



2600 Fresno Street, Third Floor

Historic Preservation Commission Executive Minutes

August 26, 2019

MONDAY

6:00 p.m.

2600 FRESNO STREET
CONFERENCE ROOM A
2nd Floor, City Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL- 6:00 p.m.

*The meeting was called to order by **Chair Patrick Boyd** at 6:04 PM.*

Commissioners Present: *Patrick Boyd, Robin Goldbeck, Paul Halajian, Ron McNary (late), C. Kristina Roper, and Don Simmons*

Staff Present: *Laura Groves van Onna, John Hastrup (CAO), Amber Piona and Dan Zack (late).*

II. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

A. Approve Minutes for June 24, 2019.

The minutes for June 24, 2019 were approved 4-0 with a motion by Commissioner Simmons and a second by Commissioner Goldbeck; Commissioner Roper abstained and Commissioner McNary was not present for this vote.

III. APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda with was approved 5-0 with a motion by Commissioner Roper and a second by Commissioner Simmons; Commissioner McNary was not present for this vote.

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

V. CONTINUED MATTERS

None.

VI. COMMISSION ITEMS

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A. CONSIDER AND MAKE FINDINGS ON APPLICATION B19-06891 BY THE PROPERTY OWNER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CARPORT WITH SOLAR PANELS AT THE ROBINSON HOME (HP #078) LOCATED AT 1003 S ORANGE AVENUE PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1606(a)(2) AND 12-1617.

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna presented the staff report on the application B19-06891 to construction a carport with solar panels on the Robinson Home (HP#078), 1003 Orange Ave; the request entails an exterior alteration visible from the public right-of-way. Staff recommends the approval of the project application with the following conditions: that the metal pole be wrapped and capped in wood on top and bottom; wood spindles are to be placed along the roofline of the carport; and that alternative angles for the roofline be considered.

Dan Zack and Ron McNary arrive 6:07p.m.

Robert Boro, (owner's representative, 985 N Van Ness): I am a friend of the applicant, Rodolfo Pasillas, the name on the application, Castillo, is incorrect. Mr. Pasillas and his contractor (from All Premium Contractors) are here tonight. A prior contractor had submitted plans for this carport and had been rejected by the City so he abandoned the project. Rodolfo contracted with the current contractor and was in a quandary about what was submitted and what further was required. I offered to contract Historic Preservation and Laura [Groves van Onna] is kind and professional and she sent me copies of the plans that had been submitted and working with the contractor we worked out what we thought was required. Clearly there has to be to a visual connection between the architectural detail of the carport and the house. The porch of the house has these vertical railings on the bottom and curved corbels, and that seemed a sensible thing to bring to the carport and wrap the posts in wood to be more in character with the house. What the owner and contractor are asking of the Commission today to approve the concept tonight. There is some work that needs to be done with the angles of the roof of the carport to camouflage the panels, like a parapet. We ask you to approve the concept, so that we can work out the angle of the roof and a parapet and have Laura review it.

Commissioner Paul Halajian: Would a concept that has four columns instead of two in the middle, would that be something that could that work?

Rodolfo Pasillas (owner, 1003 S Orange Ave): The idea behind having the three posts the middle is in a row to be able to park two cars side by side, if I have four columns I would only be park one car.

Halajian: How wide is that?

Pasillas: About 19 feet?

Commissioner Ron McNary: That sounds tight for two cars.

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Pasillas: They fit, perfectly.

Boro: There is a wrought iron fence with a vine (not a hedge) so there is more room to park to the south than it appears.

Pasillas: I have a total of 24 feet of parking room.

Boro: are the posts in the center of the 19 feet or the 24 feet?

Pasillas: 19 feet. Posts in the center of the 19 feet, the car on the right can park further to the right.

Halajian: Can the carport encroach into the five foot setback as long as the column itself isn't there? I know you can't build a structure in the setback but I think an overhang can.

Boro: I don't think [Fresno Fire Department] typically allows that.

Commissioner Robin Goldbeck: I believe three feet from the property line is what is allowed.

Halajian: With that there are several more feet that the carport could extend out. I think it would be more in keeping with the house to do four posts.

Pasillas: I am okay with that as long as I can fit two cars.

Goldbeck: Your contractor may be able to weigh in but I think you spending money for those supports cantilevering.

Boro: It's 8½ feet deep on each of the posts. They may be less deep if there are six of them.

Contractor: The materials have already been delivered to the house.

Chair Patrick Boyd: The single post is a very modern cantilever-y design. I can appreciate putting the elements on to try to match the house, but it's still very different looking.

