

2600 Fresno Street, Third Floor

Historic Preservation Commission Minutes

May 23rd, 2016

MONDAY

6:00 p.m.

CONFERENCE ROOM A
2nd Floor, City Hall

2600 FRESNO STREET

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

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

Commissioners Present: Jason Hatwig, Patrick Boyd, Kristina Roper, Don Simmons, Robin Goldbeck and Paul Halajian.

Staff Present: Karana Hattersley-Drayton, Casey Lauderdale, Dan Zack, Seth Mehrten and Talia Kolluri-Barbick (CAO).

II. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

A. Approve Minutes for March 28th, 2016.

*The minutes for the March 28th meeting were approved 6-0 with a motion by **Roper** and a second by **Goldbeck**.*

III. APPROVE AGENDA

*The agenda was approved 6-0 with a motion by **Hatwig** and a second by **Roper**.*

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

V. CONTINUED MATTERS
None

VI. COMMISSION ITEMS

A. Consider Request to Staff to Prepare an Initial Application for an Armenian Town Historic District Pursuant to FMC 12-1610 (a).

Staff Recommendation: Discuss proposed boundaries and request Initial Application be submitted at the June 27th HPC meeting.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton gave a Power Point that briefly outlined the history of Armenians in Fresno and the area that is normally referred to as "Armenian Town." Several properties in this area are already listed on Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources; one at least is

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on the National Register. Many resources, however, are not designated and would benefit from being included in a historic district, including three of the homes that have been restored as part of the Armenian Town Project.

Hatwig: Do you have a map of the proposed District boundaries?

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Hattersley-Drayton: No, that will be part of the Initial Application at the next meeting. The District would be non-contiguous (due in part to SR 41). Drayton lists some of the buildings that will be included and has heard recommendations from the community for others. She notes that the survey forms for the RDA cottages need to be updated.

Goldbeck: Asks what resources are available and what is the timeline to complete the survey?

Hattersley-Drayton: We are not planning on doing a full survey for the area other than the five houses and summer kitchen in the Armenian Town Project. We will rely on the information from the South Van Ness Industrial District Historic Survey for any properties south of SR 41. The assumption is that we will start mostly with low-hanging fruit and add resources as needed over time.

Halajian: Wonders if the State of California or another entity has a say?

Hattersley-Drayton: No, it is just the Commission and the City Council.

Halajian: Asks if SR 41 drastically alters the nature of the District.

Hattersley-Drayton: Yes, it does.

Hatwig: But there is still connectivity there?

Hattersley-Drayton: Believes that there is still a District.

Simmons: Mentions that with the relocation of the five homes for the Armenian Town Project, there are already changes.

Hattersley-Drayton: That is a good point. If we were looking at a potential National Register Historic District, relocation of the homes would disqualify them, but that is not the case with the California Register of Historical Resources or the Local Register.

Boyd: Comments that Armenian Town was initially a 60-block area, and it is important to acknowledge this, even with a freeway running through it now.

Hattersley-Drayton: As with Huntington Boulevard Historic District we can always add resources from other parts of Armenian Town in the future. However, to try to bring in the entire 60 block area would not be workable as so many buildings have been demolished or have been significantly altered over the years.

Simmons: Asks if with Porter and Wilson Island Districts, was the entire tract included?

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Hattersley-Drayton: [Ed note: If by “tract” one means the original subdivision, the answer for Wilson Island would be No, as it is only part of the original tract. However, Wilson Island and Porter Tract are both contiguous residential historic districts, thus all properties within a certain area are included as either contributors or non-contributors. Armenian Town would be non-contiguous and include both residential and non-residential properties]. She notes that with the five houses (and summer kitchen) in the Armenian Town Project, three of the houses are currently not designated on the Local Register although they have been treated as historical resources for the purposes of the project’s CEQA review.

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Hatwig: Notes that it is important to try to protect and preserve as many resources as possible within this 60-block area.

Goldbeck: Likes the concept of a District that includes both residential and non-residential buildings and that also interprets the social history.

Halajian: Asks whether the issue is the protection of the City’s/RDA’s investment in the Armenian Town cottages or are we trying to mark a cultural artifact that has really morphed [changed?].

