

City of Fresno

*City Hall
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, February 23, 2026

6:00 PM

Regular Meeting

**In Person and/or Electronic
City Hall, Room 2165**

Historic Preservation Commission

Chair - James Sponsler

Vice Chair - Jason Hatwig

Commissioner - Paul Halajian

Commissioner - Julie Federico

Commissioner - Elizabeth Laval

Commissioner - Sarah E. Johnston

Commissioner - Ryan Eddings

Staff:

Jennifer Clark, Director; Ashley Atkinson, Assistant Director

THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION WELCOMES YOU TO CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM 2165, LOCATED ON THE 2ND FLOOR, 2600 FRESNO STREET, FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93721.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – Any interested person may appear at the public hearing and present written testimony or speak in favor or against the matters scheduled on the agenda. Public participation during Fresno City Historic Preservation Commission meetings is always encouraged and can occur by attending a meeting in City Hall Conference Room 2165, 2nd Floor, 2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93721. When called to speak during a meeting, you may approach the speaker podium upon the Chair's call for additional public comment.

All public speakers will have up to 3 minutes to address the Commission pursuant to Rule No. 13 of the Historic Preservation Commission Bylaws of the City of Fresno (available in the City Clerk's Office).

VIEWING HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETINGS (non-participatory) – For your convenience, there are ways to view Historic Preservation Commission meetings live:

- 1. Community Media Access Collaborative website: <https://cmac.tv/>**
- 2. Cable Television: Comcast Channel 96 and AT&T Channel 99**
- 3. Participate Remotely via Zoom using the following link:**

https://fresno.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_BHr_6TJZR72DixRQkVVhog

a. The above link will allow you to register in advance for remote participation in the meeting via the Zoom platform. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing additional details about joining the meeting.

Should any of these viewing methods listed above experience technical difficulties, the Commission meeting will continue uninterrupted. Commission meetings will only be paused to address verifiable technical difficulties for all users participating via Zoom or in the Chambers.

The City of Fresno's goal is to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Anyone requiring reasonable ADA accommodations, including sign language interpreters, or other reasonable accommodations such as language translation, should contact the office of the City Clerk at (559) 621-7650 or clerk@fresno.gov. To help ensure availability of these services, you are advised to make your request a minimum of 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Sponsler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Eddings arrived at 6:04 p.m.

Also present were Jennifer Clark, Ashley Atkinson, Kari Camino and Jayda Symonds.

Present 5 - Chair James W Sponsler, Commissioner Paul Halajian, Commissioner Julie Federico, Commissioner Elizabeth Laval, and Commissioner Ryan Eddings

Absent 2 - Vice Chair Jason Hatwig, and Commissioner Sarah Johnston

II. PROCEDURES

6:00 p.m.

Chair Sponsler read the procedures aloud.

III. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

None

IV. APPROVE AGENDA

6:02 p.m.

Clark announced no changes to the Agenda.

On motion of Commissioner Laval, seconded by Commissioner Federico, the AGENDA was APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Chair Sponsler, Commissioner Halajian, Commissioner Federico, Commissioner Laval and Commissioner Eddings

Absent: 2 - Vice Chair Hatwig and Commissioner Johnston

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

None

VI. CONTINUED MATTERS

None

VII. COMMISSION ITEMS

- VII-A [ID 26-240](#) Hearing to consider eligibility for listing on the Local Register of Historic Resources, the property located at 755 E Shaw Ave (Assessor Parcel Number: 427-030-37)

6:03 p.m.

Commissioner Eddings arrived at 6:04 p.m.

Atkinson presented an overview of the property at 755 East Shaw Avenue, formerly Weinstock's Department Store and most recently occupied by Forever 21. She explained that staff was requesting the Commission review available evidence and determine whether to initiate historic designation, as the property has been proposed for demolition. The building, constructed in the 1970's as one of the anchor stores for Fashion Fair Mall, was designed by Charles Luckman and Associates and exhibits late-modern architectural features, though staff could not determine, based on available evidence, whether it meets eligibility criteria for historic designation. A complete historic resource assessment from the applicant was still pending at the time of the meeting.

Representatives from Macerich and Dick's Sporting Goods described their plans to construct a new Dick's House of Sport, noting that the project would not be feasible without demolition of the existing structure.

A consultant from Page & Turnbull presented preliminary findings indicating that the building does not appear eligible for listing, emphasizing its status as one of three identical structures built across California and the lack of evidence of Charles Luckman's direct involvement.

Commissioners raised questions regarding architectural integrity, comparative examples of late-modern buildings in Fresno, the historical context of Fashion Fair Mall in the city's urban development, and whether additional information, particularly regarding Luckman's role and the building's relevance to Fresno's commercial history might influence eligibility. Staff reminded the Commission that the decision before them concerned eligibility only, not project viability.

After discussion, the Commission agreed that more information was needed and voted unanimously to continue the item to the next meeting in order to allow completion and review of the final historic resource evaluation report.

On motion of Commissioner Laval, seconded by Chair Sponsler, that the above Action Item be CONTINUED to March 23, 2026. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Chair Sponsler, Commissioner Halajian, Commissioner Federico, Commissioner Laval and Commissioner Eddings

Absent: 2 - Vice Chair Hatwig and Commissioner Johnston

- VII-B** [ID 26-211](#) Hearing to consider Development Permit Application P25-03963, which proposes interior and exterior renovations to the former Berkeley's Department Store at 887 Fulton Street (Assessor Parcel Number: 468-282-21T).

6:49 p.m.

