

**Tybee Island
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes**

Date & Time: December 11, 2023, 6:00 pm

Present: Holly Grell-Lawe (Chair), Marty Harrell, Mary Anne Butler, Cara Cole, Cassidi Kendrick

Absent: Mike Goldberg, Spec Host

Observers: Tony Ploughe (City Councilman-Elect), Pat Leiby (Tybee/MLK), Jackie Boling (Former HPC Intern), Dawn Shay (Forever Tybee)

Location: Burke Day Public Safety Building, Conference Building, 78 Van Horne Ave

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm. A quorum was present.

With the intent to increase community and local government awareness of HPC and its roles and responsibilities, Holly Grell-Lawe stated that as part of opening HPC meetings she will provide a brief overview of HPC.

Recognizing that the historical and cultural heritage of Tybee Island is among its most valued and important assets and that preservation of this heritage is essential, the City of Tybee Island established the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to provide for the designation, protection, preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties and historic districts and to participate in federal and state programs to do the same. Under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the HPC is part of the planning functions of the city. The responsibilities of HPC include, in part, to prepare and maintain an inventory of properties with the potential to be designated as historic, make recommendations to City Council on historic designations and guidelines, conduct educational programs, make investigations and studies, seek federal, state and private funds for historic preservation, initiate historic markers, review and comment on nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, and review and make recommendations on building permit applications for structures 50 years and older.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 13, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved upon motion by Mary Anne Butler and seconded by Cara Cole.

Announcements

Tybee/MLK

Pat Leiby reported that there will be a Tybee/MLK program honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 13, 2024 starting at 3:00pm at the Post Theater. Reverend Sue Jackson will be the MC. Prior to the program, there will be a "Parade in Place" at 2:00pm in front of the Post Theater. The event will include posthumous recognition of Walter Parker and Dr. Donna Allen Goggins. Everyone is invited. The event is free but please register through the Post Theater ahead of the event.

Signs for the Black History Trail have been printed. They are waiting on DPW to install the signs at the different sites. A dedication and celebration will take place once the signs are installed. Everyone will be invited.

Lazaretto Coalition

No update was available.

HPC Chair

Holly Grell-Lawe reminded the members to calendar all the 2024 HPC meeting dates, including the February 3rd HPC Annual Planning Meeting which will be held at the Guardhouse from 10am-2:15pm. Like last year, at some point after lunchtime, non-HPC members, members of the public, observers, etc. can leave the meeting if they want. The last part of that meeting will be administrative.

Members were also reminded to find their training certificates and make sure that Cassidi Kendrick has copies of them. Those records need to be available for the next Certified Local Government (CLG) evaluation.

Holly Grell-Lawe requested that HPC's Promotion & Education Committee meet before the February 3rd Annual Planning Meeting and make arrangements to order and purchase the historic preservation banner (decided on last summer) and to decide on the size of the Preserve Historic Tybee signs and how they are to be used. The committee will bring this information to the HPC's Annual Planning Meeting.

Holly Grell-Lawe then recognized Marty Harrell for her service to HPC over 2 (+) terms as an HPC member. Her 2nd term is now ending. We have appreciated her participation, contributions and viewpoints in our discussions. On behalf of the HPC members and City Staff, a Certificate of Appreciation was given to Marty Harrell for her service. It was recognized that serving 2 terms provided important continuity to the HPC and the perspective brought forward by Marty Harrell was important and needed in HPC discussions. Marty Harrell thanked the group and stated that she had benefited from her participation on HPC.

