

MINUTES

Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission

Valdosta City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room
300 North Lee Street, Valdosta, Georgia

April 5, 2021 5:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Alex Alvarez
Ms. Sandie Burkett
Mr. Tommy Crane

Ms. Celine Gladwin
Dr. Harry Hamm
Ms. Laura Yale

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Sally Querin

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. James Horton
Ms. Lauren Hurley
Mr. Matt Martin

VISITORS PRESENT

Rachel Bradley
Bill Brauham
Jay Council
Guy Ervin
Vickie Everitte
Valerie Ford
Lymas Johnson

Melani Parlor
David Ponder
Cynthia Smith
Gwen Sommers
Sharon Williams
Alfred Willis

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 5:53 pm by Chairman Alvarez. It was determined that a quorum of members was present. Chairman Alvarez thanked everyone for coming and reminded the audience members to please sign the attendance register.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

The March 1, 2021 draft minutes were reviewed by the Board and there were no alterations suggested. Commissioner

Dr. Hamm made motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Yale seconded the motion and it was called and carried unanimously (6-0 vote).

III. Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Applications

- (A) HPC-2021-29, 202 East College Street. Request by Mr. Guy Ervin of the Valdosta Chapter of the Delta Chi fraternity to demolish this existing single-family residence.

Chairman Alvarez announced this agenda item and asked staff to present their report and recommendation.

Mr. James Horton presented the Staff Report in great detail along with PowerPoint slides, and described the histories and the conditions of the home and adjacent properties, along with various maps and photos relating to the historic district and the building's contributing characteristics to the area. The photos included the exterior facades of the building as well as several of the interior rooms, which depict the entire property to be in a state of disrepair. Mr. Horton stated that the site has been owned by the fraternity since 2003 and that it has been used as a residence for fraternity members. Mr. Horton described damages to the property including a leak in the ceiling causing damage to the walls, and vandalism to the windows and walls caused by people and the environment. Mr. Horton reported that in spite of the damage, the house is still structurally sound. Mr. Horton stated that the property is condemned but that does not equal demolition. Mr. Horton presented photos from the early 2000s to demonstrate the evolution of the house. May 2020 photos exhibited broken windows, burned

mattresses in the yard, tall grass and weeds and clearly no maintenance. On November 9, 2020, Mr. Horton sent a certified letter to the property owner requesting repairs to the building, including a roof inspection, repair of the leaks, repairs to the broken windows, replacement of rotten boards, protective paint and yard clean-up. By March 2021 the yard had been trimmed but the repairs had not been made. Mr. Horton stated that if the changes had been made, the request for demolition would not be present today. Mr. Horton presented the Board with three (3) redevelopment scenarios for the property: (1) Develop a new primary home at the front of the lot while maintaining the existing historic building in the rear as a rehabilitated accessory building for storage etc.; (2) Develop a new primary home at the front of the lot while maintaining the existing historic building in the rear as a rehabilitated "guest house" that serves as a partial dwelling unit; or (3) Develop a new primary home at the front of the lot, and seek Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approval to maintain the existing historic building as an Accessory Dwelling unit that could be rented.

Mr. Horton stated that because of the original layout of the house and current Land Development Regulations (LDR), if the house were demolished, a new structure would not be able to be constructed in the same manner with current setback standards. If demolished, the lot could not be likely redeveloped in the same pattern that is characteristic of the neighborhood. Mr. Horton again described the content of the certified letter sent on November 9, 2020, and how the items in the letter related to the conditions of Demolition By Neglect criteria, and how compliance with the requested actions of the letter would have negated any subjective need for demolition.

Mr. Horton described the review criteria for Demolition as contained in the adopted Design Guidelines and listed in his staff report, and how this request for demolition of a contributing historic resource will have an "adverse effect on the character of the Historic District. Mr. Horton therefore recommended denial of the request.

Chairman Alvarez the asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in favor of the request.

Mr. Guy Irvin, applicant, introduced himself as representing the Valdosta Chapter of Delta Chi Alumni Association, and is the manager for this property. Mr. Irvin stated he does not deny staff's presentation of any of the details of the case. He stated his reason for the demolition is to redevelop this property as a parking lot to be utilized for the adjacent house at 200 East College Street, and to help satisfy the overall parking need for parking by the University. Mr. Irvin stated that Delta Chi does not have the resources to rehabilitate the property and that there is no return on the investment for them. He states that it would cost \$5,000 to demolish the property versus \$150,000 to \$200,000 to rehabilitate the property or restore it to a livable condition. He recounted the history of the property as being owned by the fraternity since 1972 and that the house was remodeled in the early 2000s.

