

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING  
JULY 22, 2010**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Christel Schmidt, Chairman  
Gordon Bower, John Chalifoux, Bill Cote,  
John Hagerman, Nancy Lisby, Karen Lyons

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mitchell Austin, Urban Design Planner  
Rex Goulding

**CALL TO ORDER/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Ms. Schmidt welcomed Messrs. Hagerman and Bower, both recently appointed to the Board.
- A. Roll Call
- B. Joint City/County Meeting - July 28, 2010 at 9:00 a.m., Mid-County Regional Library, 2050 Forest Nelson Boulevard, Port Charlotte, Florida, Meeting Room C
- C. Next Scheduled Meeting - August 28, 2010

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. Meeting of June 24, 2010
  - Mr. Cote noted a correction to the minutes.
  - Mr. Cote MOVED, Mr. Hagerman SECONDED approval of the June 24, 2010 minutes as amended. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Certificates of Appropriateness
  - 1. HPAB Review
    - a. CA-21-10 - 635 East Virginia Avenue - Demolition
      - Mr. Mitchell Austin, Urban Design Planner, displayed an overhead of the subject property, as delineated in the agenda material, stating this structure was located in the Trabue Woods Historic District and had been constructed in 1952. He noted the structure was listed on the Florida Master Site File and had been constructed in a Masonry Vernacular Style; however, the structure did have additions to the front and rear which were not consistent with that style. He continued since the 2002 survey, which was the first record of the building, period metal awnings over the windows had been removed, adding the structure had been left vacant and unprotected in the recent past. He reported three ownership changes since 2005 and several City Code violations regarding tall grass and weeds over the past few years. He confirmed no report on the structural integrity of the house was provided by the applicant, Mr. Rex

Goulding; thus, only an exterior, visual inspection of the property was conducted, which revealed a building which did not seem to have any obvious structural defects as all walls and the roof appeared to be intact. He concluded with staff's recommendation for denial of CA-21-10.

- Ms. Lisby questioned the basis for staff's recommendation for denial.
- Mr. Austin reiterated there appeared to be no basis for demolition at this time; however, he acknowledged there may be an issue related to the health, safety and welfare of the public in that the structure was vacant, and the building had the potential for occupation by vagrants.
- Ms. Lyons confirmed staff had not conducted an interior inspection. She questioned the owner's reason for the demolition request.
- Mr. Austin replied the owner had indicated the structure was problematic due to the potential for visual blight or occupation by vagrants, for example.
- Mr. Hagerman disclosed he had visited the site, noting he personally owned a home inspection company. He announced the house was structurally sound, adding the applicant owned the adjacent, vacant properties on each side; thus, demolition of 635 East Virginia Avenue would increase the attractiveness of the site. He continued any building had the "potential" for vagrancy problems; however, he pointed out the agenda material included correspondence from the Police Department indicating they had not experienced any law enforcement problems with this property.
- Mr. Bower clarified staff was recommending denial based on technical reasons.
- Mr. Austin responded the property did not meet the criteria necessary for demolition.
- Mr. Bower disclosed he also drove by the property, acknowledging the structure was somewhat unsightly.
- Ms. Schmidt questioned the owner's plans for the property.
- Mr. Austin expressed uncertainty regarding same. He agreed the development potential would increase significantly upon demolition due to the fact that the applicant owned the adjacent properties. He advised denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness would delay the demolition for a maximum of 18 months, adding the applicant had the right of immediate appeal to City Council.
- Ms. Schmidt questioned the owner's liability in the event the structure began to be used as a "drug house."
- Mr. Austin replied he was unsure, reiterating there had been no such problems to date.
- Mr. Chalifoux disclosed he drove by the home and observed what appeared to be a new roof, adding several windows were broken. He then stated a land swap was approved at a recent City Council/Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) meeting,

the intent being for the County's use as affordable housing. He displayed an aerial view of the surrounding area as a point of reference, pointing out the subject property was located in the same neighborhood.

