

HISTORIC RESOURCE COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

Special Meeting

May 27, 2009

The special meeting of the Coronado Historic Resource Commission was called to order at 3 p.m., Wednesday, May 27, 2009, at the Coronado City Hall Council Chambers, 1825 Strand Way, Coronado, California, by Chairperson O'Brien.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Crenshaw, Jones, O'Brien, Ryan, and St. Denis

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Ann McCaull, Associate Planner  
Martha L Alvarez, Recording Secretary

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

None.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS

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

MISCELLANEOUS

**HRPA 8-08 City of Coronado: Discussion regarding proposed changes to the Mills Act Program and upcoming Public Workshop scheduled for June 23, 2009, at 6 p.m.**

Ms. McCaull introduced the staff report as outlined in the agenda. At the February 18, 2009, Historic Resource Commission meeting, the Commission began preliminary discussions regarding the upcoming Mills Act workshops. Subcommittees of the Commission were formed to develop preliminary recommendations regarding the items to be discussed at the workshops. The areas the Commission would like to focus on include 1) eligibility requirements, e.g. what properties are eligible to apply; 2) process e.g., how are properties treated/evaluated on the waiting list; 3) funding levels, e.g. how should the fiscal cap be handled annually; and 4) alterations, e.g. extent of alterations allowed for Mills Act properties.

Ms. McCaull stated that the purpose of today's meeting is to finalize the Commission's recommendations in preparation for the public workshop that will be held on Tuesday, June 23, 2009, at 6 p.m., in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The Commission reviewed the Draft Changes to Mills Act Program and noted possible changes:

1. Mills Act Process: How should applications be processed? *The Commission reviewed and prefers A & E.*
  - A. Process applications based upon historical significance with increased weight given to application date. (Eliminate existing criteria of in-danger because it is difficult to measure.)
  - B. Process applications based upon application date.
  - C. Process a maximum of 5 or 6 applications each calendar year.
  - D. Process one home from each of the 5 categories of development before a second home in any particular category is selected.
  - E. Retain Mills Act Exemptions for special circumstances approved by the City Council.

Commissioner St. Denis commented that the application date is very important (alternative A). She asked if the application date could count as a 50 percent weight in the total grade.

Vice Chair Crenshaw said this was discussed at the last meeting and the Commission agreed to replace the word “some” with “increased.”

Chairperson O’Brien said the Commission recommendation at the last meeting was to add significant weight to the application date.

Ms. McCaull said that the first application received would receive 100 points, the second application would receive 99 points, and so on. Newer applications would receive less points. This system would allow the program to expand as new applications are received.

Chairperson O’Brien said alternatives A and E are the Commission’s recommendation. Public input received at the public workshop will be considered in the final recommendation to City Council.

There were no members of the public wishing to speak on this item.

2. Eligibility Requirements: Who is eligible to apply for Mills Act? *The Commission reviewed and agrees with A, B, and C.*
  - A. Only property owners with historically designated residential structures may apply for a Mills Act Agreement.
  - B. Only the historic structure itself shall receive tax relief. No tax reduction for non historic additions or accessory buildings except in special circumstances.
  - C. A historically designated property that already has inappropriate or illegal additions or changes, in particular to the front façade, may not be eligible for MA benefits.

Chairperson O'Brien suggested that this item remain unchanged.

Commissioner St. Denis commented that alternative C is very important.

There were no members of the public wishing to speak on this item.

3. Alterations to Mills Act properties: What types of alterations are allowed?

Overview: Alterations allowable for historically designated structures may be more lenient and flexible (within the Secretary of the Interior's Standards) than those allowable to Mills Act properties. The owner has two choices:

- 1) Preserve and protect a historic house and foster the strong community identity unique to Coronado's rich heritage in exchange for the pride of stewardship and Mills Act tax benefits or
  - 2) "Save" a historic house and add to or alter it as appropriate (subject to HRC approval), adapting a piece of Coronado's history to today's lifestyle. Owner may take advantage of considerable possible zoning exceptions and other benefits, with the understanding that he/she may forego the possibility of Mills Act tax benefits.
- A. The front façade is sacred. Changes to the front façade or any façade facing a public right-of-way (excluding alleys) should be avoided (moved from other section). Proposed alterations to a front facade (i.e. replacing windows and with French doors or adding a visible second story to a one-story house), although deemed historically compatible and approved by HRC, may make that house ineligible for the Mills Act. Owners should be made aware of this at the time the proposed alterations are reviewed by HRC. Previous alterations and additions that have occurred to a residence prior to an application for a Mills Act Agreement may also make the house ineligible for a Mills Act Agreement.
  - B. Rehabilitation (returning a historic structure to its original condition on elevations visible from public rights-of-way) shall be eligible for Mills Act benefits if the application is accompanied by historic photographs and/or other reliable documentation of the likely appearance of the original structure.
  - C. Alterations and additions proposed for Mills Act Properties shall comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings ([www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/guide.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/guide.htm)) The following are important guidelines considered by the Historic Resource Commission when considering alterations and additions for a Mills Act Property.

Ms. McCaull asked for clarifications about additions being allowed to Mills Act homes. She understood that a Mills Act value would not be given to the addition, but a Mills Act property still allowed additions.

Commissioner St. Denis clarified that new additions are allowed to Mills Act properties. With reference to item 3.1), a person can preserve and protect a historic Mills Act home and also have an appropriate addition added. This is allowable within the Standards. Ms. St. Denis also suggested that the website for the Secretary of Interior's Standards be included in the Handbook given to the public for easy reference to a number of frequently asked questions about guidelines involving new additions, windows, porches, roofs, and so on.

Nancy Santos, 279 C Avenue, said her home was approved for Mills Act about nine years ago. She asked if the new processes being discussed today will affect the status of her home under the program since she has had additions made to her home since it was originally approved for Mills Act.

Chairperson O'Brien said this issue has been taken into consideration inasmuch as these recommendations are suggestions to the public workshop. The processes are not intended to apply to homes that have previously been approved for the Mills Act program.

Ms. Santos asked, for those homes on the wait list, if consideration will be given to the date the additions were made to the homes.

Chairperson O'Brien said this issue is being addressed under the section titled Alterations. He added that the Commission tends to focus on the front elevation.

Ms. McCaull said that if the addition to the home was done over 75 years ago, then the addition is considered historic.

Bruce Coons, 51 Aruba Bend, asked if the guidelines will be incorporated with the Standards. He added that the guidelines are extremely helpful as it gives examples on what is and is not recommended.

Chairperson O'Brien added that the word "primarily" should be added under 2).A. to read as follows: "Changes to the front façade primarily..." because a change to any façade that faces the right-of-way is more restrictive. He suggested that this item be recommended as presented, and the guidelines be included in the Handbook.

Chris Ackerman, 765 C Avenue, agreed that normally the front façade would be the most important; however, if there is a corner lot and each of the two sides are visible to the public right-of-way, he feels that both sides are equally as important.

## GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS TO MILLS ACT PROPERTIES

### 1. REHABILITATION

- A. Preserve Primary Historic Building Materials whenever feasible
  - 1. Retain and preserve original wall and siding materials.

2. Do not cover or obscure original façade materials.
3. If stucco covers original siding, then its removal is encouraged.
4. The use of vinyl is prohibited (includes windows, fences, downspouts, guard rails, etc.)

B. Preserve Historic Architectural Features and Details

1. Preserve and maintain significant stylistic and architectural features.
2. Deteriorated architectural features and details should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible.
3. Avoid adding elements or details that were not part of the original building.

Chris Ackerman, 765 C Avenue, suggested changing the word “repaired” under B.2) to “restored.”

Chairperson O’Brien suggested using the words “repaired” or “restored.”

The Commission agreed to use the words “...repaired or restored rather than replaced...”

Commissioner St. Denis commented that previous discussions questioned whether the Commission should be involved in deciding paint color on historic homes. She stated that there are two sections under the Guidelines. The section under Wood reads as follows: “Identifying, retaining and preserving wood features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as siding, cornices, brackets, window, architraves, and doorway pediments, and their paints, finishes, and colors.” The section under Masonry reads as follows: “Not recommended: radically changing the type of paint or coating or its color.” She suggested that the Commission handle these types of issues with care.

Commissioner Ryan disagreed. He said the Commission should not dictate the color of a home, but instead focus on reviewing the history and architectural features of a historical home.

Chairperson O’Brien said the Commission should provide color suggestions to property owners of historic homes.