Ongoing Business

City Hall Renovation

Cassidi Kendrick stated that city staff is supposed to be moving back into City Hall in early January. Once everyone has moved back in and is situated, it is intended that there will be a grand reopening/ribbon-cutting event. No date set for that yet. Holly Grell-Lawe indicated that when Cassidi Kendrick had told her this news, she emailed Sarah Jones, Spec Hosti and Cassidi Kendrick and reminded them that when HPC had the tour of city hall renovations last spring that the architect had agreed to provide copies of all documentation (blueprints, plans, change orders, bills of materials, etc.), whether hardcopy or electronic, to the Tybee Island Historical Society (TIHS). Holly Grell-Lawe believes the architect will also leave copies with the city but being unfamiliar with record keeping at City Hall, we asked that it also be provided to TIHS. TIHS has a new archives building and with their commitment to preserving Tybee history, that

information will be retained over time. That is important because City Hall is a National Historic Register-listed building and we want to be able for historical purposes to back-in to the changes that were made during the renovation. Holly Grell-Lawe is relying on Cassidi Kendrick and Spec Hosti (current City Council Liaison to HPC) to follow through on this.

Central Island Historic District Update

Bob Ciucevich's December update on the Central Island National Historic District application was emailed to HPC members. Holly Grell-Lawe summarized his update as follows. Mr. Ciucevich is editing the application at this point, making a few tweaks to the statement of significance and adding a few architectural sections. He is also getting the support documentation together, mainly maps of the proposed district. He agrees that adding a reference to the Raised Tybee Cottages being placed on the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation's "Places in Peril" List in 2007 might be a good idea. He plans on adding the African American context but will likely wait until the second draft. (We discussed this before as the "architecture of segregation.") He does not want the reviewers to get too bogged down with that while we already have enough information on historical significance of the proposed district. We do not have a lot of documentation on the African American context as it relates to Tybee and the Raised Tybee Cottage. Once SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) confirms we are on the right track with the proposed boundaries and significance, he'll present that additional context, which he believes is compelling and singular. He plans to submit the application after the first of the year (2024). This is a bit disappointing as we were hoping that the application would be submitted by the end of September, but Holly Grell-Lawe and Cassidi Kendrick will follow up with Bob to make sure that soon after New Year's, the application is moved forward.

Holly Grell-Lawe noted again that this is a lengthy process. SHPO will review the application within 60 days of submission and send it back with feedback. The submission will put pressure on HPC to develop its information outreach campaign and notice to City Council about this application submission, what it is, what it involves, and the value of having a National Historic District. This is a topic that will be tackled in our February 3rd Annual Planning Meeting.

HPC Vacant Position

Consideration of the appointment of Marna Lewin to the HPC is Item #4 on the City Council Meeting Agenda for Thursday, December 14, 2023. Marna Lewin was the only applicant and HPC expects that she will be approved. Ms. Lewin was unable to attend tonight's meeting as an observer, but it is expected she will start attending HPC meetings in January 2024.

New Business

2024 CLG Grant Application

Holly Grell-Lawe stated that the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DC) opened up the 2024 CLG Grant Application Period on the first Friday of December (2023). HPC will be preparing and submitting a grant application proposal that will be due on February 1, 2024. There are two kinds of projects that can be proposed under this grant program. One is a pre-development/development project and the other is a survey/planning project. HPC is proposing a survey/planning project. This is a lot of work with a short turnaround. Holly Grell-Lawe and

Cassidi Kendrick, with input and support from HPC Advisor Sarah Jones, will be preparing the proposal which is for a study of the potential for a local historic district within the Fort Screven National Historic District and the North Campbell neighborhood. Letters of support must accompany the proposal.

CLG grants are reimbursement grants and require a 60/40 cost share. The cost share cannot be federal funds. We have outreached to historic preservation consultants and contractors to request cost estimates for the study. CLG historic preservation grant awards run from \$1,000 to \$25,000. DCA will hold back 25% of the grant funds until the final product has been completed and is reviewed and approved by DCA. The grant application is online. It does allow for uploading documents. HPC will need a letter of support from the Mayor and City Council and will need to communicate the financial requirements of the proposed project to City Council.

