

# MINUTES

## Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission

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

August 1, 2022 5:30 p.m.

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Alex Alvarez  
Ms. Celine Gladwin  
Dr. Harry Hamm  
Mr. Tommy Crane  
Ms. Sally Querin

### MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Laura Yale  
Ms. Sandie Burkett

### STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeff Brammer  
Ms. Lauren Hurley  
Mr. Matt Martin

### VISITORS PRESENT

Patti Robertson  
Alan Sanderson  
Bruce Smith

#### I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chairman Alvarez. It was determined that a quorum of members was present. Dr. Alvarez thanked everyone for coming and reminded audience members to sign the attendance register.

#### II. Review and Approval of Minutes

The July 11, 2022, draft minutes were reviewed by the Commission. Ms. Querin made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Crane seconded the motion, and it was called and carried unanimously (4-0 vote).

#### III. Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Applications

- A. **HPC-2022-80 — 116-122 North Ashley Street:** Mr. Brammer presents. The petitioner requests approval to paint a public art wall mural on the south elevation of the subject property. The mural will consist of a series of painted scenes depicting the performing arts. The mural in total calls for covered space of roughly 13 feet in height x 40 feet in length. The guidelines say nothing specifically about public art and wall murals. However, the guidelines do say painted masonry is to remain painted and unpainted masonry is to remain unpainted. Given the property's history of being both painted and unpainted, staff recommends approval of the mural project as proposed. Staff also recommends that any prep work, including removal of the existing plaster/stucco, to facilitate painting be performed by the gentlest means available to protect the brick.

Mr. Bruce Smith, with the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC), spoke on behalf of the application. He stated that PAAC reviewed the project at the request of the theater. They worked together to develop a theme. They advertised twice for submissions because they did not get what they were looking for during early submittals. Mr. Smith clarified that originally the submittal was just the image without the valance curtain, but PAAC suggested the addition of the curtain making the height of the mural all the way to the top of the currently painted wall. Therefore, the height of the mural will be 13 feet, as opposed to 8 feet. Ms. Querin asked if the image was a conceptual design or the actual mural. Mr. Smith said that the rendering is the actual image to be painted. Mr. Smith stated that part of the contract with the artist is that the artist will do wall prep and PAAC is specific about what the wall prep will include. PAAC will oversee that none of the historic attributes on this wall will be damaged. Ms. Gladwin asked if the mural will cover the whole yellow painted portion of the wall and stop at the window. Mr. Smith confirmed. He stated that

there has been discussion of murals being done farther down the wall, but that this is the only one happening now. Mr. Smith stated that the mayor reviewed the project and is excited about it.

Ms. Patti Robertson spoke in support of the application. She stated that Mr. Smith approached the theater about a project before COVID-19 (around 2019). She stated one of the theater guild members is the artist for the chosen submittal. She stated that she had not seen the rendering with the curtain. Mr. Smith said that PAAC added the curtain as a recommendation. Ms. Robertson stated that the theater guild agreed to allow PAAC to use their wall, so long as they could review and approve the design, which they did.

With no one else in support or opposition of the case, the Commission discussed. Dr. Hamm stated that in the past when people have chosen to put signs up, they could not exceed a certain dimension based on the size of the building. He stated that this mural seems quite large. Mr. Smith stated that he could answer that question. He said that PAAC has been through this process before and that murals are not subject to sign regulations if there is no advertisement or wording directing toward a certain business. He said that this design is generic and does not advertise for the theater.

Ms. Gladwin stated that there is no guideline for murals. She stated that murals alter the character of the building and that there should be procedures for how murals come about involving all parties including the HPC, PAAC and Mainstreet. Ms. Gladwin reiterated that if the building had not been painted before, it would not be eligible. She stated that content is not something on which the Commission can vote. She said that murals can be something that HPC comes to protect—meaning a historic mural may be protected under the ordinance. She made the motion to approve the application with the mural going as high as 13 feet. Ms. Querin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (4-0 vote).

Ms. Querin suggested to Mr. Smith that whenever PAAC begins the process and a location is being selected, that PAAC contact Mr. Brammer so that coordination of these processes may begin. Mr. Smith stated that he understood and thinks that HPC should get a preview to voice possible concerns.

#### **IV. Consideration of Administrative Review and Approvals**

Board members reviewed the Administrative Reviews for the month of July with no questions.

#### **V. Other Business**

- (A) Local Historic District Survey Update (Phase II)** – Mr. Brammer stated that the second round of comments have been submitted to JMT from HPC and the state. He stated that the survey is shaping up and looking better.