C. Preserve the size and shape of windows and doors because they significantly affect the character of a structure

1. Preserve the functional and decorative features of original windows and doors.
2. Maintain original windows and door proportions.
3. Maintain the historic window arrangement on a primary façade.
4. Repair a deteriorated window or door instead of replacing it or enclosing the opening altogether whenever possible.
5. Do not add new window or door openings on character-defining facades.
6. When window or door replacement is necessary, match the replacement to

the original design as closely as possible. (This item was deleted, see below.)

7. A new opening should be similar in location, size and type to those seen traditionally.
8. Windows and doors should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. (This item was deleted, see below.)
9. If replacement of windows or doors is necessary, it should be done in a manner to replicate the original design and detailing as close as possible. (This item was changed, see below.)
10. Original hardware should be re-used on replacement if possible.
11. New entrances (including French doors) are not recommended on a façade. (This item was deleted, see below.)
12. Aluminum clad windows are prohibited (where visible from the street right-of-way), as are aluminum awnings \*unless material is original to structure).

The Commission agreed to the following changes:

Item 6 was deleted.

Item 8 was deleted.

Item 9 was changed to read as follows: “If replacement of windows or doors is necessary, replicate the original design, detailing and materials as close as possible.”

Item 11 was deleted.

- D. Preserve a porch in its original condition and form
  1. Maintain an original porch, when feasible.
  2. Enclosing a porch with opaque materials that destroy the openness and transparency of the porch is inappropriate. (This item was changed, see below.)
  3. Where building codes stipulate that new porch railings lower than 36 inches in height be augmented or corrected to raise their effective height to 36 inches or greater, consider providing a smaller railing above the historic railing to achieve a greater overall railing height.
  4. Repair rather than replace those elements of a porch that are deteriorated, whenever possible.
  5. Consider restoring an altered porch back to its original design and configuration. (This item was changed, see below.)
  6. When porch replacement is necessary, it should be similar in character, design, scale and materials to those seen traditionally.

The Commission agreed to the following change:

Item 2 was changed to read as follows: “Enclosing a porch with opaque materials that destroy the openness and transparency of the porch is not recommended.”

Mr. Ackerman suggested changing item 5 to read as follows: “Restoring an altered porch back to its original design and configuration is recommended.”

The Commission agreed to the change.

## 2. ADDITIONS

### A. Design a new addition to be compatible with the historic building

1. Locate an addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building and limit its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.
2. Construct a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged or destroyed. (This item was changed, see below.)
3. Place an addition at the rear of a building or set it back from the front to minimize the visual impacts. (This item was changed, see below.)
4. Do no obscure, damage, destroy or remove original architectural details and materials of the historic building whenever possible. (This item was changed, see below.)
5. An addition should be compatible in scale with the historic building/structure. (This item was changed, see below.)
6. An addition should be compatible in character with the historic structure.
7. Use building materials that are compatible with those of the historic structure. (This item was changed, see below.)
8. Use windows that are similar in character and materials to those of the historic structure. (This item was deleted, see below.)
9. The roof form of a new addition should be in character with and subordinate to that of the historic building. (This item was deleted, see below.)
10. Additions should be designed to be reversible. (This item was added, see below.)
11. Additions should be designed in such a manner that the addition is discernable from the original. (This item was added, see below.)

Commissioner St. Denis suggested replacing items 1 through 7 items with the following:

- “1. Additions should be compatible in character and style of architecture to the historic building.
2. Additions should be subordinate in scale, bulk and mass to the historic building.
3. New dormers or other roof forms should be subordinate to the roof of the historic

- building.
4. Additions should be located at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of the historic building.
  5. Avoid additions that obscure, damage, destroy or remove original character-defining features of the historic building.
  6. Use building materials that are compatible with those of the historic structure.
  7. Windows of the addition should be similar in character, color and materials to original historic windows. If historic windows are removed, incorporate them into the addition, is possible.”

The Commission agreed to use the new wording for items 1 through 7.

Item 8 was deleted.

Chairperson O'Brien disagreed with the suggested wording in item 5.

Commissioner St. Denis replied that if the addition is very subordinate to the original house and is not a looming second story addition, it can be toward the rear of the property and not compete with the structure. She suggested that the Commission should be somewhat flexible.

Ms. McCaull asked if these suggested guidelines are direct verbatim from the Standards.

Commissioner St. Denis said all but item 8 is direct verbatim.

