BENICIA HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

City Hall Commission Room
Thursday, July 28, 2011
6:30 P.M.

I. OPENING OF MEETING:

A. Pledge of Allegiance
B. Roll Call of Commissioners

Present: Commissioners Haughey, McKee, Taagepera, Van Landschoot, and Chair Crompton

Absent: Commissioner Mang (excused) and Commissioner White

Staff Present:
Charlie Knox, Director
Mike Roberts, Senior Civil Engineer
Doug Vu, Associate Planner
Gina Eleccion, Management Analyst

C. Reference to Fundamental Rights of Public - A plaque stating the Fundamental Rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to this meeting room per Section 4.04.030 of the City of Benicia's Open Government Ordinance.

II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

On motion of Commissioner Haughey, seconded by Commissioner Taagepera, the agenda was adopted, as presented, by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Haughey, McKee, Taagepera, Van Landschoot and Chair Crompton
Noes: None

Absent: Commissioners Mang and White

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

A. WRITTEN COMMENT

None.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

None.

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

On motion of Commissioner Van Landschoot, seconded by Commissioner Taagepera, the Consent Calendar was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Haughey, McKee, Taagepera, Van Landschoot and Chair Crompton
Noes: None
Absent: Commissioners Mang and White
Abstain: None

A. Approval of Minutes of June 23, 2011

VI. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

A. 963 JEFFERSON STREET – DESIGN REVIEW

08PLN-00028 – Design Review
963 Jefferson Street, APNs: 0080-150-020 and 0080-150-030

PROPOSAL:

The property owner requests design review approval to rehabilitate the Officers Quarters Duplex located at 963 Jefferson Street in the Benicia Arsenal Historic District for future use as a Bed and Breakfast Inn and Restaurant. The primary elements of the proposed project include:

1) Demolition of the existing brick moat retaining wall and enlargement of the moat on the east, south and west facades that includes the construction of a new moat with a concrete-masonry unit (CMU) retaining wall;
2) Reconstruction of the east veranda, including replacement of the existing sandstone piers with a CMU wall that will also serve as the expanded moat retaining wall, restoration of the original wood

balustrades and replacement of the wood Corinthian columns with polymer replicas;

3) Reconstruction and enlargement of the moat at the northwest corner of the building that will function as a sub-grade courtyard and be used for restaurant dining. The new courtyard will span approximately 35-feet at its widest area and extend approximately 80-feet along the west-facing façade. The removal of a mature sycamore tree will be necessary to construct this element; and
4) Reconstruction and enlargement of the south-facing entry porch that includes constructing the base with CMU and cladding with stucco or covered with wood lattice, constructing new stairs, new polymer Corinthian columns to support the roof, restoring the original pilasters, constructing a new porch roof and replacing wood tongue-and-groove decking.

Recommendation: Approve a design review request for exterior modifications to the existing Officers Quarters Duplex located at 963 Jefferson Street, based on recommended modifications by staff, the findings and subject to the conditions of approval set forth in the proposed resolution.

Doug Vu, Associate Planner, gave an overview of the project. He summarized the above four points related to the rehabilitation. He noted the following:

1. Existing moat be retained/preserved where moat is not being enlarged.
2. Where east veranda is being reconstructed, staff is recommending the wall be constructed of concrete piers faced in sandstone or that the proposed windows be substantially enlarged to give the appearance of an open underside, providing the basement with light and air.
3. Regarding the sunken courtyard, staff recommends that historic materials from other parts of the building are not used so as to not create an false sense of history.
4. Regarding the wood columns, staff recommends a professional conservator be consulted to determine if the columns could be preserved.
5. Regarding the original entry, staff recommends an extension along the perimeter to be designed/constructed so that the original porch could be restored in the future.

Doug Vu noted that the applicant agreed to revise the project description.

Commissioners asked questions of staff. Doug Vu noted that the existing porch depth is 5', and applicant wishes to extend the deck to 8'6". Only the depth of the porch would be increased, not the width. The Page & Turnbull report was referenced related to the columns. Doug Vu noted that the form and design of the columns are important, particularly if it is economically infeasible to use original materials. There was a question about the moat. Doug Vu noted that the Secretary of the Interior (SOI) Standards acknowledge that rehabilitation allows for modern accommodations. Regarding the bricks, there was a comment that possibly the bricks could be used for a path or on another part of the property. The height of the rail was discussed. The Historical Building Code applies, so the rail height can be original.

Mark Mitchell, Attorney for Applicant – He noted that his client is prepared to make changes to comply with staff's recommendations. He noted that the corner moat will still retain all of the original materials. He noted that he submitted a letter to the Commission. He noted that the top of the columns are wood. He further noted that wood columns are twice the cost of polymer. The location of the bathrooms was changed based on the March site visit.

There were questions about the wood columns related to how the columns were done at the Commanding Officer's Quarters. The applicant noted that with the drains, there was no room for interior supports on many of the columns. Much of the wood was very deteriorated. The bathrooms were moved to provide more visibility from the lower windows.

The public hearing was opened.

Dana Dean, Attorney for Amports – She raised procedural issues regarding CEQA. She challenged the Categorical Exemption. She stated that the project would need to be pulled back and redefined. She does not believe that an 11th hour modification of project description is acceptable. She believes this should be continued. She stated that there are inaccuracies in the letter written by Mark Mitchell.

Curt Hoffman, resident – he commented that there are too many roadblocks being put up for this project. There should be common sense used. We should be promoting businesses and tourism.