#### **VII. New Business**

Mr. Brammer discussed potential processes for murals and opened it up for the Commission to discuss their thoughts on the matter. Before this meeting, he provided HPC members with minutes from the last discussion (May 2019) regarding the mural facing the historic courthouse. HPC members agreed that plans for being more involved with the process of murals, despite the lack of regulations, has been discussed before. He said that holding a work session to establish a process for murals and inviting PAAC and Mainstreet staff is necessary so that confusion over murals in the historic district doesn't continue.

Basic compatibility rules apply within the district, but they are ambiguous. Ms. Querin stated that it would be helpful if HPC understood the rules under which PAAC operates and for PAAC to understand the rules under which HPC operates. Mr. Crane stated that researching what other Historic Preservation Commissions do could be beneficial. Dr. Hamm and the other commissioners remarked that the geometric mural in the rear of Bennie's Alley was never reviewed. Mr. Brammer stated that luckily, that wall was painted previously as well, and the geometric mural was painted over paint. Mr. Martin stated that murals are foreseen to be an increasing occurrence. Mr. Martin brought up that in this case, PAAC was involved and consulted but that the theater is a private entity, and they could have commissioned a

mural without consulting PAAC and HPC would not have been involved. Also, of question is what role the Central Valdosta Development Authority (CVDA) plays in murals downtown, and what about art that appears on City- or County-owned property that does not need HPC approval. Dr. Hamm mentioned that the mural in front of the courthouse was brought to HPC because it was a Mainstreet project.

Meanwhile, Ms. Querin reported that she went to the Valdosta Black Heritage Group (VBHG) meeting. Ms. Querin presented the event program. On page two, it says VBHG's "mission is to restore African American historic property protection, preservation and dignity commensurate with the National Historic Preservation Act established in 1966." It also says that the No. 1 purpose is "to repeal current illegal and outdated racially biased Local Historic District ordinance. Dissolve all content created under its purview, replace with appropriate new measures. Requires work with City Council, the community, and Georgia State historic preservation office." The third point states, "declare black commercial district a bone fide historic district. Requires repeal of Local Historic District ordinance and City Council approval for recognized quarters, housing and Wisenbaker lane, requires repeal of Local Historic District ordinance and City Council approval. To create a black voice in historic preservation currently unrecognized."

Ms. Querin stated that this was presented as their mission. Ms. Querin stated that the organizers, including Ms. Gwen Sommers Redwine, clearly do not understand what HPC does. Ms. Gladwin stated that it is unfortunate because several HPC members and previous staff have reached out to the group and its organizers, explaining the process for expansion of the historic district, and providing them with maps and details regarding the processes that must occur. Ms. Querin stated that the theme that the VBHG seem to be angry about is the demolition of buildings and feeling as if they do not have protection.

Ms. Querin stated that HPC needs to figure out how to work with the group. Ms. Querin went on to say, if what this group wants is protection, then HPC can work with the group to understand how that can be done. Mr. Crane said one way to do that is to become part of the local historic district. Mr. Martin stated that another way would be to get buildings nominated as individual historic properties, giving them the same protections as buildings inside the local historic district. Ms. Querin suggested meeting with the group to give them options and a plan. Ms. Gladwin stated that that has been done already. She stated that aligning the local historic district with the Southside National Historic District would be beneficial. Right now, a lot of properties on the South Side are part of the national historic district, but not the local historic district. HPC regulates only for the local historic district.

In the past, people have opposed expanding the local historic district because they do not want the regulations that come with being in the local historic district. Ms. Gladwin stated that the Commission has had this conversation several times regarding how to reach out to this group and that the group has been advised on how to become part of the local historic district. Chairman Alvarez stated that the steps were explained, and the process was explained at a previous meeting with the group in attendance. He suggested that the problem for the group might be getting started.

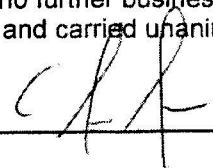
Meanwhile, Ms. Gladwin added that the State Historic Preservation Conference is scheduled Sept. 20-22. She said the conference is through the Georgia Alliance for Preservation Commissions. She said she will send information to staff regarding the conference.

Finally, the next HPC work session is August 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm to discuss murals with PAAC and CVDA.

#### VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Crane made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Hamm seconded the motion. It was called and carried unanimously (4-0 vote). The meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

HPC Chairman



Date

9-13-22