

City of Fresno

*City Hall
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, May 21, 2018

6:00 PM

Regular Meeting

**Fresno City Hall, Second Floor
Room 2165N (Conference Room A)**

Historic Preservation Commission

Chair Patrick Boyd

Vice Chair Jason Hatwig, LEED, AP, BD+C

Commissioners:

Robin Goldbeck; Paul Halajian, AIA; Ron McNary;

C. Kristina Roper, M.A.; Don Simmons, Ph.D.

Staff:

***Daniel Zack, AICP Assistant Director; Laura van Onna, Historic
Preservation Specialist; Amber Piona, Planner II, Recording Secretary;
John Hastrup, Deputy City Attorney II***

The Historic Preservation Commission welcomes you to Room 2165, located in City Hall, 2nd Floor, 2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, California 93721.

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I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present 4 - Chair Patrick Boyd, Commissioner Robin Goldbeck,
Commissioner Paul Halajian, and Commissioner Ron
McNary

Absent 3 - Vice Chair Jason Hatwig, Commissioner C. Kristina Roper,
and Commissioner Don Simmons

II. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

A. [ID18-0647](#) Approve Minutes for April 23, 2018.

Attachments: [HPC_Minutes_Apr_23_2018](#)

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

III. APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda with was approved 4-0 with a motion by Commissioner Goldbeck and a second by Commissioner McNary.

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

V. CONTINUED MATTERS

None.

VI. COMMISSION ITEMS

- A. [ID18-0646](#) CONSIDER RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL THE DESIGNATION OF THE HERNDON SUBSTATION CONTROL BUILDING LOCATED AT 7430 N WEBER AVENUE TO FRESNO'S LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AND ADOPTION OF FINDINGS NECESSARY TO SUPORT RECOMMENDATION PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1609 AND FRESNO GENERAL PLAN POLICY FOR DEMOLITION REVIEW HCR-2-g.

Attachments: [7430 N Weber Attachments](#)

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna presented the staff report for the nomination for Herndon Substation Control (7430 N Weber) to the local register under Criterion i, for its association with both the merger of Pacific Gas and Electric and San Joaquin Light and Power Corporation and with the role of substation in economic and social growth of the region as well as Criterion iii embodies distinctive characteristics of the Art Deco style. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the request for nomination and forward to the City Council.

Public Comment Open

Matthew Armstrong (1455 E Shaw): I am the Cultural Resource Specialist for PG&E. I have reviewed the DPR 523 form prepared by Laura [Groves van Onna]. I have two comments regarding this. While I agree that the connection of San Joaquin Light and Power to Pacific Gas and Electric's grid is an important historical event, I would question whether or not the removal of everything but the control building allows this to convey that event. Even though it is a substation it is a substation that is dramatically changed from the one that existed in the 1930s. On the point of whether or not it is eligible under Criterion iii, I will immediately concede that I am an archeologist not an architectural historian. I do know that Aubrie Morlet, did argue that there were other better examples of the Art Deco style within Fresno, in your presentation you argued that there were not, I am not qualified to have an opinion on the subject. Those are the two points I would make, I would question that the removal of the substation equipment that was originally there would allow it to retain integrity for qualification under

Criterion i, for Criterion iii I think it's a question of whether or not Fresno does indeed retain a sufficient number of more representative Art Deco buildings.

Chair Patrick Boyd: I think we can have a conversation on those two points. Regarding the integrity, we look at the architectural integrity of the exterior of the building, so the interior of the building could be entirely gutted and repurposed, so long as the exterior of the building, what the public sees, retains integrity.

Armstrong: I understand that, I am referring to the equipment necessary to run the control building, all of which would have been required to run the substation and none of which are still present. Even though the building itself may maintain integrity, and may retain the integrity of appearance that allows it to convey the Art Deco style, I don't know that it successfully shows the merger of the San Joaquin Light and Power and Pacific Gas and Electric grids.

Commissioner Ron McNary: What is the building being used for now?

Armstrong: Nothing at the moment

McNary: Could it be used for storage?

Armstrong: I do not know. I know there are problems with flooding, I do not know the details of that, unfortunately. I do know that as a substation in an area with a ground grid that does introduce challenges.

McNary: My point is that if it could be utilized for something other than being vacant.

Jeff Crocker (PGE): I am representing the applicant and I used to work at PG&E. The other buildings that were a part of the original substation were removed in order to expand the station to meet the needs of the power demand. It's one of those NIMBY things where we need it but no one wants it in their backyard. They've upgraded with the solar energy coming in they

have to have a switching station in order to distribute the power and they are landlocked; the building is in the way of the expansion of electrical power for all of us. I love the Art Deco style; however, behind the fence within a live energized substation, it would be difficult to have the public appreciate the building.

McNary: Is the building structurally sound?

Crocker: It appears structurally sound.

Commissioner Paul Halajian: Our role is to put blinders on and look at the building. That is what we can do. Our challenge is does this building meet the test of meeting a historic resource.

Historic Preservation Specialist Laura Groves van Onna: That's correct. The Commission must decide if the property is eligible for listing. If they decided it is then it is forwarded to the City Council who makes a final decision.

Deputy City Attorney John Hastrup: The Council ultimately has authority under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance to determine whether or not something should be listed. For example see Producer's Dairy, the HPC recommended it and then the City Council decided.

