Committee to HRC and through HRC to the City Council. She said she has only heard one negative response so far and it was the usual argument regarding property rights. She thanked HRC for taking the lead.

Chairman Keith said she would encourage everyone in attendance also attend the City Council meeting. She said the number of voices is a major part of the campaign. She said it would be certain that every developer in town will be there talking about property rights, etc. and the historic preservation supporters will want to make sure the developers don't have the loudest voice.

Ms. McCaull said the demolition permit ordinance could be discussed at the next regular meeting of HRC, but the City Council plan is to move very rapidly to put an ordinance in place.

Ms. Keith said there is unanimous consensus among the Commissioners to urge the City Council to adopt the urgency ordinance.

The Commission members discussed whether they would all attend the City Council meeting or just send a representative. Commissioner Draper thought it would be best for the Chair to speak for the group, but the other Commissioners should have the opportunity to add comments that are not redundant.

Doug St. Denis said she was present at the joint meeting with City Council and it worked very well for everyone to have their say. It seemed that each person had something to say.

Bruce Coons commented that the more voices that are heard the more weight they will carry.

Chairman Keith said she is in favor of everyone having the chance to speak as long as they are within the rules of the meeting. Ms. McCaull said she would request the City Attorney's counsel and inform the Commission of his response.

#### 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