Boro: Would you approve it with six posts instead?

Boyd: There may at one point in time have been a porte cochere on the south side with some steps going out to an old drive way. If we could get something to look more like that and not a cantilevered mid-century modern look like this. If you framed it out so that you're looking at posts on either side and trimmed those appropriately.

Boro: Would there be any logic to having two posts at the façade (closest to the street) and the center posts further back like they are now. The only reason I am asking is because it's engineered and the materials are already there, it would be economical to put the two on the front and the others are back as you suggested.

Goldbeck: If the objection is to the cantilever, this approach would mitigate that, somewhat. It would still structurally be cantilevered.

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Boyd: Then you'd be getting into a whole façade concept. You could build the structure as you have it and have a separate structure on the front that would be detached from the house.

Goldbeck: You could really make a little gable on the front, there.

Boyd: It would be more reminiscent of the architecture of the home and the view-shed from Orange Avenue it would look like a more traditional porte cochere element.

Boro: So you would actually have three posts on the front, wouldn't you?

Boyd: Visually from the front with this concept you would see two end posts and a center post, but instead of trying to re-engineer an element that you already have, our consideration is the architecture of the home, but maybe a façade treatment of the front area, that almost takes the whole solar panel out of play, visually.

Boro: Mr. Pasillas like that.

Boyd: Did you want a carport, is that why you're proposing a carport with solar panels in lieu of placing them on the structure?

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna: So your proposal is to approve the proposal as is with the current conditions in addition to putting two posts on either end in front?

Boyd: Yes, it's similar to what we'd do with warehouse fronts, where you'd have an old warehouse with a barreled roof, but in the front there'd be a brick façade and the windows. For this project, across the front from this elevation we'd see two posts and a parapet structure that matches up with the architecture of the house. That could literally be something that's more linear and flat, allowing the other structure to be protected from view. This solution is appealing because it's not attached to the home, the current design is visually not appealing because it's so different from the house, but the proposed solution fixes that aesthetic issue. If the structure ever needed to come down in the future it wouldn't be a major deconstruction measure. Does that make sense?

Groves van Onna: Yes, thank you.

Boro: That's very acceptable to the applicant.

No Public Comment

Groves van Onna: So you would like to amend the conditions? Regarding recommendation three, alternative angles, I did hear back from All Premium and I did hear that there is no flexibility regarding the angle of the solar panels, but it sounds like from our discussion that this will not be an issue, because I think you will be proposing a parapet to place in front of the panels.

Boyd: With the parapet-type solution they can maximize the productivity

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of the solar panels at whatever angle they want as long as the parapet is higher.

Halajian: So the parapet is going to be on the back side, too or just the front?

Boyd: Just the front.

Halajian: Obliquely you'll see the the thin edge of the parapet from the street, is that right?

Boyd: At a certain angle coming down the street.

Boro: There is quite a setback

Boyd: The neighbor's vegetation is in the way.

Halajian: What direction are we facing?

Groves van Onna: The house is facing west.

Halajian: The parapet is not going to cast a significant shadow on the panels?

Boro: No.

Boyd: We'll change condition #1 to be a detached parapet and we'll remove item #3.

Groves van Onna: To clarify, did you want two additional posts to be on the front? Yes? I can amend the current recommendation #1 to say "two poles will be added to the end of the carport, and all poles will be wrapped in wood and capped with wood trim."?

Boyd: Yes. We're kind of suggesting a whole new element. Would the Commission like to see it again before final approval?

Halajian: I think we would.

Boro: Is it possible to submit it by email before the next commission meeting?

Groves van Onna: because this would be a continued item I would still accept additional drawings before September.

Goldbeck: And then you'd distribute those to us and we could make comments?

Halajian: Actually, do we have the ability to delegate this to Laura, to speed things up?

Goldbeck: We do, that's how it reads right now.

Boyd: Yes, we do. That was my question did we want Laura to handle it or did we want it to come back here.

Halajian: I'm good with that.

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Groves van Onna: Would you like to approve with the condition that I review the revised plans.

Deputy City Attorney John Hastrup: The Commission has three options, approve, decline or bring back.

Commissioner Kristina Roper: So the motion would be to approve the application, with the amendments we suggested, with Laura reviewing the details of the parapet.

Staff recommendation, with amendments, was approved 6-0 on a motion by Commissioner Roper and a second by Commissioner Simmons.