Mr. Jay Council, 2410 Patrick Place, stated that he is also a member of the local Delta Chi Alumni Association and that he supports the demolition proposal. He also gave a brief history of the fraternity's history at this location and stated that the adjacent fraternity house at 200 East College Street has been vacant since November 30, 2020, and that their plan is to market both properties for sale.

Commissioner Gladwin asked questions about the maintenance history of the property and the estimated repair costs, and also how long the property has been listed on the market for sale. The applicants responded that a lot of money was spent on remodeling the house in 2016, and that the Alumni Association no longer has that amount of money to spend. They also stated that they are just now beginning the process to list the property for sale, but would like to advertise it as a vacant lot.

Commissioner Gladwin stated that the house is a contributing resource in the District because of its historic integrity and that she would like to keep it open for historic preservation to allow someone else to have the opportunity to bring the house back to life. She suggested that instead of demolition, that this building be properly stabilized and secured, and that both properties be placed on the market for sale for a period of several months to allow interested persons time to make offers on the properties. She stated that otherwise the request for demolition should be flatly denied.

Commissioner Hamm stated that if the applicants were preparing to spend \$5,000 on the demolition anyway, that perhaps this funding could instead be used to make repairs and/or stabilize the property. He also questioned why this property needed to be converted into a parking lot. The applicants responded stating the adjacent building at 200 East College Street has parking for only about 4 cars and that more overall parking was needed in order to market these properties for future use. Commissioner Hamm replied that parking for 4 cars was certainly enough for a single-family residence, which is how the property is currently zoned.

Commissioner Burkett stated she believed the demolition should not be approved at this time and that the property should be marketed for sale for at least 6 months before making any kind of decision.

Chairman Alvarez asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak in favor of this request. There was no response. He then asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in opposition to this request. There was no response.

Commissioner Gladwin made a motion to formally deny this request for demolition, and request the applicants to stabilize the structure from further damage by the elements, and actively market the property for sale for a period of 6 months before returning to the Historic Preservation Commission with a new application and proposal for the property. Commissioner Yale seconded the motion and it was called and carried by the majority (4-1 vote). Commissioner Crane voted against the motion.

(B) HPC-2021-08, 1512 North Oak Street. ** Tabled item from the 3-1-2021 meeting. Mr. J. Merrit Guthrie has now submitted a formal drawing of the small roof change in this property.

Chairman Alvarez announced this agenda item and asked staff to present their recommendation.

Mr. Horton presented a brief summary of this request as it was reviewed at the March 1, 2021 meeting, and presented photos of the proposed roof changes along with drawings recently submitted by the applicant. Board members reviewed these drawings and came to a consensus that the proposed roof design did not look appropriate.

Commissioner Gladwin suggested that the main roof gable be extended to cover the entire side addition to the house, such that it looks more like one roof when viewed from the front.

Chairman Alvarez asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in favor of this request. There was no response. He then asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in opposition to this request. There was no response.

Commissioner Hamm made a motion to deny the originally proposed roof design and to instead approve the applicant to extend the existing main roof design southward to cover the entire addition on the side of the home. Commissioner Crane seconded the motion and it was called and carried unanimously (5-0 vote)

IV. Consent Agenda

Chairman Alvarez stated that there are 14 items listed on this part of the agenda that are the COA Administrative Approvals by staff since the March meeting. He asked if the Board had any questions on any of these, and there was no response.

V. Old Business

(A) Demolition by Neglect:

Mr. Horton stated there are 4 properties on this list, and gave a status update on each of these as follows:

1. 210 W. Mary Street is being purchased.

2. 113 E. North Street has Architect, Jimmy Cone, working with the property owner to develop alternatives for the building.
3. 202 E. College was addressed earlier in the meeting.
4. McAlister Property: Mr. Horton presented “before & after” photos from 2016 to 2021 for each of these properties showing monitoring and significant improvement recently:
209 W. Brookwood
210 W. Jane
1300 N. Toombs
1301 W. Jane
1306 Toombs Street
1308 Slater Street
1308 N. Toombs
1310 Toombs Street

(B) Other Items:

Resurvey of the Local Historic District - Phase II Grant results are not yet announced. Mr. Horton stated that there is no word yet from the State about the results of this latest grant proposal, but that he anticipates hearing something later in May.

Places in Peril listing: 909 - 915 North Oak Street — still active. Mr. Horton stated that this is referred to as the Deming House, and that there is an ongoing effort to secure a purchaser for the home.