- Mr. Austin observed the aerial depicted the pattern of the neighborhood, specifically a number of vacant lots. He opined the above mentioned land swap was incidental to this request.
- Ms. Schmidt asked if staff was aware of the overall neighborhood's feelings regarding the proposal.
- Mr. Austin replied he had not received any direct feedback.
- Ms. Lisby commented she was concerned with someone's profitability taking precedence over retaining a historic structure. She clarified she was concerned with losing the City's designation as "historic Punta Gorda."
- Mr. Rex Goulding, owner's representative, announced the owner wished to demolish the home based on several factors. He explained the home was quite small in comparison to surrounding structures, adding the property was purchased in anticipation for use as an investment for future development. He acknowledged the roof was relatively new, having been replaced after damage incurred during Hurricane Charley in August 2004. He advised use of the structure as rental property was cost prohibitive due to the upgrades needed, adding there had been some vandalism to date such as theft of copper piping. He continued the owner also believed the property would eventually be rezoned for use as office/medical/institutional.
- Mr. Austin countered the overall feelings of the neighborhood were against any further such encroachment, confirming staff was in agreement with that sentiment. He mentioned the subject area currently contained a great deal of vacant, commercial space.
- Mr. Hagerman asked if the owner had any estimates as to the loss incurred by the abovementioned vandalism.
- Mr. Goulding replied he did not have that information in hand. He opined the structure itself was not historically significant, stating same was more related to the overall neighborhood.
- Mr. Chalifoux disclosed he knew Mr. Goulding personally. He asked if the City could force the owner to replace the windows and make the home habitable in the event the request for demolition was denied.
- Mr. Austin replied in the negative.
- Mr. Chalifoux clarified the structure could sit in blight for 18 months, pointing out same would encourage occupation by vagrants.

- Mr. Austin agreed that was a possibility with any unoccupied structure; however, home owners were responsible for maintaining the security of their property.
  - Mr. Bower questioned the financial impact to the property owner, if any, if the property was not demolished.
  - Mr. Goulding replied the City required the grounds to be mowed and the appearance to be maintained. He explained the owner wished to reduce his tax burden as well, reiterating the structure was not functional as far as a rental property. He clarified demolition would reduce the owner's tax base significantly, acknowledging the structure represented a small portion of the total tax appraised value.
  - Mr. Bower asked if the current tax assessment reflected conditions of the structure's interior.
  - Mr. Goulding replied he did not believe so.
  - Ms. Lisby asked if the current owner was the same as in 2004.
  - Mr. Austin replied the applicant had owned the property since 2008.
  - Ms. Schmidt questioned the owner's plans for the property.
  - Mr. Goulding replied he had not been made aware of same, reiterating he was representing the owner this date simply as the demolition contractor.
  - Ms. Lisby confirmed the owner was not local.
  - Ms. Lisby MOVED, Ms. Lyons SECONDED to deny CA-21-10. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- b. CA-22-10 - 357 West Marion Avenue - Signage
- Mr. Austin displayed an overhead of the proposed signage, as denoted within the agenda material, stating the subject property/building was located in the National Register Historic District and was a non-contributing structure built in 2002. He noted this current, one-story, commercial structure replaced a circa 1909 one-story, single family residence which was demolished in 2000. He mentioned the building was located in the City Center (CC) zoning district. He explained the proposed façade sign would replace an existing, non-conforming façade sign. He clarified the proposed signage met the requirements of City Code and did not adversely impact the architectural or historic character of the National Register Historic District. He concluded staff recommended approval of CA-22-10 based on the evidence provided by the applicant.
  - Mr. Chalifoux confirmed the property had been cited by the Code Compliance Division.
  - Mr. Hagerman clarified the applicant was undertaking this action so as to come into compliance.