- B. CONSIDER AND MAKE FINDINGS ON B19-08915 BY THE PROPERTY OWNER FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS AT THE WHARTON HOME (CONTRIBUTOR TO THE PORTER TRACT HISTORIC DISTRICT) LOCATED AT 1021 E WELDON AVENUE PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1606(a)(2) AND 12-1618(h)(1).**

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna presented the staff report on the application B19-08915 to install solar panels on the Wharton Home (Contributor to the Porter Tract Historic District), 1021 E Weldon Ave; the request entails an exterior alteration visible from the public right-of-way. Staff recommends the continuance of this item with the recommendation that the property owner shall preserve the character of the property by proposing placement of the solar panels in areas of minimal or no visibility, such as a flat roof with a low angle or secondary roof slopes.

Boyd: When is this photo from?

Groves van Onna: This photo is from the time of designation. I can provide a current street view if you would like.

McNary: That roof isn't a very steep pitched roof. On my own house in the Wilson Island district I put them on the north facing roof so that you cannot see them from the street.

Boyd: When we have east-west streets, it means that houses facing south need to put their solar panels alternate roof lines and all the houses facing north can use the south elevation in the back yard.

McNary: A south-facing house with south solar panels is not attractive.

Boyd: There's quite a bit of roofline on the east and west facing sides.

Halajian: Can we see the property to the right [1023 E Weldon Ave], which has solar panels?

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Boyd: This building also has them on the east facing roof on the back which you cannot see.

Halajian: Is that house also a contributor?

Groves van Onna: It is. It obviously occurred prior to my time here, but I am guessing it fell through the cracks when it came to historic review.

Roper: Could the solar panels be put on the east-west facing roof elevations? There is a tree there.

Groves van Onna: When I spoke to the owner, he said that this large tree would block a good portion of the roof area.

Goldbeck: Is it his tree or the neighbors?

Groves van Onna: I believe it's the neighbors, but the owner is here and could speak to that. I don't think the eastern portion of the roof is blocked.

Ben Siebert (Planet Solar, 598 E Woodhaven): I installed my first solar system in Fresno in 1983, in that time over 8,000 installations and have 30 or 40 on historic buildings. We're highly sensitive to aesthetics. We'd use lighter panels to better match the substrate. The pitch on this roof is significantly less than the neighbor's roof; the neighbor's roof is a 30 degree pitch and this roof is 15 degree pitch. We think it will have minimal visual impacts. That tree is a problem for solar generation. The one on the east is actually more impactful because it is more southerly. As it's more southerly, it will get more shade on the easterly-facing roof prior to 11AM. Is that tree on your property?

Tyler Hamilton-Graves (owner, 1021 E Weldon): It is.

Siebert: Okay. Our intention is to use panels that better match the roof at a low height above the roof and do so in a symmetrical manner to be a visual enhancement. The neighbor's house was installed prior to the fire requirement which is holding the panels away from hips and gables by 18 inches. With regard to the southerly facing panels versus east and west, you lose 8-10% of solar generation by facing either east or west compared to due south. PG&E's is beginning to charge more for power between 3 and 8pm, losing 8-10% in solar generation may only be a 5-7% loss in financial benefit if we place solar panels on the west elevation. That's something that could be considered, but to make this the best system for my client we'd like the system to face southerly and are interested in a solution that would be acceptable for the commission and for us.

Roper: The structure in the rear isn't feasible?

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Siebert: No, it's under shade and there are trees everywhere. We did Ray Upton's house and his set up was similar and we put panels on the back on his because he had trees that could not be trimmed.

Halajian: What is the height of the ridge relative to the adjacent trees? What I find unattractive about solar panels is when they are installed like the neighbors with that zigzag/jagged look. A clean field of panels is better. We're in a situation where there has to be some sort of compromise. One thought I have is move seven to the north side, and keep two rows of seven on the south face.

Siebert: On the north side you would lose some efficiency, but on the east side maybe.

Halajian: Up high on the ridge.

Boyd: Could we trim that tree maybe would that help?

Siebert: You'd like a symmetrical array, 14 panels symmetrically arrayed (two rows of seven); seven located somewhere else as long as you don't see them. We'll do our best to locate them on the east-facing roof behind the ridge, does that work?

[ALL]: Yes.

Groves van Onna: I will send you a written confirmation.

No Public Comment

The application was approved, as amended, 6-0 on a motion by Commissioner Roper and a second by Commissioner McNary.

