

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC) MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2021 9:30 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Jessica Francis, Chairman; Diane Miller, Vice Chairman; Members: Melinda Murphy, Debbie Avery and John Roberts **Also Present:** Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director; Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) October 14, 2021

Ms. Avery made a motion to approve the October 14, 2021 minutes. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

**A) Request by Garret Puzzo to Designate a Historic Building, located at 1110 Royal Palm Blvd.
(Application #HD21-000001)**

Mrs. Francis explained that this meeting would be conducted as a Quasi-judicial hearing and she would be following the procedures to conduct a Quasi-judicial hearing. There was no ex parte communication disclosed by the HPC members. The City Clerk swore in witnesses en masse and all exhibits handed out for this hearing would be marked for identification and kept by the City Clerk.

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, gave a Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes) recommending approval of the historic site designation.

Mr. Garret Puzzo, applicant for this case was sworn in. He said that a few years ago he purchased the property at 706 Royal Palm Place and has fixed up that piece of property. The property they are discussing today at 1110 Royal Palm Boulevard has been on his radar for some time now and he was told to walk away because there is a lot of work that needs to be done to that piece of property. He wants to bring the property back to its original structure. He has a drawing of the property dating back to 1950 that was done by Carter & Associates. He said the ultimate goal is to bring the home back to its original station in life. The exterior of the building will stay like it is. There will be 10 apartments and he is not planning to change this into Housing Urban Development (HUD) property. He was available to answer any questions that the Commission might have.

Mr. Arthur Story, who was sworn in said that he owns the dentist office next door to this property and that he was against designating this property historical for several reasons. He said the first thing being that they don't know when this property was built. He was shocked that the City did not have this information. Also the secondary building was built in 1948, which he didn't know why it was being considered for preservation. He said the building is in very poor condition. He was going through the backup material provided and it does not mention that a fire happened on the property about 20 years

ago. The report fails to mention any testing for lead. He said the Fire Marshal should have to evaluate the building to make sure that it can be made safe and they should be consulted before this Commission makes their recommendation. In the Vero Beach Magazine there is a picture of the front building on Royal Palm Boulevard where it shows the floor has dropped and now has a crack in it and it wasn't like that eight (8) months ago. He mentioned how much are taxpayers going to pay to help restore this building, which may not be worth restoring. He wants to know what all this building needs to bring it back up to its original structure. He said that it has been there for 38 years.

Mrs. Ruth Stanbridge, County Historian, was sworn in. She clarified that to declare a piece of property historic it has to be 50 years or older and it must meet all the criteria in the guidelines and this property does. She talked about the person that did the architectural design of this building. She said this is the last apartment building left in the Royal Palm area. She has helped restore a lot of these buildings and no matter how bad they look they can be restored and look nice when they are finished. They have an opportunity to restore these buildings. She said that any businessman that takes on a project like this understands the expenses and permitting that he will have to go through. She encouraged the Commission to allow this piece of property to be declared a historical building for history reasons.

Ms. Priscilla Richardson commented that she has been keeping an eye on this piece of property. She said it is very historical to her. She is from Los Angeles and has watched different pieces of property be restored and brought back to life. There are only a few of these buildings here in Vero Beach and this could be one of them. This is a part of the history of Vero Beach and she would hate to see a building like this one torn down. She said that it is possible to restore it.

Mr. Rey Neville mentioned a piece of property in Royal Park that has been demolished and in its place there are condos. He has family that has stayed in this actual building, which goes back to 1952. He hopes that it will be preserved and would hate to see it torn down. He asked if the interior architectural work will be kept.

Mr. Puzzo stated that they are trying to keep the interior of the building intact as much as they can. The stairs may have to be removed because they are non-conforming. They will have to replace the tile, but will replace it with tile from that time period. He has been working very closely with Mrs. Stanbridge on these things. He said that the building has been boarded up for the past 11 years. He hopes that the Commission will approve this today in order for him to work with the City and the Building Department to get permits necessary to bring the building back. He said as far as the floor settling it would have to be repaired.

Mr. Jeffries explained that when it comes to designation criteria, the criteria is outlined in Section 76.21 of the Code. He went over the one (1) criteria that this building meets in order to designate it historic. Staff found that it possesses integrity of the design to be designated. The issues regarding the building is it still has to meet zoning and a site plan will have to be submitted. They will have to work with the Building Official on any structural damage of the building. He said it was condemned at one (1) time by the Building Official. He said that Mr. Puzzo will have to meet all the structural elements. A structural analysis report by a structural engineer will have to be done. The building code is a separate issue on what they are doing today. He also mentioned it was a priority of the previous Historical Commission three (3) years ago to save this building. Now they have found a new property owner who wants to restore the building.

Mrs. Francis recalled in 2018 that this was brought up before the Commission and discussed.

Mr. Roberts asked if the ultimate purpose of restoring the building was to keep the eight (8) rental apartments.

Mr. Puzzo answered yes. He said that currently someone is living on the back property, which has been inspected and is in conformance. He said the person living there is not paying rent. He is just watching the property. He said that vagrants are constantly trying to break into the building and he doesn't want it to get any worse than it already is.