- Mr. Chalifoux opined the proposed sign was far less attractive than the existing signage.
- Mr. Chalifoux MOVED, Mr. Cote SECONDED approval of CA-22-10. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- B. ZA-11-10 - An Ordinance of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, Amending Chapter 26 of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, Code of Ordinances known as the Land Development Regulations, Article 16, Application review and approval requirements, amending Section 16.3, application for Certificate of Appropriateness; amending Subsection 16.3(e), decisions on Certificate of Appropriateness applications, providing for decision-making by the Zoning Official in the event the Historic Preservation Advisory Board fails to hold a required meeting; providing for conflict and severability; and providing an effective date.
  - Mr. Austin announced when an item was scheduled to be reviewed at a Board meeting which was subsequently cancelled due to lack of a quorum of members, such application was currently required to be continued to the Board's next meeting, thus placing an unwarranted burden on the applicant to wait an additional 30 days. He explained the proposed amendment, as delineated in the agenda material, would allow the Zoning Official to review and determine compliance with design guidelines. He clarified this amendment would allow projects to continue through the approval process and assist in the promotion of new development and renovations without undue delay. He concluded with a recommendation for approval of ZA-11-10.
  - Ms. Lyons asserted this would eliminate the Board's authority, stating the Board was in place to preserve Punta Gorda's history.
  - Mr. Hagerman questioned the percentage of total sign permit applications submitted for the historic district versus any other City district.
  - Mr. Austin replied the majority of applications were required to undergo the Certificate of Appropriateness process. He reiterated the proposed amendment was applicable only if the Board failed to hold a regularly scheduled meeting due to lack of a quorum. He explained staff simply wished to ensure the City was as business friendly as possible.
  - Ms. Schmidt recalled a case where Board approval was provided by electronic mail.
  - Mr. Austin agreed, noting same was done on a one time basis; however, the City Attorney advised against doing so in the future.
  - Mr. Hagerman asked if a sign approved by the Zoning Official in a situation as described in the amendment would be considered permanent.
  - Mr. Austin replied affirmatively.

- Mr. Chalifoux opined Section 26-16.3(b)(1-5) gave staff broad approval to take any action desired, expressing opposition to same.
- Mr. Austin agreed the amendment related to all Board actions.
- Ms. Lisby expressed concern with giving up authority, basing her concern on the recent demise of the Revitalization Committee. She stated she would be saddened to see this Board sunsetted based only on a lack of interested citizens. She asserted it was incumbent upon members to attend all meetings, acknowledging unexpected, valid reasons existed for occasional absences.
- Mr. Chalifoux pointed out members had shown the ability to fill vacant positions, acknowledging they had a responsibility to do so.
- Mr. Bower clarified the amendment would apply only when there was no quorum.
- Mr. Chalifoux explained same currently delayed the Board's approval or denial an additional 30 days.
- Mr. Hagerman then commented on CA-20-10, 258 West Marion Avenue, "Tapas One", as delineated in the June 24, 2010 minutes, maintaining the City took it upon itself to add to the Board's recommendation. He explained the Board approved the projecting sign and the mural only, adding the minutes stated "either/or" would be allowed in reference to window lettering; however, he opined their signage had the appearance of a supermarket, which was not part of what the Board had approved.
- Mr. Austin responded he understood the Board's recommendation was for staff to work with the applicant with regard to a projecting sign "and/or" window graphics.
- Mr. Hagerman countered the minutes suggested the applicant be given the option to utilize window lettering or the type of signage typically approved for use by downtown businesses; however, both had been established. He expressed deep concern with allowing a Port Charlotte type signage theme, which he felt negatively impacted the beauty and historic value of Punta Gorda.
- Mr. Austin commented he may have misinterpreted the Board's direction, stating he would review the tapes of the June 24, 2010 meeting.
- Mr. Chalifoux read from the CA-20-10 application under the description of work to be performed as follows: paint black area on canopy and install pin mounted lettering and logo as per attached drawing, mural and signage combined to be painted on exterior west wall. He pointed out there was no mention of window lettering.
- Ms. Lyons countered the Board had raised the issue of window lettering.
- Mr. Hagerman reiterated the Board's direction was for "either/or."
- Mr. Chalifoux agreed, noting the business now had three different types of signage.

