

CORAL GABLES HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 22, 2009, 4:00 p.m.

City Commission Chambers

405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida

MEMBERS:	N	D	J	F#	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	APPOINTED BY:
Dorothy Thomson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Margaret Rolando*		P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Ernesto Santos	P	P	P	A	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Comm. Maria Anderson
Venny Torre*						P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	Comm. Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Dolly MacIntyre	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P-	P	P	Comm. Wayne "Chip" Withers
Richard Heisenbottle*										P	P	P	P	Historic Preservation Board
Joyce Meyers	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P-	E	P	City Manager
Gay Bondurant*									P	P	P	P	P	City Commission
Sharon Langer*											P	E	P	City Commission

+ Ms. Rolando recused herself from discussion of one application at the special February meeting.

- Ms. MacIntyre arrived at 6:53 p.m.; Ms. Meyers departed at 6:54 p.m.

STAFF:

Kara Kautz, Historic Resources Officer

Simone Chin, Historic Preservation Administrator

Betty Perez, Administrative Assistant

A = Absent

P = Present

E = Excused

*** = New Member**

^ = Resigned Member

= Special Meeting

GUESTS: Betsy Adams, Suzy Amerikan, Matt Malone, Evelyn Budde, Ronald Potter, Kay Murff, Alberto Rodríguez, Laura Russo, Parking Director Kevin Kinney, Ileana Varela, Alex Acosta, Rosa Compain

RECORDING SECRETARY: Betty Perez

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

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dolly MacIntyre at 4:04 p.m. A quorum was present.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT and DISCLOSURE OF CONTEXT:

Ms. MacIntyre read for the record the statement regarding lobbyist registration and disclosure. She then stated that if any members of the board had any ex parte communication or contact regarding any cases being heard, it was necessary to disclose such communication or contact. Board members did not indicate that any such communication occurred.

MINUTES: MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2009:

Mr. Heisenbottle made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 22, 2009 with the noted change. Ms. Langer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

DEFERRALS: None

PUBLIC SWEARING IN: Members of the audience who planned to testify during the meeting were sworn in.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE: Betsy Adams, Coral Gables Garden Club – Althea Merrick Statue for the Coral Gables Merrick House:

Ms. Thomson divulged that she is a Coral Gables Garden Club board member, said she is not remunerated for service, was aware of the today's presentation, but could impartially review and vote on the issue.

Ms. Adams introduced Garden Club President Suzy Amerkan, First Vice President Kay Murff and Second Vice President/proposal co-chair, Evelyn Budde, then overviewed the Club's 20-year Coral Gables entrance project prior to presenting the proposed project to plan, design, fund and donate a life-size monument of Althea Merrick sitting on a bench in her garden at Merrick House. After explaining design options and selection of the American Bronze Foundry to create the statue, Ms. Adams displayed photographs of Mrs. Merrick for Board input about the most appropriate model for the statue.

Ms. MacIntyre referenced the statue of Marjory Stoneman Douglas sitting on a bench in Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden as a way of featuring Mrs. Merrick in her garden. Ms. Kautz added that the Merrick House Governing Board reviewed and supported the Garden Club proposal and advised that, like the statue of George Merrick in front of City Hall, photographs of the design of this statue would be reviewed by the Board for a Certificate of Appropriateness. When completed, the statue will be unveiled during the year-long celebration of the Merrick House's 100th anniversary in 2010.

Ms. Thomson expressed pride in the dedication, work and contributions to the City by the Coral Gables Garden Club. Board members relayed their photograph preferences to Ms. Adams.

Ms. Thomson made a motion to approve of the concept of the Althea Merrick statue as presented. Ms. Langer seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Heisenbottle, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Langer, Ms. Meyers, Mr. Torre, Mr. Santos, Ms. Rolando, Ms. Thomson, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: None.

LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION:

CASE FILE LHD 2009-06 AND COA (SP) 2009-20:

Consideration of the local historic designation of the property at 215 Phoenetia Avenue, legally described as Lot 13, Block 17, Coral Gables Douglas Section, according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 25, Page 69, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The applicant is also requesting the issuance of an Accelerated Special Certificate of Appropriateness and design approval for renovation of the building and the installation of off-street parking. A variance has been requested from Article 5, Division 14, Section 5-1403 (B) (2) of the Coral Gables "Zoning Code" in regard to the location of off-street parking for the existing multi-family building.

As a Powerpoint presentation was conducted, Ms. Chin reviewed the history, architecture, features and ownership record of the property, concluding that staff recommended approval of local historic designation based on historical significance. She advised that the owner was in the audience.

Property owner Ronald Potter described options for preserving the property's history and also altering it to protect his investment. He stressed the importance of parking for property residents. Ms. MacIntyre invited other members of the public to speak.

To Mr. Malone's inquiry, Ms. MacIntyre responded that designating the building would prevent it from being demolished in the future. Mr. Malone recommended careful review the application as future site development would add tax revenue, and preservation would interfere with future development. He voiced objection to the application to designate.