Mrs. Francis asked if the back property will also be designated historical.

Mr. Jeffries explained that they only will be designating the front of the building. The back of the building doesn't exhibit the architectural style. He said that it is unclear when that building was built. He said only the front building meets the criteria.

Mr. Puzzo added that it is their intent not to put up other structures than what is there. Also, they do not plan on changing anything on the exterior of the building and just have the main building designated historical.

Ms. Murphy brought up that Mr. Puzzo said that his intent was not to build anything on the property or change what is already there. She asked if he was to sell the property what happens when a new buyer comes in.

Mr. Jeffries explained if this structure was torn down only five (5) units could be built. He said they cannot expand the number of units that are there now. There was an illegal conversion of one (1) of the units that has to be restored back. The zoning of the property will have to be met. No commercial uses of the property will be allowed.

Mrs. Murphy asked about parking and the runoff.

Mr. Puzzo is looking at putting in asphalt or concrete parking to meet the current parking requirements. He said the current parking spaces are 1.5 spaces per apartment. He would like to use the turf block, but doesn't know if that is allowed. He said as far as drainage goes, an engineer will come in and do some drainage. He said all that has to meet code.

Mr. Jeffries added that a site plan will have to be done, the parking issue will have to be addressed, and Mr. Puzzo will have to comply with the stormwater drainage regulations.

Mrs. Murphy asked what does 1.5 spaces mean.

Mr. Jeffries explained that is the code requirement and that is the calculation used for this dwelling.

Mrs. Murphy asked if this is approved who is responsible for overseeing the historic guidelines aspect of this property.

Mr. Jeffries explained that the responsibility falls in different places. He said any alterations to the building will be addressed and a building permit will be given if one (1) is needed. He said those permits do come over to his office because it is a joint City/County Building Department.

Mr. Roberts asked Mr. Puzzo how much research has he done on what it would take to accomplish this renovation, as well as things that might come up during the process. He would hate to see the Commission approve it and then Mr. Puzzo finds it is too big of a project and doesn't want to finish it.

Mr. Puzzo expressed that this is the fifth property that he has renovated. He first contacted Mr. Terry Schlitt to be the contractor because he is familiar with historical homes. He said that this home is not a flipper. The intent is for this building to stay intact forever. He said there is termite damage that will have to be repaired, as well as any fire damage in the house will also have to be repaired. He said when things come up they will have to be dealt with. He said this is a long term investment.

Mrs. Francis asked Mr. Puzzo if this was not designated historic would he still use the property as a rental property.

Mr. Puzzo said that probably would not be viable for him.

Mr. Arthur Storey felt that the building was not safe, which is why he does not want it designated historic. He asked if the building was going to be restored to modern day standards.

Mrs. Francis explained that the outside of the building will be brought back to mission style. She said that is what this Commission is concerned about and their purview.

Mr. Storey said the people living there will probably be paying less rent than what is normally collected in this area, which he has some concerns about as to who will occupy the building. He said they also will need to test the house to see if there is lead and asbestos.

Mrs. Francis explained that those are things that the City will do. The Commission's main interest is the exterior of the property.

Mr. Storey asked why did the City condemn this building and why is it still standing.

Mr. Puzzo commented that he could request that the building be put in the National Registry and then file with the government and make it a HUD piece of property, which is not what he is going to do. He said that these will be upscale apartments and not cheap rentals.

Mr. Jeffries did not know the facts on why the Building Official condemned this piece of property, so those issues will have to be dealt with.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, said that the first process was for the applicant to come to the Historic Preservation Commission and then it will need to go to the City Council.

Ms. Avery made a motion that based on the competent substantial evidence presented that the applicable code provisions have been met. Mrs. Murphy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A) Historic Preservation Flyer

Mrs. Francis commented that the previous Historic Preservation Commission was working on the draft flyer that they have in front of them to give to people that are new to the City and purchasing property

that they might want to designate historical. She asked the members to look it over and if there are any changes that they would like to see made to let the Clerk's office know.

Mrs. Murphy asked where will the flyers be put.

Mrs. Francis said that they could put some downtown and in different realtor's offices. Mr. Jeffries has told the Commission that he has a printing budget so he will handle printing the flyers for the Commission.

Mrs. Francis will update the flyer and bring it back to their next meeting.

B) Review of the Website

Mrs. Francis asked the members to review the website to see if they want any changes made to it in reference to the Historical section. She said if they would like to have some changes made they can ask Mr. Jeffries to update the website.

5. OLD BUSINESS

6. MEMBER'S MATTER

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Ms. Avery asked if they have ever thought about inviting Mainstreet Vero Beach to be a member of the Commission.

Mr. Jeffries said they will need to see if there is a conflict of interest in having Mrs. Sue Gromis on the Historic Preservation Commission and hold the position of the Director of MainStreet. He said that MainStreet has different areas that they focus on. He said they are membership, program, and economic development. He said the City has a Historical Economic Development Board that helps with the design of the downtown designated area.

Mrs. Francis will work with staff on the designated styles that the Commission can go over.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Avery made a motion to adjourn today's meeting at 10:46 a.m. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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