

NEWPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

January 25, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

ROLL CALL

Commission members present were Ken Clift, Mary Beth Crocker, Ed Davis, Robert Ingguls, Mike Kolb, Catherine McElwain, and Nick Miller. Scott Clark, Historic Preservation Officer, and John Hayden, City Attorney, were present. The meeting began at 6:02 p.m. The meeting was held in person in conjunction with a live stream on Newport's YouTube page.

MINUTES

Commissioner Crocker moved to approve the minutes as revised from the January 11, 2023 meeting, seconded by Chair Miller.

NEW BUSINESS

1. COA Updates

Scott Clark updated the Commission on COAs received and approved in 2022. There were 241 COAs for 2022, with most approved by staff. Chair Miller asked about the pace of COAs coming in compared with previous years; Mr. Clark noted that the current number is on par with the previous year, but that there were 400 in 2020. Chair Miller noted that if Commissioners have questions about specific projects, they should direct those questions to Staff offline to avoid getting into the weeds during meetings. Mr. Clark discussed what COA applicants receive with their approved COAs and how those must be displayed.

2. Discussion Regarding HP Ordinance and Guideline Revisions

Chair Miller asked Staff what the goal of the discussion was for the evening. Scott Clark noted that various ordinances are being reviewed throughout the City and that the Historic Preservation Ordinance hadn't been revised since the introduction of the York Street Local District.

Mr. Clark explained that the proposed Buena Vista Local District necessitates a review of the Ordinance to ensure that it meets the needs of Newport residents.

Mr. Hayden noted that there is likely much input to be given from the Commission, but that tonight's meeting is the first of many conversations

about the Ordinance and Guidelines. He requested that conversation be limited to about an hour for the evening; there will be multiple public meetings and opportunities for public input. He emphasized the City's interest in moving the Buena Vista nomination forward. He also encouraged Commissioners to direct members of the public to speak with Staff if they wanted to discuss any questions or concerns to ensure that the whole community can be proud of the work done.

Chair Miller asked whether there were any specific points Mr. Hayden or Mr. Clark wanted to address. Mr. Clark noted that some of it is cleaning up language to make things more readable and understandable. Mr. Clark also expressed a desire that pre-existing owner-occupied properties in new and newly expanded districts be given a measure of consideration as long as their work does not change the exterior appearance or affect a property's historic character. Referring to pages 11 & 12 of the Ordinance, Mr. Clark noted that the goal is to allow everyone to feel they can participate in the District while enjoying their property. Chair Miller noted that this could be particularly helpful on the West Side and asked whether there was specific language prepared. Mr. Hayden noted that there is some language in development that needed to be reviewed by Legal Staff. The goal is to make the District as welcoming a place for owner-occupied property owners as possible while still being legally sound. He also suggested considerations of hardship provisions. A discussion ensued about what kinds of changes may be permitted in the Buena Vista Local Historic District.

Mr. Clark noted that the current Ordinance calls out the East Row Historic District Review Guidelines; once the Guidelines are revised, they will be named the Newport Historic District Design Review Guidelines. The goal is not to make every District like East Row; Mr. Clark noted that each District has its own character. He also noted that the Ordinance requires certified mail notifications, which may need to change to ensure that people receive their notices. A discussion of mailing options and expenses ensued. Mr. Clark reiterated that the goal is to clean up the language and find ways to take care of owner-occupied properties and homeowners who are already in the City.

Chair Miller discussed some concerns about the Guidelines, including a need for a more detailed introduction and for flexibility in addressing needs in different districts. Mr. Clark agreed with the need for greater flexibility.

Chair Miller asked whether any other Commissioners wished to comment and asked whether there was still a plan for hiring a professional to rewrite the Guidelines; Mr. Clark and Mr. Hayden answered in the affirmative. Mr. Hayden noted that Mr. Clark will be heavily involved in the process and

will be incorporating feedback from the NHPC and the community at large. The goal is to complete this process by the end of 2023.

Chair Miller invited members of the audience to comment. Commissioner Rehtin thanked the NHPC for their work and said that the more quickly the process could move forward, the better.

Mr. Clark asked the NHPC whether they had specific concerns about the Guidelines. He noted that a major issue is the use of “should” rather than “shall” and that the language should be more like code. Chair Miller asked for an introduction that explains the role of Historic Preservation in the City of Newport and the purpose of the Guidelines. Mr. Clark also noted the need for visuals and images and suggested putting architectural styles in an appendix.

Commissioner Crocker suggested including information on the value of historic districts and what they do for homeowners and cities. She also asked that modern building materials be discussed in detail. Mr. Clark agreed. Chair Miller discussed the need for economic sustainability and crafting historic preservation regulations based on a community’s needs.

3. Discussion Regarding Proposed Buena Vista Local Historic District

Mr. Clark discussed the map of the proposed Buena Vista Local Historic District and explained how it differs from the National Historic District. Some of the National District is in the York Street Local Historic District, for example. He then gave a presentation on the history of the area, the architectural styles present, notable sites, and the Newport Shotgun. Commissioner McElwain noted that the smaller homes in Buena Vista are more affordable and accessible for many in the community, and a discussion of affordability and development ensued. Chair Miller asked about what would happen next, and Mr. Clark discussed upcoming public meetings and opportunities to participate in the process. There will have to be a public hearing before the Commission. Mr. Hayden discussed the timeline and the need to ensure that stakeholders are given the opportunity to participate and provide feedback. A discussion of community concerns about affording historic preservation efforts ensued. Commissioner Davis noted that the City is changing and stressed the need to exercise control over development. Mr. Clark asked each Commissioner to consider what changes they would like to see in the Ordinance and direct that information to Staff. Chair Miller asked whether any members of the public wished to speak. Commissioner Rehtin spoke about the loss of historic features in the district and stressed that time is of the essence. Josh Tunning with the West Side Citizens Coalition spoke in favor of the District, as well, stressing that historic districts protect homes.