Mr. Coons suggested that additions should not appear to be a seamless part of the original historic structure. He also suggested adding another item to read: “Additions should be designed to be reversible.”

The Commission agreed to add item 10 to read as follows: “Additions should be designed to be reversible.”

The Commission agreed to add item 11 to read as follows: “Additions should be designed in such a manner that the addition is discernable from the original.”

4. Fiscal Cap of the Mills Act Program: Should the fiscal investment the City has in the Mills Act be changed? *The Commission considered A, B, & C. The Commission prefers C.*

A. Eliminate the fiscal cap to the program in one fiscal year.

This proposal involves allowing all property owners on the Mills Act waiting list to receive approval in FY 09. This action would involve an annual increased investment in the City's Preservation Program of approximately \$230,000.

This proposal would acknowledge the City's Preservation Program as an extremely high priority for the community given the foregone City and CDA revenues that would occur on an annual basis with the proposal. The action would allow more participation in the program but does not address how future applications would be processed. The new Mills Act eligibility criteria that are being recommended may reduce the number of program participants as well as the decreasing number of historic properties eligible for the Mills Act. The proposal places no fiscal control over the Mills Act program.

Commissioner Ryan suggested deleting the sentence which reads "The action would allow more participation in the program but does not address how future applications would be processed." He also suggested replacing the sentence "The proposal places no fiscal control over the Mills Act program." with "This proposal relieves the Mills Act approved applicant back to zero in Fiscal Year 1. All future fiscal years could be controlled by a formula that pegs Mills Act future revenue (see paragraph, below)."

The Commission agreed to the suggested changes.

Chris Kleber, 1015 Alameda, said he withdrew his application for Mills Act the day before it was to be heard by the City Council because of the ambiguity of the formula that was used. He suggested that the Commission establish a formula that is easily understood.

Chairperson O'Brien stated that the formula is developed by the County and is administered by the City.

Ms. McCaull said the percentage savings is a policy decision made by the City Council.

Chairperson O'Brien said this issue will be discussed at the upcoming public workshop.

Nancy Splinter, 1027 G Avenue, expressed concern with the 50 percent rental as it would be very time consuming to negotiate with individual property owners. She added that Coronado property owners are blessed because of the success of the Mills Act program. However, she added that the City of Coronado receives back 58 percent of the property tax compared to the average city in the state which receives back 24 percent of its property tax. It is her contention that Coronado can afford to fully fund the program.

Chairperson O'Brien said the Commission's recommendation to City Council is that City Council has the ability to make exceptions outside the fiscal cap.

B. Negotiate a rental value with the property owner (as provided in the Mills Act Legislation Guidelines) to allow the City to control the reduced property tax revenues associated with a Mills Act Agreement. A general policy allowing for a 50% percent reduction in property taxes with a Mills Act Agreement could be established.

Issues to consider: (1) is 50% fair; (2) would a modified formula reduce participation? (3) is the full amount necessary to properly maintain and preserve a residence? (4) should

another percentage be used?

The Commission determined the Mills Act Program should be administered in the spirit of the legislation that was established and only in unique circumstances should this methodology be used. The Commission wants to treat past, present, and future owners the same with respect to reduced property taxes rather than 50% or other arbitrary percentage. Historic properties are costly to preserve and a reduced property tax reduction may deter owners from participating in the program.

- C. Replace the fiscal cap with a NEW FORMULA that would be used to maintain fiscal accountability with the program and regulate the number of participants each year. The general concept is to tie the program to a percentage of the Residential Property Tax revenues the City receives. As property tax revenues increase, the number of participants each year could increase. Alternatively, as revenues decline, the number of new participants in the given year would reduce. The concept is more fully described in the attached PowerPoint.

Draft Public Workshop PowerPoint Presentation

Welcome and Introductions (HRC and staff)

Purpose of Meeting (Public Input on Improvements to the Historic Preservation Program)

- (1) Mills Act Process: Current and Proposed
- (2) Eligibility Requirements: Current and Proposed
- (3) Mills Act Alterations and Guidelines: Current and Proposed
- (4) Monetary Investment to Historic Preservation Program: Current and Proposed

Draft Guide for participating in the City's Historic Preservation Program would be distributed at the meeting. Per the Commission's discussion, the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines would be attached to the Guide.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

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Rachel A. Hurst, Director of Community Development,  
Redevelopment & Housing Services