



Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

CORAL GABLES HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 15, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida

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CORAL GABLES
FLORIDA 33134

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MEMBERS:	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	APPOINTED BY:
	14	14	15	15	1	1	15	15	15	15	15	15	
Janice Thomson*									P	P	A	P	Mayor Jim Cason
Venny Torre	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Vice Mayor Frank C. Quesada
Elizabeth Ghia*									P	P	P	P	Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick
Alejandro Silva	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Patricia Keon
Alexander Adams*									P	P	P	E	Commissioner Vince Lago
John Fullerton*					E	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	Historic Preservation Board
Robert Parsley	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	City Manager
Margaret											E	P	City Commission
Rolando*													
Albert Menendez*											P	P	City Commission

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member;
- = No Meeting

STAFF:

Dona M. Spain, Historic Preservation Officer
 Kara N. Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
 ElizaBeth Guin, Historic Preservationist
 Yesenia Diaz, Administrative Assistant, Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department
 Miriam Ramos, Deputy City Attorney

GUESTS: Monica Loreda; Karen Barnett-Backer, Esq.; Albert Pozo; Jane Maranos; Karelia Martinez Carbonell; Ann Rosalind Goodman; Rashmi Murthy; Hallegeré Murthy.

RECORDING AND PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Nancy C. Morgan, Coral Gables Services, Inc.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Torre at 4:09 p.m. A quorum was present.

MINUTES: MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2015:

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2015 meeting was made by Mr. Menendez, seconded by Ms. Rolando and unanimously approved by voice vote.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

A motion to excuse the meeting absence of Mr. Adams was made by Mr. Fullerton, seconded by Ms. Rolando and unanimously approved by voice vote.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT and DISCLOSURE OF CONTEXT:

Mr. Torre read for the record the statement regarding lobbyist registration and disclosure. Board members who had ex-parte communication or contact regarding cases being heard were instructed to disclose such communication or contact. Board members did not indicate that any such communication occurred.

DEFERRALS: None.

PUBLIC SWEARING IN: Nancy Morgan, Notary Public, administered the public swearing in for those testifying during the meeting.

Ms. Spain encouraged Board members to attend the Books & Books event featuring Arva Parks and her new book about the Merrick family.

REQUEST FROM HISTORIC PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION OF CORAL GABLES TO PLACE A DOUBLE-SIDED HISTORIC MARKER FOR THE "WHITE WAY LIGHTS" AND APPROVAL OF MARKER TEXT:

As President of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables, Ms. Martinez Carbonell relayed the significance of the white way lights and the HPACG's signature project to preserve and restore them. Among the original 500 lights, 78 remain. She described the proposed two-sided marker to be funded by HPACG, and asked the Board to approve the marker's design and text. The organization wants to dedicate the lights within the City's 90th anniversary year by April 2016. Ms. Martinez Carbonell suggested that a good place for the marker was the Coral Gables Library area. She extended an invitation to Board members to attend an event on Sunday, October 19th, where the artist commissioned to create fundraising note cards will be present. The note cards will defray the cost of the restoration.

Ms. Rolando made a motion to approve the placement of the historic marker in the vicinity of the Coral Gables Library bearing the text proposed by the HPACG. Mr. Silva seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Fullerton, Ms. Thomson, Ms. Ghia, Mr. Silva, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Menendez, Mr. Torre.
Nays: None.

LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS:

CASE FILE LHD 2015-08: Consideration of the removal of the local historic designation of the property at 2900 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, legally described as Lots 16 and 17, Block 26, Coral Gables Crafts Section, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, Page 40, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Ms. Spain explained that the application was to remove historic designation from the property and would be a recommendation to the City Commission.

Ms. Kautz advised that removal of the designation was initiated by staff. As she described the property, she conducted a visual display of property photographs and discussed the property's history, particularly mentioning its past use as Charade Restaurant, destroyed by fire in 1995. Nothing has been built on the site since the fire, and the property is in use today as a parking lot. Ms. Kautz asked the Board to consider if the property still meets criteria sufficient to retain designation as a landmark. After reviewing the property fact and designation data, Ms. Kautz announced that staff was requesting removal of the historic designation, and recommended a recommendation (to the City Commission) to approve staff's report and a removal of the designation.

Mr. Fullerton made a motion to approve staff's report and recommend approval of removing the historic designation of the property located at 2900 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, conditioned on the placement of a descriptive plaque or other permanent feature stating the importance of the site to be incorporated in a later development of the property, and to include recognition of the Wilkins' family and the Granada Shop. Mr. Silva seconded the motion.

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Mr. Silva commented that the motion should not be viewed as a “carte blanche” for demolition by neglect issues or by a developer and noted for the record that the City lost the opportunity to secure a reconstruction of the property because it wasn’t possible to pass appropriate variances at the time.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Thomson, Ms. Ghia, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Silva, Mr. Fullerton, Mr. Menendez, Mr. Torre.
Nays: None.

SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

CASE FILE COA (SP) 2015-014:

An application for the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 716 Alhambra Circle, a contributing resource within the “Alhambra Circle Historic District,” legally described as the East 20 Feet of Lot 13 and all of Lots 14 & 15, Block 23, Coral Gables Section “B,” according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 111 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The application requests design approval for the addition of a gazebo and pond and alterations to the residence.

Ms. Kautz described the background and history of the district and residence at 716 Alhambra Circle. As she did so, she displayed a location map as well as historic and current photographs of the structure, a contributing residence within the district. She briefly overviewed the current proposal, introduced project architect, Albert Poza, and said she had a few comments to make after his presentation.

Mr. Poza relayed his past design efforts with the former owner of the house, which suspended when the former owner relocated. At present, he said both owner and design project were new, and added that the current owner intended in the future to expand on the remodeling proposal presented today.

As he detailed the proposed project, drawings and photographs were displayed. He specifically pointed out a side entry door that would be blocked out; explained how stucco would be applied at the infill site; windows in bad condition would be replaced; the rear yard area where a pool and gazebo were proposed; the free form fish pond, currently in poor condition; a trellis and seating area near the pond and gazebo, and concluded that the design respected the existing architecture and also reflected detailing of the house but in a more modern context.

Mr. Torre invited additional audience comment. Hearing no requests to speak, he opened Board discussion. Board questions focused on details and technical issues pertaining to the design proposal, including window clarification; trellis, gazebo and pond elements.

The trellis design was reviewed in detail with Mr. Poza. Board suggestions included: Insist on a mitered edge on the trellis; trellis members need to stop at the post rather than the beam. The recess proposed for the removed door was discussed and Mr. Poza said he would further discuss the issue with the plan reviewer.

Ms. Kautz commented that staff believed the front door is original to the house and stated a preference for the front door to be shuttered.

Ms. Thomson asked if a fountain would be added to blend with the pool. Mr. Poza responded that the Jacuzzi had a spillover adjacent to the gazebo.

At Mr. Torre’s request, Ms. Kautz stated all staff comments:

- Staff to administratively issue a Standard COA for the pool and deck;
- Regarding blocking up the side door leading to the Florida Room, if the door is approved for removal, the concrete should be recessed enough so the existing screen door sits within the recess and is not mounted on the wall;
- The original front door should remain and can be shuttered if there is concern about hurricane protection.

Ms. Rolando made a motion to approve the design proposal for alterations to the existing residence located at 716 Alhambra Circle and for construction of the gazebo with the following conditions: 1) that the front door remain as is; 2) that the side door to the Florida Room be recessed to the maximum extent possible so it is sufficiently blocked in to allow the existing screen door to sit within the recess; 3) for staff to administratively conduct a review for a Standard Certificate of Appropriateness for the pool and pool deck; and to approve issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness. Ms. Ghia seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes. Mr. Silva, Mr. Fullerton, Ms. Thomson, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Menendez, Ms. Ghia, Mr. Torre.
Nays: None.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION:

Historical Significance Determination of the property at 1461 Ancona Avenue, legally described as Lots 34 & 35 and the East 10 Feet of Lot 36, Block 75, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 5, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 20, at Page 38, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

At Mr. Torre's request, Ms. Spain relayed the background of the City ordinance established in +/- 2003 to protect historically undesignated properties in the City as many potentially historic properties are without protection from demolition. Based on this protective ordinance, if a property owner today applies to demolish an undesignated property in the City, the Historic Preservation Officer must first review and approve the demolition application. If the Officer finds the property historically significant, further research is conducted, a designation report is prepared and the matter is brought to the Board to consider a determination of historic significance.

Ms. Spain advised that this case was different as the owners of the property applied for a historic significance determination because they wanted to demolish the building. When staff reviewed the application, they found enough evidence of potential significance (built in 1952; designed by H. George Fink; unaltered) to warrant further review by the Board. Because of the circumstances, Ms. Spain requested guidance from the Board about how it wanted staff to manage these types of requests. She reiterated that Board consideration should not be to designate, but to determine if the Board wanted staff to conduct additional research and prepare a designation report.

Ms. Spain displayed a 1957 and current property photograph, the survey, original permit drawings and facades. During discussion, Ms. Ghia commented on the interesting evolution of Mr. Fink's work, and suggested this more recent example of his work might become more significant as time passes. Mr. Fullerton suggested the possibility that the street be approached as a district. Ms. Rolando observed that the City contained many post-war homes, and suggested consideration of a more comprehensive approach to analyzing the significance of ranch / post-war homes. Ms. Spain pointed out that staff receives numerous significance determination requests, often finding that the homes have been significantly altered over time. Mr. Fullerton added that it would be beneficial to establish a method of recognizing these kinds of architectural expressions. Ms. Kautz added that in the context of a district, it would be easier to determine how a property harmonizes with a street as a whole. Ms. Rolando recommended more of a district approach rather than a focus on architectural examples.

Members of the audience were invited to comment.

