

Historic Preservation Board Retreat

Summary Minutes

Location: Benedictine University Community Room – 225 E Main Street

Date: February 15, 2020 Time: 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Greg Marek, Chair
Brandon Benzing, Vice-Chair
Laura Schaffer-Metcalf Ed.D.
Benjamin Ayers
Barbara Bingham
Milagros Zingoni

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jim Babos

STAFF PRESENT:

Nana Appiah
Arianna Urban

GUESTS:

Vic Linoff

1. Call Meeting to Order.

Chair called the meeting to order at 9:21 a.m.

2. Introductions and Light Breakfast.

Guest Vic Linoff was introduced as a longtime member of the Mesa historic preservation community.

Dr. Nana Appiah recounted a recent meeting between the State Historic Preservation Office and the Mesa Historic Preservation Office staff in order to introduce Ms. Urban as the new Historic Preservation Coordinator.

3. Hear a presentation and discuss the purpose, roles, and function of the Historic Preservation Board, as described in Mesa's City Code, laws and ordinances, and the relationship between the Board and City staff.

Dr. Appiah outlined a presentation including the composition of the Historic Preservation Board (HP Board) members, summarized the articles in the City Code or Ordinances refer to the duties and responsibilities of the Historic Preservation Board, the processes of project review and the role of the HP Board in the city's historic preservation projects, the historic preservation section of the Mesa 2040 General Plan, the formal and informal nature of the relationship between the Board and City staff, and the current Historic Preservation Plan. The involvement with the Board Members in the Certificate of Appropriateness process was dissected and brainstormed for ways it may evolve.

4. Discuss the Board's short-term and long-term goals and strategies for Mesa's historic

preservation program.

Several goals were discussed, regarding the future of the historic preservation program as it is rebuilt and reimagined. It was concurred by all that the relationship between the Board Members and City staff is integral to an effective program, and that mutual cooperation will ensure the greatest success of the program. The nature of historic preservation itself, and it being broader than only “saving old buildings” was discussed as a crucial facet for City leadership, stakeholders, and property owners to understand.

Dr. Appiah offered that the ultimate success of historic preservation combines preserving history and culture, while also combined with messaging surrounding how preservation can lead to economic development. It is important for the City Council to advocate for preservation, and currently there are several historic preservation champions on the council. It is also critical to be selective in which projects or programs we choose to champion, especially those which move the city forward, economically and developmentally.

Board Member Zingoni articulated that old attitudes that pit historic preservation against economic development are not current or helpful, and the goals and content of a successful program must be willing to adapt and change according to the needs of the city.

5. Review and discuss current historic preservation projects and ideas for potential future projects, including updates on current projects and revival of suspended projects.

Many ideas for future historic preservation projects were brainstormed: potential grants for oral history and cultural documentation, investigation into the preservation and redevelopment programs of other major and similar sized cities in the country and internationally, the potential for a new citywide survey of historic resources, joining the National Alliance for Preservation Commissions, making an effort to collaborate with commercial and downtown property owners, establishing an ongoing historic preservation project matrix, and building a preservation toolkit for city staff and property owners alike.

A greater discussion was had regarding Mesa’s historic neon signs. As Mesa’s neon has been well-documented and surveyed, moving forward with a neon sign park or some kind of display initiative was discussed as the logical next step. It was agreed that the neon is an important historic resource in the community and that other cities, like Casa Grande, may be examples of successful neon sign programs.

6. Discuss the Certified Local Government grant the City received to update its historic preservation ordinance and ideas for future updates and revisions to the ordinance, including the Historic Landmark Overlay Districts..

The Mesa Historic Preservation Office received a \$20,000 matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office to update its historic preservation ordinance and historic design guidelines. The process of composing the RFP is currently underway, and it will include a comprehensive study of Mesa’s historic resource and how they can be responsibly cared for in the 21st century.

The vast number of postwar neighborhoods in Mesa was considered by all, and the

postwar resource study conducted in 2004 was recognized as an excellent jumping-off point. Currently, the postwar neighborhoods are at a turning point, and new design guidelines should include specific sections on how to explicitly preserve postwar buildings.

7. Discuss ideas to increase the Board's and the City's community outreach efforts as it pertains to historic preservation, including methods to connect with historic district, establishing contacts in potential districts, and organizing Mesa historic preservation stakeholders.

A great deal of brainstorming was conducted to imagine the shape of historic preservation community outreach in Mesa. Many constructive ideas were proposed, including:

- Collaborating with the Mesa Community Outreach office to establish contacts in each historic district;
- Attending those neighborhood meetings or hosting our own, and conducting meet-and-greets and historic preservation Q-and-A sessions;
- Establishing a presence for historic preservation on social media and youtube;
- Hosting historic neighborhood celebrations and invite representatives from potential historic districts, school principals, and other community members;
- Collaborating with other local historic preservation officers and commissions to form a coalition and possibly a convention;
- Hosting a citywide historic preservation seminar at the end of the year with speakers, tours, and presentations.

8. Lunch served by Worth Takeaway

9. Adjournment.

Chair Marek adjourned the meeting at 1:20pm.

Supporting data is available for public review in the Planning Division, Municipal Building,
55 N. Center Street, Mesa, AZ 85201