VI. New Business

(A) Board member re-appointments. Mr. Horton reported that Ms. Sandie Burkett and Ms. Celine Gladwin have each been reappointed to 3-year terms.

(B) Election of Officers for 2021. Mr. Horton stated that at last month’s meeting, the decision was made to postpone the annual election of Officers until this month, because the reappointment of two of our members was not yet known. He therefore started the elections process and called for nominations and a vote for Chairman.

Commissioner Yale made motion to nominate Alex Alvarez for another 1-year term as Chairman. Commissioner Crane seconded the motion. There were no other nominations made. The motion was called and carried unanimously (5-0 vote).

Chairman Alvarez then called for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Commissioner Hamm made a motion to nominate Celine Gladwin for another 1-year term as Vice Chairman. Commissioner Yale seconded the motion. There were no other nomination made. The motion was called and carried unanimously (5-0 vote).

Chairman Alvarez then called for nominations for Secretary.

Commissioner Crane made a motion to nominate Laure Yale for another 1-year term as Secretary. Commissioner Hamm seconded the motion. There were no other nominations made. The motion was called and carried unanimously (5-0 vote).

(C) New business from the floor. Commissioner Gladwin acknowledged that there were several visitors present at today’s meeting, and asked that they each introduce themselves and explain their purpose for attending the meeting.

Ms. Gwen Sommers Redwine presented herself and introduced members of the neighborhood group which has formed in hopes of extending the boundaries of the historic district. She stated that the group consists of neighbors who populate the communities surrounding the current mapped historic district, and that they would like to have their neighborhoods qualified or included in the re-survey of historic resources as their neighborhoods fit the criteria for the National Register.

Mr. Horton distributed copies of handouts which depict maps of both the local Historic District as well as the six (6) National Register historic districts within the city, and also handouts which describe differences in these kinds of districts, etc.. He then gave a lengthy description of how the Historic Preservation movement began in Valdosta, how and when the local Historic District was originally formed, and how the Historic Preservation Commission uses adopted Design Guidelines when reviewing development and redevelopment proposals within the local District. He also explained how the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process works, and the differences between administrative COA reviews and those that require action by the Commission.

Ms. Redwine stated that the group's initiative is to monitor what is happening in the City and its development pattern, emphasizing the visible difference between the beautiful north side and the desolate south side areas of the City. She stated that although the group is not formally created, they do have the backing of several community leaders, including Councilwoman Sandra Tooley. The group would like to therefore be included in the resurveying process as to include neighborhoods that are disparaged. She stated she would like to see the National Register include more houses in these neighborhoods and would like to understand the process of resurveying to include neighborhoods on the south side of town.

Commissioner Gladwin also described the differences between a local Historic District and a National Register District, and the processes for nominating local historic properties and amending the designated local Historic District boundaries, are already in place in City ordinance. She also explained the very lengthy process of nominating properties to the National Register, and how a high level of historical detail about the properties is required. She also explained how the designation of local Historic Districts or even later amendments of its boundaries, is submitted and approved locally but that it must also be approved by the State.

Mr. Horton explained in greater detail about the process for extending the boundaries of the Historic District, and how the Commission already has plans to evaluate realignment of the boundaries of the local Historic District and the National Register district portions that lie outside. Mr. Horton further discussed these steps as well as the advantages and disadvantages of becoming part of a local Historic District. He also described the multiple steps in creating or expanding a local District, which include creating a group who represents the property owners who are interested in the project, formally submitting a detailed proposal to the Commission – which includes a detailed description of an area and projected boundary drawn as well as a report of historic significance of the proposed District. Public hearings will then have to be scheduled so that all citizens who live in the affected area can attend in support or opposition of the District change. The Commission would then vote on the proposal, Valdosta Mayor and City Council would then affirm or deny the proposal, and it would then go to the State for final review and approval. Mr. Horton emphasized that written notifications would then have to be sent to every property owner within the newly approved District.

There was much more continued discussion on all of these same topics between the visitors and members of the Commission. Commissioner Gladwin thanked the visitors for their involvement in community activism, and their participation in the meeting this evening, and stated that the Commission would like to continue these discussions at future meetings.

Commissioner Burkett and Commissioner Hamm departed the meeting during these discussions, at around 7:30pm.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Alvarez called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Crane then made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Yale seconded the motion and it was called and carried unanimously (3-0 vote). The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 pm.

HPC Chairman 

Date 5/17/21