Attorney Karen Bernet-Backer advised of her representation of Mr. Rivera, the property owner. Mr. Rivera acquired the property in September 2015, intending to demolish it and develop a two-story home. He was unaware that the home was designed by H. George Fink. Ms. Bernet-Backer reviewed other properties on the block, comparing their appearance to those of Kendall area homes. She reviewed results of her research of H. George Fink designed structures and compared that research to this house, pointing out the modifications. She said her client intended to demolish the building and construct one that meets the standards of Coral Gables. She pointed out that there was no consideration of this building's historic value until the demo application was submitted, and asked the Board to determine the home was not significant.

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Ms. Spain reminded the Board that staff was not taking a position on this matter, but pointed out that other than the property's architectural significance, there also existed cultural and historical significance. She pointed out the criteria included in meeting packets.

Board summarized and combined comments:

- Mr. Silva: The Board is not tasked with preserving only 1920s, Spanish style homes, homes of a certain size, etc. The alterations done to the home are reversible.
- Mr. Torre: There is a process, which usually works well, and the issue is time because the Board has to study the research, evaluate, take a conservative approach and make a correct decision. The house is 63 versus 85 years old. The Board needs to deliberate when these issues need to be addressed, and determine what needs protection and what does not.
- Ms. Rolando: Windows, burglar bars and reroofing are easily reversible alterations. The arguments about those issues aren't persuasive, and there isn't Board consensus about the issue. There is concern, too, that a "McMansion" will be built on the property. (Ms. Spain advised that the Board could not take that into consideration.) It may be best not to make this property an example; to take a more coherent approach and conduct an analysis of post-war properties in the City, examine what has been altered and unaltered, which properties are extraordinary, and to develop guidelines. It makes sense to approach the issue comprehensively and to examine outstanding examples and develop an architectural evaluation. The process could take six months to conduct a proper analysis, and this individual property application should not be impeded.
- Ms. Spain: The City has issued demolition approvals for other ranch style houses. This situation is different primarily because the house is greater than 50 years of age and substantially unaltered. She also advised that a process had long been in place for any demolition permit in the City. If a potential purchaser wants to purchase and demolish a property, the potential purchaser should bring a significance determination request to staff in advance of the purchase to avoid this type of outcome, a process detailed on the City website and widely made known to realtors.
- Mr. Fullerton: It is not unreasonable to allow this application to proceed as the client requests, after which the Board needs to seriously address the issues and also make additional efforts need to be made to increase public awareness. Also, districts make more logical sense, in which the subject property could be a contributing structure within the district. However, if a two-story house in that several block area will be out of character.

Ms. Barnett-Backer observed that her client invested significant money with the intent of demolishing it and creating a home he can live in. The home is in deteriorating condition. Ms. Barnett-Backer's concern was the time involved for the Board to make a determination. She indicated understanding of the Board's position, and reiterated the position of her client.

During discussion, Ms. Rolando asked for Board input about asking staff to begin a review of the 15-year post-war period of structures in Coral Gables that would be considered good architectural examples of the period.

Ms. Rolando made a motion to approve authorizing Historical Resources staff to issue a letter stating that the house at 1461 Ancona Avenue is not historically significant and may be demolished. Ms. Thomson seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Menendez, Mr. Silva, Mr. Fullerton, Ms. Thomson, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Torre. Nays: Ms. Ghia.

Ms. Rolando made a motion to instruct Historical Resources staff to conduct a review and analysis of the structures constructed within Coral Gables between 1945 and 1960 to determine which are culturally or architecturally significant; and to determine if the Board should undertake historical designation of certain districts with predominantly post-war structures as historically significant. Mr. Fullerton seconded the motion.

Discussion continued, during which time Ms. Rolando asked staff for a reasonable timeframe to complete the review and analysis as stated in the motion. Ms. Spain agreed that the review and analysis were appropriate actions, but wants to first

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discuss issues with the City's legal department. She said staff would aim to complete the process in six months, and will provide the Board with updates as the project proceeds.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Menendez, Ms. Ghia, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Fullerton, Mr. Silva, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Torre.
Nays: None.

Mr. Torre initiated a discussion about educating and notifying the public of issues such as those attendant to this application. Staff will research the issues, current processes and new opportunities to educate all parties involved in real property transfers pre-transaction. Ms. Barnet-Backer suggested including an appropriate notification provision in real estate contracts and documents.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:

Ms. Spain made the following announcements:

Mr. Fullerton's selection as Board Appointee was approved by the City Commission.

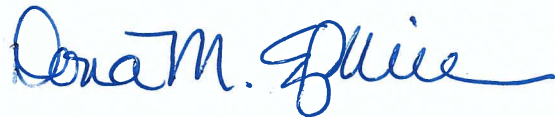
The National Preservation Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. from November 3rd through the 6th.

The Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department hired ElizaBeth Guin as Historic Preservationist. Ms. Guin's educational and professional qualifications were relayed to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Dona M. Spain
Historic Preservation Officer