Hattersley-Drayton: Responds that she may have placed too much emphasis on the investment [the restoration of the Armenian Town Homes was close to 1 million]. But thinks it is important to honor the history of the area. Several buildings remain in situ, including the Lahvosh Bakery, Holy Trinity church, the houses south of SR41. The landscaping at the Armenian Town project was prepared in consultation with members of the Armenian community to resemble as much as possible what local families had... thus no grass lawns in front of houses, the use of roses, etc.

The agenda item is opened to the public for comment.

Herb Arden (Board Member, Heritage Fresno, 2156 W. Via Delfini, Fresno 93711). Relates progress made to establish an Armenian Culture and Historic Museum in Fresno, sponsored by Heritage Fresno. A separate non-profit group has been created and approved by IRS. Heritage Fresno has been showing a series of movies about Armenian culture with the next one scheduled for June 20th... he invites staff and Commissioners. He mentions that the five homes [on the firehouse site] were saved as contingent on the construction of the state courthouse. Heritage Fresno recommends a historic district that includes Saroyan Theater, the site of Emerson School, all sites incorporated by the Saroyan Society into their history walks and the Ventura and M Street clusters. Asks if there are any questions about the proposed museum.

Hatwig: States that an Armenian Culture History Museum is a great idea and would help promote heritage tourism.

Hattersley-Drayton: Notes that Midge and Chuck Barrett were unable to come tonight but are interested in being part of the discussion about District boundaries. She mentions that the building that serves as the Armenian Cultural Center was previously evaluated as part of the Fulton Corridor Historic Survey and found ineligible for listing due to a lack of architectural integrity, but it is worth revisiting this evaluation to see if there is cultural and social history significance. She emphasizes again the importance of starting small and focused and perhaps adding to the District once it is established.

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Hatwig: Asks if the property owners in Armenian Town can see these movies [the series is open to the public.]

Hattersley-Drayton: Recalls that one family that owns a home within the proposed district came to the meeting on the South Van Ness Industrial Survey. The father, who owns the home, grew up there and was very interested in listing it... the children were not so sure. You can list a property on the Register over the objections of the property owner, but we do not like to do this, as you know. It's been tough even with the RDA to bring in the Armenian Town properties.

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The public comment period is closed.

Roper: Supports the concept and wants to see it move forward.

Simmons: Absolutely supports the concept of an Armenian Town District. He is very much involved through Fresno State with the proposed Armenian History Museum and feels as well that this will be a great boost to heritage tourism.

The Commission on a vote of 6-0 endorsed the request to prepare an Initial Application for an Armenian Town Historic District, with a motion by Roper and second by Simmons.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton notes that she will hope to bring the Initial Application back to the Commission at the June meeting with the caveat that there is a lot of work to do with outreach to property owners, establishment of the boundaries, etc.

- B. Consideration of Approval of Request by the Property Owner to Recommend to the City Council the Designation of the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home Located at 1284 N. Wilson Avenue to Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources and Adoption of Findings Necessary to Support Recommendation Pursuant to FMC 12-1609 (ACTION ITEM).

Staff Recommendation: Recommend designation and forward to the City Council.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton gave a Power Point presentation on the history of the Wishon Home and its unique story of how it was built, and the additions made to it in the early 1920s.

Roper: Comments on the incredible number of electrical outlets in the home.

Hattersley-Drayton: Notes that Emory Wishon (like his father A.G. Wishon) worked his way up through the ranks of the San Joaquin Light and Power Company which later became PGE. She also briefly mentions the other families who lived in the home ending with the Fortune family. She reiterates the criteria for listing a property and the requirement to notice tonight's hearing on this issue in the Fresno Bee. The new property owners are very supportive and want to restore the home. Staff recommends that the home appears to be eligible for listing under Criteria i and iii, mostly due to its association with the Wishon family.

Hatwig: Asks if we know who the original architect may have been?

Hattersley-Drayton: No. [In retrospect it may not have architect-designed but rather from a pattern book.] The alteration was by a contractor, S.A. Allen.

There was no public comment.

On a motion of 6-0 the Commission supported the staff recommendation to designate the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home to the Local Register and to forward this recommendation to the City Council. Motion by Simmons, second by Roper.