Variance: Requesting to move and keep historic building in setback – 5 7th Street – 40005 20009 – Zone R-2 Brent Watts

Prior to the meeting, HPC members were asked to view this segment of the video of the 11/20/2023 Planning Commission meeting. Holly Grell-Lawe stated that this variance is Item #10 on the City Council Meeting Agenda for December 14, 2023. This is a request for a variance for a set-back of 12 feet instead of the required 20 feet for a Raised Tybee Cottage (the Espy/Eagan RTC) that will be moved within its existing lot located at 5 7th Street. The petitioner is Brent Watts who has done a good bit of historic preservation work on Tybee using historic preservation tax incentives, including the Barracks, the Bowling Alley and one other historic house. Holly Grell-Lawe does not know if the tax incentives Mr. Watts was awarded for those properties were federal or Georgia tax incentives; however, those projects were done to meet the US Department of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.

The cottage is to be moved closer to the beach. The live oaks on the East side of the property will be retained. The property is to be his family's beach house, not an STR. The reason for the variance is that he would like to be able to obtain historic preservation tax incentives for restoration of the cottage. Mr. Watts and his historic preservation consultant Sara Ward have been talking to SHPO at DCA about the project. It's Holly Grell-Lawe's understanding that SHPO is okay with moving the cottage within the lot and retaining the live oaks, but they are requesting that the cottage not be set-back 20 feet as current code requires. A 20 feet set-back would mean loss of integrity of setting for the cottage and loss of integrity of development from the street side. Integrity of setting is important and among the criteria for tax incentive projects.

The City of Tybee, in many of its documents including its Comprehensive Plan and forms filled out for the Planning Commission, commits to preserving historic properties whenever possible. The Planning Commission voted YES on the variance and now it is going to City Council.

Holly Grell-Lawe proposed that HPC send a letter of support for the variance to the Mayor and members of City Council. She noted that the Espy/Eagan RTC is a contributing historic building within the proposed Central Island National Historic District.

Cara Cole inquired what the motivation is for moving the cottage within the lot. Holly Grell-Lawe responded that the apparent issue was flooding on the first floor in the past and moving the cottage closer to the beach is higher ground than where the cottage now sits. For additional information, members were referred to the City Council Meeting Packet for 12/14/2023 and the (Item #10) letter of explanation and support for the variance from Sara Ward, the historic preservation consultant working with Mr. Watts.

There was a further discussion initiated by Cara Cole about whether the variance, once granted, stayed with the property—could the property be sold and a new buyer tear down the cottage and do a new build, could they use the 12 feet set-back variance. A definitive answer was not available. Holly Grell-Lawe speculated that in that situation of a tear down and new build, the current 20 feet set-back requirement would likely need to be met.

HPC members present unanimously approved a motion by Marty Harrell and seconded by Mary Anne Butler to send an email to Mayor and City Council members in support of the set-back variance requested by Brent Watts for 5 7th Street, Item #10 on the 12/14/2023 City Council Meeting Agenda. Holly Grell-Lawe will prepare and send the email. Marty Harrell agreed to read the HPC email of support during the Public Hearing for the variance at the City Council meeting on 12/14/2023.

Marty Harrell was advised that she will also be recognized for her service to HPC at the City Council Meeting on 12/14/2023.

Permit Reviews

There were no new permits to review. Holly Grell-Lawe summarized the action that was taken on the 21 Pulaski Street (Battery Backus) permit application that was discussed in last month's HPC meeting. This permit application was for building six sections of retaining wall, 3 feet high on the street side of the property. The permit application was received from Lisa Schaaf on 11/1/2023 and HPC responded on 11/21/2023, which was within the 15 business days allowed under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. In the response to Lisa Schaaf HPC did not recommend approval of the permit application on the sole grounds of historic preservation. The installation of a retaining wall in front of Battery Backus makes it unrecognizable as a part of the Endicott Era coastal defense emplacements on Tybee Island. Holly Grell-Lawe send an email (copied to HPC members and city staff) to the property owners, Mr. and Mrs. Moravec, asking them to reconsider installation of the retaining wall and providing historical background on Endicott Era US coastal defense fortifications and Battery Backus.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:58pm with unanimous approval upon motion by Cara Cole and seconded by Mary Anne Butler.