

**Tybee Island  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
Meeting Minutes**

**Date & Time:** June 12, 2023, 6:00 pm

**Present:** Holly Grell-Lawe, Mike Goldberg, Cara Cole, Cassidi Kendrick, Jackie Boling

**Absent:** Marty Harrell, Mary Anne Butler, Sarah Jones, Spec Hosti

**Observers:** 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 6:00 pm. A quorum was present.

**Welcome to New HPC Member**

Cara Cole was welcomed as a new member of the Historic Preservation Commission. City Council approved Cole's appointment on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. During the meeting, members, staff, and observers introduced themselves during a round of introductions.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the May 8, 2023 meeting were approved. Motion by Mike Goldberg. Seconded by Cara Cole. Unanimous approval.

**Ongoing Business**

**Status Update on City Attorney Review of Revisions to Tybee Historic Preservation Ordinance**

The revised Historic Preservation Ordinance was on the City Council Meeting Agenda per reports by Holly Grell-Lawe and Cassidi Kendrick. The Ordinance was placed on the Council's Consent Agenda, and the 1<sup>st</sup> reading of the revised Ordinance was unanimously approved. Cassidi Kendrick confirmed that the Ordinance will have a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading at the next Council meeting.

**HPC Budget Request Update**

Budget Request: Cassidi Kendrick reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> reading of the City's budget was approved. That budget includes \$15,250 for HPC.

Trolley Tour Financial Results: Cassidi Kendrick reported that four tours were conducted (May 12 and May 19). Seventy-three tickets were sold. Trolley bus and brochure printing costs were \$900. Sponsorships raised \$750. Profit was \$2,400.

**City Hall Renovation**

Some HPC members and staff attended a tour of the renovations at City Hall on Tuesday, May 30, 2023 led by architect, Keith Howington. Some of the actions taken in the renovation to preserve historic features were highlighted, such as retaining original door to auditorium, original stairs to balcony area, change in flooring to identify where lobby hall wall originally stood, preservation of crown molding where possible, open lobby wall in indicate original ceiling

height of lobby, retaining original stage floor within offices now located in the stage area. Removal of the auditorium plaster was discussed and Mr. Howington enumerated the reasons that City Council member and City Manager made the decision for removal. Reasons provided were primarily related to cost and energy considerations and ease of adding wiring. HPC members expressed their disappointment and concerns about the historic nature of the auditorium and the good condition of the plaster, with the exception of some minor plaster issues around some windows. HPC will send a letter to Mayor and City Council about the plaster removal and requesting an HPC voice at the table for renovations of city historic properties to ensure that historic preservation principles are considered in renovation discussions and decisions.

### **Saving Historic Cottages and Bungalows**

#### STR Ordinance Impact on Relocation and Tax Incentive-Based Preservation of Historic Houses:

To bring new HPC member Cara Cole, up to speed and for a public record, the HPC Chair, Holly Grell-Lawe, made the following statement:

"A couple months ago, HPC drafted an amendment to the STR Ordinance that would allow a property owner who restored an historic house using federal and/or state tax incentives or who relocated an historic house to obtain an STR permit. In order to access HP tax incentives for amounts \$300K or larger, the property must be income producing, I believe for at least 5 years. For an individual historic structure, the only options for income producing are long term or short term rentals. Federal and state historic preservation tax incentive projects must also meet the US Department of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Here is an overview about the specific situation that resulted in HPC's proposed text amendment to the STR Ordinance. At the regular monthly meetings, HPC reviews permit applications for historic properties. In early 2023, an application for a demolition permit for a Tybee Raised Cottage at 1517 Chatham Avenue came to HPC for review.

The Tybee Raised Cottage architectural style is of particular interest to HPC because Tybee Raised Cottages were placed on the "Places in Peril" List in 2007 by the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. It was noted during HPC's review that there was no opportunity for historic renovation of the 1517 Chatham Avenue cottage because a full tax credit renovation of the cottage had been completed in 2012 under the previous property owner.

In response to the application for a demolition permit, HPC sent a letter to the current property owners in an attempt to convince the owners to save the cottage and educate them on the history of the cottage. HPC was made aware by the HPC Advisor, Sarah Jones, that a contractor was interested in potentially moving the cottage to a residential lot but was concerned about recouping the relocation and renovation cost unless the property was able to be income-producing as a short-term rental.

This led HPC to look at the STR Ordinance and there was a discussion about how the Ordinance impacted the potential relocation of the 1517 Chatham Avenue cottage and how it had the potential to impact tax credit restoration/rehabilitation projects for historic properties, in general. HPC concluded that the STR Ordinance had the potential to partially suppress homeowner access to the higher-level tax credits where historic properties have to be income-producing in order to attain tax credits of \$300,000 or higher.