C. PRESENTATION BY THE ARMENDIAN CULTURAL CONSERVANCY REGARDING RELOCATION EFFORTS FOR THE VARTANIAN HOME.

Van Der Mugrdechian board member from Armenian Cultural Conservancy gave a presentation to the Historic Preservation Commission on the relocation efforts for the Vartanian Home. Vartanian Home was built in 1894. In 1997 the building was donated to Fresno Rescue Mission and it was their offices for many years. The Fresno Rescue Mission is impacted by High Speed Rail, and would like to demolish the building. Saving this house is very important to the Armenian Cultural Conservancy's mission. The Conservancy is trying to open dialog with Penstar to relocate the building to the Old Armenian district to make an Old Armenian Village.

Commissioner Boyd: What's this building? Is it the old carriage house?

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Der Mugrdechian: It was a barn. The property consists of the main house, tank house and then the barn.

McNary: All three structures can be moved?

Der Mugrdechian: Yes. I talked to the movers who did the M St. house and he gave us a bid. They would need to divide the buildings for moving.

Halajian: The plan is to move these three structures this particular site? Has the management, curriculum, operations, etc. been established or is it in the works.

Der Mugrdechian: Everything is pending; first we need to be able to get it there.

McNary: Who would own the structures?

Der Mugrdechian: The Rescue Mission is basically giving the building to us.

Halajian: Who owns the site?

Assistant Director Dan Zack: The site is owned by the Redevelopment Agency but under a development agreement with Penstar. Penstar will take over the cottages and vacant land on both sides of Santa Clara.

Halajian: So, it's ultimately Penstar's decision?

Zack: They have the rights to buy the property and develop it. We're interested in a site, this one was suggested, but there's been no movement to make it happen.

Halajian: So, this is informational?

Zack: Yes. This is a great idea, but many more steps would have to happen to end up in that particular place.

McNary: I'm all for it. If we could save all three structures that would be great.

Groves van Onna: There are actually four structures, there is an outhouse, as well.

Boyd: Has the mission put in an application to demolish the house?

Groves van Onna: Yes.

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Boyd: Who is their architect?

Groves van Onna: I am not sure who the architect is for their expansion plan.

Boyd: A long time ago Chris Johnson was working on this and I was working with him and they wanted remove many of the buildings, but I told him that was a terrible idea. The plan we developed kept these in place.

Hastrup: When was that approximately?

Boyd: I'd have to look it up, but 2010, 2009 I think?

Halajian: Did the Fresno Rescue Mission restore the property or simply repair it?

Der Mugrdechian: I am not qualified to assess that. The exterior has been maintained, the inside has been modernized (drywall and carpeted).

McNary: What's your plan for the inside?

Der Mugrdechian: My plan would be a museum and office. The other house we'd like to do genealogy/academic research on preserving Western Armenian culture. I have here an annual from 1912, *Armenians in America* I started translating a section because the author has information on Armenians in Fresno and just in the first few pages I found information I was unable to find in Wilson Wallis's book [Fresno Armenians], Williams book or Berge Bulbulian [the Fresno Armenians: History of a Diaspora Community] book about Fresno Armenians. People have these kinds of things in their basement. They donate them to Fresno State which is fine, my brother Barlow runs the Armenian studies program over there, but they don't have the space to do the research. We would like to dedicate one of the buildings to academic research; we would want it to be a viable space.

McNary: Good luck.

Der Mugrdechian: I am hoping. We're working on talking with the developer.

Zack: We talked to them today but we got cut off, he and I are meeting tomorrow on another topic and we'll continue that conversation then.

McNary: Are we approving anything?

Groves van Onna: This is a discussion topic.

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Boyd: This is an amazing project, thank you for taking it on.

Groves van Onna: Weren't you one of the founders of the Armenian Studies program?

Der Mugrdechian: I was one of the early students of the program. I do have a minor in Armenian Studies just in case you doubt my academic credentials. I did go to Armenia, to a seminary, in the 1970s. Thank you again.

Public Comment Open

Midge Barrett: Van is a goldmine of information. I can't help but ask for your participation in this. We'd like to think of you as partners in this, it's really important. The first occupant of this house, Henry Vartanian, was a jeweler and this large house is representative of him making it in America. Van tells me that history is all about connections, and now I have a connection to this house. This is part of revitalizing Fresno.

Boyd: Absolutely.

Public Comment Closed

Roper: As the archeologist on this commission, one thing that might be overlooked is that there is a high potential for buried artifacts and features, especially since there is an outhouse and I think this needs to be recognized in any plan for moving the structures.

Boyd: Dan, you mentioned you were already in conversations with Penstar?

Zack: Yes, I was talking to them about another project and mentioned it, we're meeting tomorrow. Clustering them all together would be great. If there's more to report next month, we will let you know.