Commissioner Robin Goldbeck: Speaking to the Art Deco question Is it the most elaborate Art Deco, no? But we can look ascribe that time period to it.

Halajian: On that subject, my understanding is that there are multiple iterations of that style, is this a Zigzag modern, Streamline Moderne, and Egyptian Moderne. I think this is a fine example of Zigzag Moderne.

Groves van Onna: I didn't find any examples of zig-zags on it. As I mentioned in the report, it's not the most elaborate example of Art Deco, but I do feel it embodies that style.

Goldbeck: I also feel that we are here to evaluate Art Deco in Fresno, not Art Deco in other cities and substations. Is that correct?

Groves van Onna: Yes, because we are evaluating it on a local level we are comparing it to examples within the city.

Boyd: I believe we have other substations listed, they are more downtown.

Groves van Onna: To my knowledge, no, we do not have any other substations listed, but I could be mistaken. I do know there are a few Art Deco buildings listed.

Boyd: It might not be a PG and E substation listed. There's one next to Community Hospital [H.P.#91 City Fire Alarm Station] and one on G Street next to where Cosmo's used to be [1133 G St.]. I think that one came up when the High Speed Rail Station came into play. We do have other examples of utility stations that we have listed before.

Crocker: But were any of those in an operating substation?

Boyd: No, they were abandoned for years, and other things had built up around where the other parts of the substation were, but this cool architectural element was still there. I understand what you're saying about the distance from the road.

Goldbeck: I was fascinated; I've lived here all my life and have never gone out to the end of that road before.

Boyd: I would say that if it's listed and the substation itself goes away...

Goldbeck: From what we've heard tonight it looks like the substation is looking to expand and is likely to be here for the foreseeable future.

Crocker: They've streamlined things, but now that basically everything we touch is electronic, they've need to keep up with demands. They are looking for growth opportunities and to put a substation somewhere else, like someone's backyard is not easy.

Groves van Onna: Provides visual examples of Art Deco in the City of Fresno.

Public Comment Closed

Boyd: I think that this building embodies Art Deco better than pretty much all the other ones we have in Fresno. I can understand the points you are making regarding master planning the site, but as far as architecture goes, it's a sweet a little Art Deco Building.

Goldbeck: If it is approved as a local register property will it be better taken care of?

Armstrong: I do not know. I could have that question answered, but I cannot say yes or no.

Halajian: This building would be a great museum piece.

Armstrong: There are safety concerns that we would not want to expose the public.

Staff recommendation was approved 4-0 on a motion by Commissioner Goldbeck and a second by Commissioner Halajian.

Boyd: Could you please outline the process to the applicant?

Groves van Onna: Once a property nominated to the Local Register is approved by the Commission it is then forwarded to City Council for a final public hearing and determination as to whether it will be listed in the Register of Local Resources. That must be done within 45 days. We can schedule it for the next available meeting.

Armstrong: Since this was brought up by the submittal of a demolition permit. What is the fate of that permit if the property is determined eligible?

Groves van Onna: For this meeting the property is being brought forward for

consideration for designation. I believe it would have to come before HPC again if it does get listed, in order to be considered for demolition.

Armstrong: Would it be the case that the permit could be denied?

Groves van Onna: Yes.

Armstrong: That's all I needed to know.

Groves van Onna: There is an appeal process.

Hastrup: I am not sure it would come back. I think it would be automatically denied. Once something is put on the register, it would have to be delisted in order to be demolished. It would not be very likely to be successful to try and get something delisted after it was just listed. Also you would have an affirmative obligation to minimum maintenance. The Council vote has to be held in 45 days, after which if you wanted to demolish it, it would have to be delisted.

Halajian: The Council they are not determining whether or not they agree with HPC's recommendation they can take into account extenuating circumstances.

Hastrup: The Council does not have to use any particular criteria when making a determination.

McNary: So if they make their case to the Council for demolition and the Council bought it, [the Council] would approve the permit?

Hastrup: Yes.

Boyd: They would deny our recommendation and then the demolition permit would hold.

Goldbeck: Would be granted.

Armstrong: Now I know with National Register property listings a property owner can challenge that. Would this be the process that that PG&E could challenge the listing if they chose to do that?

Hastrup: You get two chances. The City Council meeting, and then, per the local Historic Preservation Ordinance there is the delisting process. This is outlined in Fresno Municipal Code Chapter 12, Article 16, Section 1620.

Crocker: Is there funding opportunities for maintenance?

Boyd: We do have minimum requirements for mothballing. When you have a listed property, you get. We have the Mills Act (tax rebate program).

Groves van Onna: We have the historic preservation mitigation fund. It's a reimbursement grant of \$7,500 or 40% of the project cost whichever is less.

At this point Mr. Crocker shared his enthusiasm for the Art Deco architectural style, and outlined the work he has done on his own Art Deco home in Fig Garden.

Item Closed.

VII. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None.

VIII. UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

A. Members of the Commission

None.

B. Staff

1. Hotel Fresno

The State Historic Resources Commission forwarded this nomination to the NPS Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. The decision will be made within in 45 days.

C. General Public

None.

IX. NEXT MEETING: June 25, 2018, 6 PM Conference Room A, City Hall

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Boyd adjourned the meeting at 6:53 PM.