The HPC's proposed amendment to the STR Ordinance was intended to preserve the widest range of income-producing options for homeowners interested in either relocating historic buildings or needing a \$300,000+ tax credit restoration, taking into account the increasing costs of lumber, materials and supplies.

Sarah Jones confirmed that typically only 1-2 tax credit projects take place each year, and only 1-2 relocations happen every 5-10 years. The proposed HPC amendment to the STR Ordinance would involve only a small number of historic properties.

That being said, I would like to state clearly and unequivocally for the public record that in developing the proposed amendment to the STR Ordinance, the HPC and its members were not influenced, cajoled or otherwise manipulated into taking this action by any local government official, city council member, realtor, developer, contractor or third party of any kind. The action evolved, as I have said, from a permit review for the demolition of a historic raised Tybee cottage. And any person who spreads gossip or rumors to the contrary is attacking the integrity of this Commission and its members. And I would say shame on you to anyone who furthers the falsehood that the HPC was manipulated into this action. Our goal is simply to save historic structures on Tybee Island.

The amendment was drafted, has been through legal review, and now come back to the HPC for review, as we requested. Now, we need to determine what our path forward will be. As Chair, I propose that rather than moving the proposed STR amendment to the Planning Commission, it be parked with the other potential city economic incentives that we have discussed in the past and that we agreed to work on this summer and formally consider in the Fall."

The HPC members present agreed with the Chair's proposal that the HPC amendment to the STR Ordinance is not moved forward to the Planning Commission but instead, be further considered as one potential local economic incentive within the HPC's larger work on developing a list of potential economic and other incentives for historic preservation to be presented to City Council at a future time. The Chair pointed out that the proposal for local economic incentives must necessarily flesh out the how-to's of implementing each incentive. Otherwise, the City Council will not act based solely on just a list.

Local Economic Incentives for Historic Preservation: Holly Grell-Lawe led a brief brainstorming session on possible local incentives. Printouts of the permit fees from the City's website were distributed to the members. The ideas captured on the flipchart were as follows:

What actions would qualify for incentives?

- Historic renovations
- Façade easements
- Historic structure relocations

What are possible incentives?

- City property tax break (for X number of years)
- Waiving of permit fees (specific fees need TBD)
- STR permit
- Annual City of Tybee Historic Preservation Award

What information will be needed?

- What are the criteria for each action?
- What evidence is needed to prove the criteria are met?
- Who decides/evaluates the evidence against the criteria?
- How is the [qualifying] action monitored?

What are the possible criteria for the actions?

- Historic renovations-US Department of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation? Other?
- Façade easements-Historic Savannah Foundation criteria? Tybee specific?
- Historic structure relocations-Intact without exterior changes?

## **New Business**

### **Permit Reviews**

Holly Grell-Lawe reminded the group that permit reviews were being handled via email to ensure timely review. Since the last HPC meeting, the following permit applications were reviewed and approved: 52 Solomon Ave (already altered too much for tax incentive-based restoration); 1307 Solomon Ave (during review it was noted that readily available public information on planned changes to the exterior of the building are not fully disclosed on the permit application); 5 Billfish Lane (elevation of structure); 1402 6<sup>th</sup> Ave (exterior siding replacement); W.G. Logan Cottage 104 17<sup>th</sup> St (exterior siding replacement). Owner/contractor for 1402 6<sup>th</sup> Ave and 104 17<sup>th</sup> St was notified by email that both properties were eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places per the 2016 *Tybee Island Historic Resources Survey Phase 1* (Field Survey #142 and #042) and that replacement of the siding on both structures will likely result in loss of eligibility for National Register Listing for both structures.

## **Announcements**

### **Tybee/MLK**

Holly Grell-Lawe delivered the Tybee/MLK update since Pat Leiby was not able to attend. From June 17<sup>th</sup> through June 19<sup>th</sup>, we will be celebrating Juneteenth. This is a City and Federal holiday celebrating the freedom of the last enslaved people who were in Texas. The enslaved in Texas did not know of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It wasn't until two years later, on June 19, 1865, that the enslaved in Texas learned they were free. This year, the two-day celebration will be held in Memorial Park from 11:00 to 7:00.

There will be vendors, music, and speakers. On Monday morning, June 19<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00 am to 11:00 am, the Wade-In will take place at South Beach, led by Patt Gunn and the Salt Watah Players. We thank Jay Burke for providing beach chairs for the Wade-In. We invite the Mayor, City Council, City staff, and the public to join us in this celebration of freedom.

**Lazaretto Coalition**

No update is available currently.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 with unanimous approval upon motion by Mike Goldberg and seconded by Cara Cole.