- Mr. Hagerman opined the actual content of Tapas One's window lettering fell outside of the realm of signage.
- Mr. Austin responded case law was fairly clear with regard to the authority of municipalities to regulate signage size, location and type; however, content could not be regulated as same was protected under the First Amendment. He reiterated he may have misinterpreted the Board's direction and would review the tapes.
- Ms. Schmidt asked if the existing signage at Tapas One was in compliance with City Code.
- Mr. Austin replied affirmatively.
- Ms. Lisby suggested the amount of signage may prove to be a safety hazard for people driving by, particularly in the busy winter months. She clarified she expected Punta Gorda to be business friendly; however, she also expected foreigners who came to Punta Gorda to abide by and try to fit in as aesthetically as possible and not become garish, thus diminishing the City's historic integrity.
- Mr. Hagerman questioned the remedy if it was determined staff had issued the City's approval in error. He then commented on the proposed amendment, stating he felt same would increase the chances of another incident similar to Tapas One.
- Mr. Chalifoux MOVED, Mr. Hagerman SECONDED to recommend denial of ZA-11-10. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- Ms. Schmidt asked if anyone had a suggestion relative to an alternative to that proposed in ZA-11-10 in that same had been denied.
- Mr. Austin interjected while the Board had recommended denial, ZA-11-10 would still be presented to the Planning Commission, adding both recommendations would ultimately be presented to City Council who would make the final decision.
- Mr. Chalifoux stated he would attend the Planning Commission meeting at which ZA-11-10 would be presented.
- Ms. Schmidt suggested a special meeting could always be held in the event a quorum was not available on the Board's regularly scheduled meeting day.
- Ms. Lisby confirmed the Board's regular meeting days were denoted in their bylaws.
- Mr. Chalifoux agreed, pointing out staff provided the Board with a list of meeting dates at the start of every year.
- Ms. Lisby commented perhaps the bylaws could be amended to address the possibility of a lack of quorum by designation of an alternate meeting day and/or time.
- Mr. Chalifoux countered he did not feel same was necessary, expressing his belief City Council was responsible for filling vacant seats.

- Mr. Bower stated he could envision instances where two or three people may be on vacation and another member became ill, resulting in a lack of quorum.
- Mr. Hagerman clarified the ability to reschedule would avoid the possibility of imposing undue delay on an applicant.
- Mr. Chalifoux suggested staff poll the Board by electronic mail prior to each meeting to confirm each member's attendance. He commended staff on their quick response to any and all electronic mail.
- Ms. Schmidt stated the Board may wish to consider alternate members as was the case with other advisory boards/committees.
- Ms. Lyons confirmed ZA-11-10 would be heard by the Planning Commission and City Council on July 26, 2010, and August 18, 2010, respectively.

C. 2011 Strategic Plan

- Mr. Austin announced the City had initiated development of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Strategic Plan and was seeking input from community stakeholders on development of a potential list of strategic objectives for the upcoming fiscal year. He noted strategic plan objectives must be beyond daily operational objectives and be reflective of longer term goals which contributed to realization of the City's collective vision. He clarified objectives should be broad in scope. He mentioned one issue which arose from City staff's meetings with Charlotte County staff and Team Punta Gorda (TPG) regarding south county gateway planning, specifically with regard to the unincorporated County property immediately adjacent to the City as well as the entirety of south Charlotte County, was a potential interest in the Scenic Highway Program, providing a detailed explanation of same. He suggested the Board may wish to recommend the City further explore such a program, possibly in conjunction with Charlotte County.
- Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Lyons expressed approval of Mr. Austin's recommendation.
- Discussion ensued with regard to compilation of a formal recommendation to City Council.
- Consensus of the Board was to place "Scenic Highway Program" on their next agenda, with a letter to subsequently be issued to City Council with a recommendation.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. Punta Gorda Historical Society, Inc.

- Ms. Lisby announced The Home Depot had organized a volunteer community group to assist with projects in situations where resources were simply unavailable, citing examples such as power washing, tree removal or general clean-up. She advised the Punta Gorda Historical Society (PGHS) was receiving assistance with power washing at the Train Depot, commenting favorably on same.

- Mr. Bower mentioned they had also worked on the Blanchard House as well as the Cooper Street Recreation Center.

