

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC) MINUTES  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019 9:30 A.M.  
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**PRESENT:** Steven Erickson, Vice Chairman; Mr. Jeffrey Ray, Mr. Dane Ullian, and Mrs. Jessica Francis **Also Present:** Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

**Excused Absence:** Mrs. Joy Todd

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Vice Chairman called the meeting to order.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A) May 23, 2019**

**Mrs. Francis made a motion to approve the May 23, 2019 minutes. Mr. Ullian seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**A) Discussion regarding Historic Preservation Priorities – Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director**

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, gave an overview of some of the Commission's duties. He gave a Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Erickson noted that the HPC does not have a budget, but would offer their assistance to the Planning and Development Director as he moves forward and would love to work with him anyway that they can.

Mr. Jeffries will be calling on the HPC members to help him in finishing the brochure that they worked on some years ago. He said that functions for this Commission do fall under his budget.

**B) Szechuan Palace – Mr. Jim Wilson, Photographer**

Mrs. Ruth Stanbridge, County Historian and President of the Historical Society, has been following the Szechuan Palace for years. She said that some years back before the 2004 hurricanes they tried to find the potential availability of making the restaurant a historic designation. The 2004 hurricanes came and went and so did the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the County's widening project for 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. This matter did not surface again until 2013 and at that time Mr. Mark Tripson was the Property

Manager for the Szechuan Palace and the eligibility for making the building a historic designation was still there. She was shocked to find out in 2013 that FDOT had commissioned that a survey be done to have the building declared historical. The survey was poorly done. FDOT had not checked with anyone and the only photos of the building that were used were the photos, that the Historical Society did in 2004. She sent a letter to the State and said that this needs to be clarified. They kept hearing that this is in litigation and they cannot talk about it. She told them that this has to be straightened out before it can be made a historic designation. Because the HPC is State certified they had a second chance of having this looked at. A letter will be sent to the State arguing that the site is eligible to be a historic designation. After FDOT has used the property for the widening project the rest of the property could remain as it is. They will continue monitoring this situation as it moves forward. They will fight to make sure this building stays in intact. Getting the designation from the State will make sure that this building stays in intact.

Mr. Jim Wilson, Professional Photographer, said he took photos in June of this year before Szechuan Palace closed. Mr. Shawn Sexton was at today's meeting to explain what is or what was inside the building. There is a lot of art in the building and there is no way to remove this art because it is a part of the history.

Mr. Shawn Sexton stated that he would make his presentation informal and will be asking Mrs. Pam Cooper to clarify some things as well. He passed out the history of the Szechuan Palace (attached to the original minutes). He described the pictures as they appeared on the screen. He said that he would be willing to repair the art pictures that are shown in the Palace because that is what he does. He would do the work for free and put that it in writing. The Palace is now owned by FDOT. If there was some sort of use of the building as a historic building his family would probably return the things that were removed and put them on an extended loan back into the Palace because that is what Waldo Sexton would have wanted.

Mr. Erickson asked if this property was located in the City of Vero Beach.

Mr. Jeffries explained that the property was annexed into the City many years ago.

Mrs. Frances asked if FDOT owns the property could they just tear the building down.

Mr. Jeffries explained that because the property does not have any local designation if FDOT came in and asked for a demolition permit there is nothing they do to stop them.

Mrs. Stanbridge explained that the State now is acknowledging that the property may become eligible for the National register. She hopes that FDOT uses the property for the widening project and then declares the building surplus. From a local standpoint they will raise their hand and carry forth in making sure conditions put on this will protect the property. The City could possibly support eligibility and do what they need to. By having a Certified Local Government it helped them in getting closer to having this property declared historic.

Mr. Erickson asked who they would talk to about this. Is it the State because they are the owner of the property.

Mr. Sexton explained that the building is not in the right-of-way and he has heard no plans for demolishing the building from FDOT. He believes they will declare it surplus.

Mrs. Stanbridge agreed that normally FDOT does not keep buildings like that. They just put it up as surplus property.

Mr. Jeffries commented that the way he understands this is that FDOT is interested in using the parking lot for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue widening. He said that those parking spaces will not need to be included in whatever zoning occurs on that property. If a restaurant goes in the building then it is already zoned for a restaurant and he will not require those additional parking spaces that are no longer there. However, if the person that is opening the restaurant wishes to have additional parking spaces they could purchase the vacant property to the south and use it for parking.

Mr. Ericson thanked Mr. Sexton and Mr. Wilson for making the presentation to them today.

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

None

**5. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**6. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

None

**7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

None

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

/tb