Mr. Potter stated his goal to improve the building, but not necessarily designate the property. He emphasized the importance of parking, and said he didn't want to pursue designation if he couldn't provide resident parking. Ms. Kautz advised that the designation was a separate issue from the application for a COA and variances. She confirmed that the only way a variance could be given by the Board would be if the property were designated historic. Otherwise, the request for a variance for parking could be made to the Board of Adjustment. She added that the building was one of the few remaining 1920s apartment buildings in the area.

Ms. Langer added that the building represented a way of life, the architectural style was unique to north Coral Gables, and the parking proposal was sympathetic to the design. Ms. Meyers said the Board should discuss parking before voting on designation. Ms. Kautz advised that the vote for designation had to be separate from the vote for the COA. It was agreed to hear the presentation about the COA and variance issues prior to voting on historic designation.

Ms. Kautz presented the application for design approval for renovation of the building and installation of a parking area, adding the requested variance for off-street parking. The Board of Architects granted approval of the design and their comments were explained along with a description of proposed renovations, including a reduction of units from six to four, landscaping and four parking spaces in front of the building. Staff's opinion, Ms. Kautz stated, was that renovations are in keeping with the style and character of the building. She said the east and west stoops with shed roofs were one of the few embellishments and should be retained even though they would be blocked up. Staff's recommendation was that the roof be true barrel tile. Regarding parking, staff recommended that the application be reviewed by Public Service because a tree appears to be part of walkway access, the tree should remain and the driveway approach be shifted to accommodate it. The Chicago brick shown on the plans should be mitigated to incorporate greenery. Ms. Kautz pointed out the presence of Parking Director Kevin Kinney if Board members had questions about off-street parking.

Ms. Kautz presented the parking variance, showing examples of established precedents and stating staff's recommendation in favor of the variance.

Mr. Heisenbottle made a motion to approve local historic designation for 215 Phonetia Avenue. Ms. Bondurant seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Langer, Ms. Meyers, Mr. Torre, Mr. Santos, Ms. Rolando, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Heisenbottle, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: None.

Ms. MacIntyre invited audience comment regarding the requested variance.

Mr. Malone, stating he also represented his wife, expressed concern about parking issues and described crowded parking conditions in the front of the property, which covered the green area. Another concern was an anticipated increase in parking with only four spaces to accommodate likely eight vehicles and the probably impact on his next-door parking area. Mr. Malone individually reviewed the seven criteria for variance authorization and stated his responses. He also pointed out that 90% of the buildings on the street were maintained at minimal standards, and were likely to be demolished and redeveloped with underground parking. He reiterated his desire to restore his building and also provide resident parking.

Hearing no further requests to speak, Ms. MacIntyre closed the public hearing. She added that if there were 36 appropriate buildings within a two-block area, the Board could consider creating a district. Ms. Kautz said the number of 1920 apartment buildings in this category were three or four at the most.

Ms. Thomson described her site research, parking availability and the appearance of front yard parked cars. Mr. Heisenbottle said the project met almost all variance criteria. Ms. Rolando said the owner had been reasonable about ameliorating issues. Mr. Santos expressed concern about the lack of details in the plans from the original building, specifically pointing out proportions of the arch, the canopy and door on the east elevation, and the way the tiles in the parapet were shown in the drawings. Mr. Torre expressed concern about the appearance of parking in the front, and the

precedent-setting impact of granting variances for parking. Ms. Bondurant spoke about the importance of saving historic buildings and being reasonably flexible about related issues.

Mr. Kinney addressed north Coral Gables parking challenges, saying that residential parking difficulties were primarily caused by commercial traffic intrusion into residential streets. He said his typical recommendation in these circumstances was that area residential owners come together and request establishment of a residential permit zone to maintain parking for residential use only. Ms. Thomson discussed the feasibility of a parking garage in the area to accommodate commercial uses.

Ms. Langer made a motion to approve the variance as requested for 215 Phoenetia with the intent to preserve the tree and all other specific staff recommendations. Mr. Heisenbottle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Langer, Ms. Meyers, Mr. Santos, Ms. Rolando, Mr. Heisenbottle, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: Mr. Torre, Ms. Thomson.

SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

CASE FILE COA (SP) 2009-24:

An application for the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 111 Florida Avenue, an empty parcel of land within the “Mac Farlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District,” legally described as Lot 3, Block 2-A, MacFarlane Homestead, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 81, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The applicant is requesting approval for the temporary installation of a storage container. A variance was requested from Article 5, Division 21, Section 5-2107 (E) of the Coral Gables “Zoning Code” to allow the temporary installation of a storage container. The applicant was granted conditional design approval for the construction of a new residence at the Historic Preservation Board meeting of May 7, 2009.

Ms. Chin described the variance application for temporary installation of a construction container, displayed and described its dimensions and said its removal was estimated to occur before Thanksgiving 2009. She reviewed stipulations of the Zoning Code and added the reason necessitating the container was theft of construction materials. She concluded by stating that staff recommended approval.

Ms. Russo, representing LBW Homeowners Foundation of Coral Gables, described the necessity to secure building materials, confirming that the temporary container would be removed prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy, estimated to occur prior to Thanksgiving. She responded to clarifying questions from Board members.