- C. Special Presentation, "Treasures from the Vault: Artifacts from Fresno's Historic Chinatown." Ruth Lang, Director, Fresno Historical Society.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton introduced **Ruth Lang**, Director of the Fresno Historical Society. **Ms. Lang** gave a Power Point that illustrated some of the Society's Chinese artifacts, including former altars, which were recently professionally evaluated by experts on Chinese art and history. To a question posed by **Paul Halajian** she responds that the altars are wood and gilded. She mentions that in the past there was a proposal to have a Pioneer Museum at Kearney Park. The temple in Chinatown was torn down in 1964 and the artifacts from the building were brought out to the Historical Society headquarters at the Kearney Mansion. The Pioneer Museum was never built. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association actually owns these artifacts. There is a possibility of forming a non-profit to do fundraising for their curation and restoration. The FHS is also looking for a permanent location to house the collection. She notes what other towns like San Jose and Oroville have accomplished with their Chinatown temples.

Ms. Lang answers other questions from various Commissioners including that 1) indeed the Chinese community has known that the artifacts exist and are stored at the FHS but that communication eventually died out; 2) the storage facility at the Historical Society does NOT have climate control per se but the artifacts are kept in the total dark and the environment is cool; 3) The Historical Society is absolutely maxed out for space; 4) the altars are mostly of teak, which may help in their preservation; 5) they were already 100 years old when moved to the Historical Society and they showed wear from their sojourn in Chinatown; 6) The artifacts appear to have been crafted in China originally but some materials may have been added from local sources.

VII. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chair Boyd had no report.

VIII. UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

A. Members of the Commission

Commissioner Simmons asks if there is anything to report about 2203 Calaveras (the Gundelfinger Home) which is for sale and now vacant. Neighbors had reported vagrants and noises inside the building.

Hattersley-Drayton: Reports that both she and code staff went out to the home and found no evidence of a break-in, no exterior trash or camping.

Boyd: Asks if the Swat Team has protocols for dealing with a situation like this?

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Hattersley-Drayton: *The Swat Team has not met since February... we need to convene a meeting. But one idea that was suggested by Code staff Kevin Watkins was to require that vacant properties have a portable alarm system. I contacted the company that provides these and never got a call back!*

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More general discussion about vacant buildings and concerns about this property in particular.

Dan Zack: *The FresnGo application just added vacant and blighted properties.*

Patrick Boyd: *Mentions that the conflict of interest regarding serving on a Commission and his firm's work on an unrelated water project has been cleared up. He wonders if they need to go through a special request each and every contract?*

Talia Koluri-Barbick: *Answers it would depend upon the language of the contract.*

Simmons: *Reports that work is being done on Cutting Flats and wonders if they have pulled permits?*

Hattersley-Drayton: *Cutting Flats is not a designated historic resource and thus we [Preservation staff and the HPC] have no jurisdiction over it.*

Simmons: *Laments that he has seen five-panel doors in the dumpster. Doesn't understand why they wouldn't want to keep these.*

B. Staff

1. Report on Ongoing Violations of Minimum Maintenance Standards for the Thompson Home (HP#035) Located at 274 N. Glenn Avenue Pursuant to FMC 12-1626.

Hattersley-Drayton reports that we have received a complaint from a neighbor in Lowell about the condition of the Thompson Home. She briefly mentions the history and significance of the property. Housing, Code and Preservation staff met to discuss the possibility of funds through the Housing Division for work on the home. Problem is that the home appears to be owned by the bank and needs to be owner-occupied. This is apparently an error and they [owner and city] are working to correct this. The only other alternative is to seriously fine the owner through Code.

On another matter, the porte-cochere at the **Craycroft Home** has collapsed and so it is time to pursue compliance under the Minimum Maintenance provisions of the Ordinance. There may be a buyer interested in purchasing the property for a wine bar.

More good news: **the Brewer-Garcia Adobe** is literally melting, however an approved project from ten years back had been reactivated. A condition of approval of this project is to preserve the adobe and use it as a storage building and construct a wayside exhibit that includes the history of this property.

Finally, she encourages the Commissioners to attend the exhibit/reception at the Republican tomorrow night on Bill Patnaude's legacy.

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2. Report on Fresno's Historic Preservation Week Activities, May 1-May 7, 2016.

Karana thanks everyone who worked on the Historic Preservation week events, particularly ***Commissioners Hatwig and Simmons***.

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C. General Public

- IX. **NEXT MEETING: June 27, 2016, 6 PM Conference Room A, City Hall.
(Election of Chair and Vice Chair)**

- X. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Boyd adjourns the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Karana Hattersley-Drayton, Secretary

Casey Lauderdale, Recording Secretary