Groves van Onna: I wanted to give the Commission some context for the urgency around the project. We received the demolition permit application, at which point we initiated environmental review, until the Armenian Cultural Conservancy came forward and said they'd like to relocate the property. Fresno Rescue Mission said they are open to that, if you can haul it you can have it. We've put the environmental review on hold for the Conservancy. However, Fresno Rescue Mission would like to move forward as soon as possible with their environmental review if these relocation efforts don't work out. At the moment we're at a standstill as far as a site to relocate. It would be ideal to work out something in Armenian Town, but pretty soon we'll have to move forward with the environmental review.

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Item Closed

D. CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND DIRECTION RELATED TO STATUS OF POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND HISTORIC SURVEYS IN ORDER TO REASSESS THE CURRENT PRIORITY DISTRICT LIST.

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna opened the discussion related to the status of potential historic districts and historic surveys in order to reassess the current priority district list. Staff is seeking direction from the Commission to help inform current prioritization and survey efforts.

Halajian: Fresno Metro Ministry has been successful beyond their dreams with grant funding. The project, Better Blackstone Design Challenge, is moving forward. The bulk of the work will be done about a year from now; they are doing lots of community outreach. It is being funded by Caltrans. I am putting a plug for moving this up the priority list because having that survey will help the outcome of that effort. It's the kind of effort that could really transform the look of that whole area. Having the data on what's on Blackstone would be very useful.

Boyd: Shall we leap frog it to the top?

Simmons: Chinatown should still be at the top.

Zack: Work has already begun on Chinatown.

Goldbeck: Laura could you update on resources and what is done or ready to be done with any of these districts?

Groves van Onna: So far we've only made progress on the top priority Chinatown. We've started a reconnaissance survey, so far we've taken photos of all the properties within those 2006 survey boundaries in addition to the extended the boundary to highway 99 and north one block to Fresno Street. We haven't analyzed any findings, yet.

Goldbeck: So, end of the year for this survey or something else?

Groves van Onna: To be honest, I am pursuing survey work whenever I have down time within my regular workload. Dan can always tell me to reprioritize if I need to, or the Commission.

Zack: At your current pace what's your current completion time?

Groves van Onna: Progress could be made by the end of the year. We tend to have a lot of projects that come at the end of the year like Mills Act, the CLG Annual Report.

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Goldbeck: Do you have an intern this fall?

Groves van Onna: No.

McNary: What is going on with Mills Act?

Groves van Onna: We have received 8 applications. Those work plans will be coming to HPC next month.

Halajian: Again, the Blackstone survey would be useful in about a year from now. If you were able to wrap up the Chinatown survey and move on to that, would that work?

Groves van Onna: Sure.

Goldbeck: We have the Warehouse District surveyed now, as we do Yosemite.

Boyd: How'd they get grant funding through Caltrans? What grant is it?

Halajian: Don't remember the exact name.

Zack: Two words Keith Bergthold.

Boyd: He is the king of grants. Do we need to approve this?

Groves van Onna: This is on the agenda as a discussion item. To confirm, would you like to keep the other three in rank behind Blackstone?

[All]: Yes.

Boyd: Good work on the Chinatown surveying.

No Public Comment

Item Closed

E. CHAIR/VICE CHAIR ELECTIONS

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna opened the floor for nominations for a new Chair and Vice Chair for the Historic Preservation Commission.

No Public Comment

Patrick Boyd and Jason Hatwig were approved as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Historic Preservation Commission, 5-0-1 on a motion by Commissioner Roper and a second by Commissioner Simmons.

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VII. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None.

VIII. UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

A. Members of the Commission

None.

B. Staff

1. **HPC training:** Staff informed the Commission that HPC training is scheduled for Friday September 20, 1:30 to 4:30, and will be provided by the Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program.
2. **Mills Act.** Staff informed the Commission that at the regular September meeting 8 Mills Act applications will be brought forward.
3. **Council Items-** Staff informed the Commission that at the end of June, City Council approved the designations of George Riddell Miller Home and Bixler Building to the Local Register.

Simmons: Was the Bixler unanimous?

Hastrup: Council Items on both designations were unanimous. There was a bit of confusion on the dais, but Laura was able to convince the Council to hear the item. It is difficult to get Council to hear an item they wanted to continue, so it was good that she was able to convince them to not push it further.

C. General Public

None.

IX. NEXT MEETING: September 23, 2019, 6 PM Conference Room A, City Hall.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Boyd adjourned the meeting at 7:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Laura Groves van Onna, Historic

Preservation Specialist

Amber Piona, Recording Secretary