Ms. MacIntyre invited other members of the public to speak. Hearing no requests, she closed the public hearing.

Mr. Santos made a motion to approve the application and variance. Ms. Langer seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Meyers, Mr. Torre, Mr. Santos, Ms. Rolando, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Heisenbottle, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Langer, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: None.

AD VALOREM TAX RELIEF:

CASE FILE AV 2004-05:

An application requesting ad valorem tax relief for the property at 308 Romano Avenue, a local historic landmark, legally described as Lots 18-21, Block 8, Coral Gables Coconut Grove Section, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 14, at Page 25, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The related Certificate of Appropriateness – Case File COA (SP) 2004-04, was granted design approval on June 17, 2004, by the Historic Preservation Board.

Ms. Kautz displayed photographs as she described the property's history, architecture, features, renovations and restoration. As before and after photographs were shown, Ms. Kautz explained the \$125,200 improvements that were included in the application. She concluded by stating that staff recommended approval of ad valorem tax relief.

Ms. Langer made a motion to approve ad valorem tax relief for the owners of 308 Romano Avenue. Ms. Bondurant seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Torre, Mr. Santos, Ms. Rolando, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Heisenbottle, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Langer, Ms. Meyers, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: None.

STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

CASE FILE COA (ST) 2009-72 CONTINUED:

An application for the issuance of a Standard Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 2024 Alhambra Circle, a contributing structure within the "Alhambra Historic District," legally described as Lot 14, and the South 5 feet of Lot 13, Block 22, Coral Gables Section "E" revised, as recorded in Plat Book 8, at Page 86, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The applicant requested replacement of windows.

Ms. Kautz said the applicant and homeowner would address the issues to the Board. Alex Acosta, window contractor, said the Board determined at its last meeting that all but two of the window units needed to be casement windows. He said the cost difference to upgrade to casements was \$6,300, and sought Board consideration of horizontal windows on the rear and north sides of the house in addition to the south side (approved at the previous meeting), and to install casements in the visible front façade.

Ms. Compain petitioned the Board to consider the less-costly windows for the non-visible portions of the house.

Ms. Kautz advised that in the past, the Board had recommended in favor of casements where egress issues did not exist. The visibility of all windows was displayed, reviewed and discussed. Mr. Acosta confirmed that none of the windows proposed as sliders would be visible from the street, and discussion continued.

Mr. Heisenbottle suggested reviewing the issue from the perspective of the precedent that would be set as he referenced standards of the Secretary of the Interior. He cautioned that setting a precedent could be a dangerous decision. Ms. Langer spoke of allowable variations when they were not visible. Ms. Kautz clarified the term variations as related to altering historic features such as casement windows, and also noted that the original casement windows on this house had been replaced years before with another window style. Ms. Meyers stated her inclination to be lenient when the applicant wasn't asking for historic fabric to be removed. Ms. Bondurant cited flexibility with features that could be considered temporary, non-visible variations.

Ms. Rolando made a motion to approve the application with clarification that the rear, second floor middle window as a casement window. Mr. Torre seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Santos, Ms. Thomson, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Langer, Ms. Meyers, Ms. MacIntyre. Nays: Ms. Rolando, Mr. Heisenbottle, Mr. Torre.

BOARD ITEMS / CITY COMMISSION / CITY PROJECTS UPDATE:

Ms. Kautz announced the following:

- A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Segovia Circle roundabout Tuesday, October 27 at 11:30 a.m. She encouraged Board members to attend.
- The Country Club proposal was heard by the City Commission and the applicant was instructed to meet with area homeowners to discuss outdoor seating issues.

- The second preservation workshop was scheduled Thursday, November 5 on demystifying historic preservation. Board members were encouraged to attend. The workshop will be filmed and aired on Channel 77 for those unable to attend.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Historic District Discussion:

Ms. Langer inquired about addressing 1950s homes for designation, and discussed excellent examples of 1950s architecture and the importance of preserving it as many of the homes underwent renovations that destroyed their original character.

Ms. MacIntyre suggested updating existing historic districts. Ms. Kautz advised that the period of significance was increased in five districts during the previous year and a half to include many structures as contributing. Ms. Meyers suggested establishing a district in the north Ponce de Leon Boulevard area. Ms. Rolando suggested reviewing some of the undesigned houses on Alhambra Circle.

Ms. Langer requested periodic educational sessions during meetings about architectural styles and periods.

At Ms. Meyers request for an update on the Mac Farlane Homestead, Ms. Kautz reported that a few of the properties were brought to Code Enforcement for minimal housing, and said some of the houses were cited for various damage issues. She confirmed that additional work needed to be done, and the lack of grant funding for restoration was discussed as well. Ms. Langer suggested that non-working construction people might be willing to provide pro bono assistance during this economic climate. It was generally agreed that the volunteer task force established to review the Mac Farlane District homes could be reconvened to update the status.

In response to Ms. Thomson's inquiry about budgetary personnel impacts on the Historical Resources Department, Ms. Kautz said they would lose one full-time employee at the end of the month.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara N. Kautz
Historic Preservation Officer