#### B. Fund Raising

- Mr. Austin displayed an overhead of a tri-fold pamphlet generated by the Charlotte County Historical Advisory Committee (CCHAC), noting copies had been provided in the Board's agenda packets as requested at their previous meeting.
- Mr. Chalifoux questioned the procedure for generating something similar in the City.
- Mr. Austin replied the Board must first identify a project for which funds were needed, stating staff could then work on designing graphics for a pamphlet. He noted input from the Finance Department would be needed as well to assess the financial implications and to determine a collection methodology. He suggested a joint effort by the Board and the CCHAC toward establishment of a plaque program could be a positive first step.

#### **Note: Mr. Hagerman left the meeting at 10:19 a.m.**

- Mr. Chalifoux noted the plaque program would be discussed at the next City/County joint meeting.
- Mr. Bower questioned the funding source for existing historical markers as pictured in the County's pamphlet.
- Mr. Austin replied both the City and County had budgeted for same; however, he stated he did not believe such funds would be allocated any longer.
- Ms. Lisby mentioned the State had dedicated funds toward historical markers as well, pointing out each marker entailed a cost of approximately \$2,000 each.
- Ms. Schmidt asked members to concentrate on identifying a specific project.
- Mr. Chalifoux suggested an award program for individual property owners such as that formerly managed by the Revitalization Committee but of higher quality such as that being discussed with the CCHAC. He displayed a copy of a proposed bronze marker, stating same provided incentive to owners to maintain their homes.
- Mr. Bower asked if the bronze plaques were intended to be permanent.
- Mr. Chalifoux replied affirmatively.
- Ms. Schmidt questioned whether City Council's approval was required to proceed.
- Mr. Austin replied he understood the Board's bylaws indicated members must simply undergo the technical process of fund raising; however, it may be advantageous to keep City Council informed of their intentions.
- Mr. Chalifoux opined the Board must first define the parameters of the project.
- Consensus of the Board was to move forward on establishing a fund raising account.

- Ms. Schmidt confirmed Mr. Austin would seek guidance from Mr. Dennis Murphy, Growth Management Director, and Mr. Dave Drury, Finance Director, on the necessary steps to begin.
- Ms. Lisby interjected she would contact Messrs. Todd Craig and Ron Winters to determine what steps they took to establish a historic marker program.
- Mr. Chalifoux concluded the Board must next delineate the basis for their desire to fund raise, the anticipated method to do so and the direction in which funds would be expended.
- Ms. Schmidt then commented on the proposed Herald Court Centre hibiscus mural project, the details for which were delineated in the agenda material, explaining same would inform the public of the importance of the hibiscus to Punta Gorda's history. She announced the Punta Gorda Mural Society (PGMS) would essentially assume responsibility for the entire project in that she would be relocating out of the area in the near future.

**Note: Mr. Cote left the meeting at 10:36 a.m.**

- Ms. Schmidt continued the plan was for establishment of a mural in the elevator alcove as well as panels on both sides of the restrooms and garage entries. She displayed photographs of these areas, submitting same into the record.

**Note: Mr. Cote returned to the meeting at 10:39 a.m.**

- Ms. Schmidt concluded with a review of suggested, community activities, fund raising events and suggested sponsors, asking if any member would be willing to act as the Board's liaison.
- Ms. Lyons volunteered to do so.

#### STAFF COMMENTS

- A. Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Project Status Report
- Mr. Austin reported the Retta Esplanade extension project was complete and open to traffic.
  - Ms. Schmidt questioned the project's cost.
  - Mr. Austin replied he was unsure; however, final costs were under budget.
  - Mr. Chalifoux then requested an update on the screening wall at the parking garage.
  - Mr. Austin replied he had not received any status reports from the project manager.

#### MEMBER COMMENTS

- Ms. Lisby commented on CA-21-10, stating she personally viewed such demolition requests as for-profit operations which were disrespectful of the City's history.
- Ms. Schmidt announced this was her last meeting, reiterating she would be moving out of the area shortly. She stated she had enjoyed serving on this Board.

- Mr. Chalifoux confirmed the Board's next agenda would include election of Chairman.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- Meeting Adjourned: 10:55 a.m.

---

Christel Schmidt, Chairman

---

Mary Kelly, Recording Secretary