A resident stated that she does not understand why anyone would object to this project. We need the business in this town.

Reed Robbins, Jefferson Street Mansion owner – She noted that she has been attending meetings related to this project. She is concerned with some of the comments that have been made. She commented on her efforts at the

Mansion. She noted that there had been inappropriate uses in the past. She noted that her project is a rehabilitation. Tourism is important to this town. She asked for no loud construction on the weekends.

Pat Lopes, resident – She commented that this is a wonderful enhancement to the community. She thinks the project is worth it.

Karen Burns, resident – She hopes that the Commission continues to work to have the best possible project and does not feel pressured to make a decision. She does not understand the need to widen the porch.

Mark Mitchell, Attorney – provided a rebuttal. He noted that there was a workshop in January. The applicant had hired Page & Turnbull, who made a series of recommendations. A site visit was held after the report was reviewed and the workshop was held. Staff's analysis incorporated recommendations that were made. He referenced the SOI Standards, which allow for new construction to be differentiated from the original. He noted that Dana Dean had requested deed restrictions on the property on behalf of Amports.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioners discussed the project and the process. Charlie Knox stated that if the Commission has to add conditions of approval to mitigate potential environmental impacts, the project would not be exempt; however, since the applicant has revised the project description, this is not an issue.

Commissioners commented they would like to have revised plans to take action on. Commissioners would like to discuss all of the elements. The bathrooms are an issue. Material samples would be appreciated. More detail on the fence and lattice detail on the east elevation are needed. The railing along the perimeter should be the original height. The Historical Building Code applies on this property. The sandstone veneer was discussed.

Commissioners noted that the process is the same as all projects. If the project is consistent with the SOI Standards, then the project is exempt. The Commission has previously added conditions to projects to comply with the SOI Standards. A cost analysis of polymer vs. wood was requested. It was also requested to determine if polymer has been used on any National Register properties. There was a request to have a conservator look at the south porch to determine if any elements could be used on other portions of the property. Analysis of the bathrooms should be done for consistency with the SOI Standards. Rehabilitating this building is an extremely important project.

Commissioners requested more information/gave direction on the following:

1. Design of bathrooms
2. Details of lattice wall, dimensions, materials.
3. Railings to be constructed per the Historical Building Code
4. Majority of Commission requested to reconstruct front porch at original size
5. More information on columns, cost analysis, precedent on National Register properties
6. Wrought iron rail details
7. Revised plans showing above changes

It was noted by Commissioner Taagepera that the Page & Turnbull report did not state that the south porch could not be widened. She stated that she was not necessarily opposed to the widening of the porch.

Commission recommended this item be continued until the above items have been addressed.

A recess was called at 8:20 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 8:25 p.m.

B. STREETLIGHT IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE BENICIA INTERMODAL FACILITIES PROJECT AT FIRST AND MILITARY

PROPOSAL:
As part of the Intermodal Facilities Project, streetlight improvements are proposed in the vicinity of First and Military. The proposed streetlight improvements implement a number of Benicia Main Street's recommendations to the maximum extent allowable by the grant, which requires that improvements be constructed within the defined project area and provide connectivity to the transit stop. The Commission is being asked to review the locations and styles of the proposed historic-style streetlights. No other aspects of the project will be reviewed or discussed.

Recommendation: Recommend that, as part of the downtown Intermodal project, existing streetlights be replaced with the historic gooseneck streetlights along Military West and First Street between West 2nd and West K and historic lantern pedestrian streetlights be installed in the planter strip along West 2nd between West K and Military West.

Mike Roberts, Senior Civil Engineer, gave a brief overview. He noted that there are existing lights proposed for replacement, as well as new, pedestrian-scaled lantern lights proposed for installation on West 2nd between Military and K. It was noted that the existing traffic signal at Military and First Street will be replaced. It was proposed to paint the new hardware Benicia Blue. It was noted that this will also

go to the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission with HPRC's comments. It was further noted that the gooseneck lights are primarily for streets and the lanterns are for sidewalk lighting. Mike Roberts stated that construction will take place Spring 2012.

Carl Lunsted, resident – He questioned if the lights on West 2nd Street would be placed between the sidewalk and curb. Staff confirmed that this was true. He suggested removing the trees to install the lights and then replanting trees in relation to the light poles. He would like lights on West K as well.

Karen Burns, resident – She is glad to see consistency with the lights on First Street. She questioned if the light bulbs were changed. Charlie Knox stated that the bulbs have not been replaced, but he would have someone look at the lights to see if there is an issue.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM STAFF

A. CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION DESIGN AWARD – HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Gina Eleccion noted that the City is proud to have received a Preservation Design Award. She thanked the Commissioners and Committee Members (Toni Haughey, Leann Taagepera, Jerry Hayes, and Bonnie Silveria). This project was truly a team effort. In addition, Charlie Knox noted that Gina Eleccion received an exceptional achievement award from the City for her work on this project.

Charlie Knox noted that the solar installation work is beginning.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Van Landschoot commented that the Historic Context Committee should get to go to the award ceremony.

Commissioner Haughey questioned the status of the Captain Walsh House. Gina Eleccion noted that all issues have been resolved except the dormer on the western porch. The property owner would need design review approval to leave this alteration.

Commissioner Taagepera questioned the issue of a citizen attending last month and asking for a window discussion. Staff noted that he was directed by the Mayor to talk to the HPRC Chair. Staff is working on direction from the City Manager.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Crompton adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.