Atkinson presented an overview of the proposed renovations to the former Berkeley's Department Store at 887 Fulton Street. She explained that the building had already been determined eligible for the Local Register, and the Commission's task was to assess whether the proposed alterations met the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. She summarized the historic context of the building, designed in 1961 by architect Alistair Simpson, and noted that it served as Berkeley's Department Store until 1982. The building has largely remained vacant since then and has experienced significant interior deterioration, although the exterior is mostly unchanged aside from the removal of signage and general wear. The proposed project includes storefront window replacements, a third-floor addition, a rooftop deck, and new second-story windows.

The applicant described the building's deteriorated condition and emphasized the need for windows to ensure functional and leasable office space, and that the Foundation was committed to downtown revitalization. Their architect outlined the planned design approach, including retaining the canopy's structural supports while adding a modernization fascia. He described the building's structural and interior conditions, noting severe deterioration and the need for remediation.

One member of the public spoke in support, expressing that revitalization aligns with the original purpose of the building and that refusing windows could undermine the vibrancy in downtown Fresno. No opposition was received.

In deliberation, Commissioners stressed the importance of preserving the building's character-defining features, particularly that the barrel-vaulted canopies must be retained and kept visible, and stated that the second-story windows must be clearly differentiated from the original first-floor window

design. They also recommended adding an interior Plaque/Display recognizing the building's history.

Because the proposal required design refinements, the Commission voted to refer the revised plans to the Architecture Review Subcommittee for review. The item will return to the full Commission only if the Subcommittee determines additional review is needed.

On motion of Commissioner Laval, seconded by Commissioner Eddings, that the above Action Item be APPROVED AS AMENDED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Chair Sponsler, Commissioner Halajian, Commissioner Federico, Commissioner Laval and Commissioner Eddings

Absent: 2 - Vice Chair Hatwig and Commissioner Johnston

- VII-C [ID 26-241](#) Report from the Fresno City & County Historical Society on Kearney Mansion Upgrades

7:30 p.m.

Commissioner Laval provided an update on restoration work underway at Kearney Mansion, supported by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated by Fresno County. The presentation included historical context of early structures such as the blacksmith shop, store, and agricultural facilities, as well as the mansion's role as the superintendent's lodge for the estate. Several historic photographs were shared to illustrate the evolution of the property and its operations, including early ranch buildings, worker housing, and the Kunishige family residence near the mansion in the 1920s. She reported that approximately half a million dollars in ARPA funding is being used for long needed repairs and preservation work. Current projects include remediation and roof repair at the carriage house, replacement of exterior staircases with historically appropriate wood railings, stabilization and repainting of the second-floor deck, and repainting of portions of the mansion's exterior. Commissioner Laval noted that about 70% of the mansion's interior remains original and that the property continues to host regular tours and educational programs. Additional historical features of the estate were highlighted, including remaining rail lines and several original outbuildings such as the superintendent's lodge, servants' quarters, carriage house, ice house, and tea house.

VII-D [ID 26-239](#)

Update on Regular Monthly Topics:

1. Staff Updates
2. Subcommittee Updates

7:44 p.m.

Atkinson provided a brief update on the Jose Garcia Brewer Adobe building, noting that efforts continue to bring the property owner, architect, and engineer together to establish concrete next steps; although communication is ongoing, the meeting has not yet occurred. Staff, in coordination with the City Attorney's Code Enforcement Division, will continue working to schedule the meeting and will report back once it takes place. There are no changes to the condition of the building or its tarping following recent storms. Atkinson also summarized the monthly department statistics, noting building permits remain higher than in previous years as staff now reviews all permits for buildings over 50 years old. Staff will be sending letters in March to all designated properties to remind owners of the opportunity to apply for the Mills Act.

Commissioner Halajian gave a brief update on the Architectural Review Subcommittee and the Municipal Code Subcommittee.

Commissioner Laval reported that the Historic Preservation Month Subcommittee met recently and will continue developing ideas for this year's calendar of events. The subcommittee encouraged all Commissioners, including those not present, to contribute ideas for activities, noting the goal of finalizing the calendar by March. The kickoff event is planned for May 7, 2026, at the Archive on Kern during ArtHop, with additional activities scheduled before and after the kickoff. Plans under consideration include food trucks, displays, and other offerings to highlight the semi-quincentennial year and illustrate how California's history connects to the broader national narrative. The subcommittee also emphasized the importance of a strong Commission presence to support a more robust kickoff event than in previous years, particularly as it will be promoted in connection with the Mayor's America 250 initiative.

VIII. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

7:52 p.m.

Chair Sponsler reported that the Lowell neighborhood - also referred to in previous surveys as the North Park neighborhood - will host a history tour on April 11, 2026. The event will highlight the neighborhood's development from its earliest homes to the present day. Trolley tours will guide participants through various locations, showcasing historic homes, local art, and other notable features within the community.

IX. UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

7:54 p.m.

IX. - A. Members of the Commission

Commissioner Laval noted that Fresno City College will host a historical walking tour on April 30th. As the oldest city community college in the state, the campus tour will conclude with the lighting of its Bulldog. More information will be provided as details are finalized.

IX. - B. Staff

None

IX. - C. General Public

A member of the public announced that May is Historic Preservation Month and shared information about a Heritage Fresno film highlighting historic preservation efforts in Fresno, including the Caglia family's contributions to saving landmarks. The film will be shown on May 28, 2026 at the Warnor's Theatre, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m., followed by a 6:00 p.m. concert by Cactus Harris, featuring the theater's organ, and the film screening at 6:30 p.m. A brief lobby tour will follow. She highlighted that artist Pat Hunter, known for her work documenting Fresno's architectural treasures, will participate that evening, with books available for purchase.

X. NEXT MEETING

March 23, 2026

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sponsler adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.