

MINUTES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

February 21, 2024

Minutes of the regular hearing of the Historic Preservation commission, of the City of Tempe, which was held in hybrid format in person at City Council Chambers, 31 East 5th Street, Tempe, AZ, and virtually through WebEx.

Regular Meeting 6:00 PM

Present:

Staff:

Kyle Woodson	Zachary Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer
Dave Fackler	Ryan Levesque, Deputy Director, Com Dev
Erin Davis	Jennifer Daniels, Admirative Assistant II, Com Dev
Jean Robinson	
Reylynne Williams	
Greg Larson	
Kiyomi Kurooka	

Native Land Acknowledgement Statement: We wish to acknowledge that Tempe is the homeland of the Native people who have inhabited this landscape since time immemorial. These ancestral lands of the O’odham (known as the Pima), Piipaash (known as the Maricopa), and their ancestors extend far beyond our city. This land continues to be spiritually connected to the O’odham of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and Gila River Indian Community. We accept the responsibility of stewarding those places and solemnly pledge to consider this commitment in every action.

- 1) **Call to Audience:** Persons wishing to address the Commission on any matter may do so at the discretion of the Chair. However, Arizona Open Meeting Law Limits Commission discussion to matters listed on the posted agenda. Other topics may be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

- 2) **Voting of the Meeting Minutes for November 8, 2023**

Commissioner Williams stated that on page 4, last paragraph, 10th line the word “caj” should be “can”.

Motion by Commissioner Larson to approve Meeting Minutes for November 8, 2023, with corrections; second by Commissioner Davis. Motion passed on **7-0** vote.

Ayes: Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Fackler, Commissioners Davis, Robinson, Williams, Larson and Kurooka

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Commissioners Montero and Engnell

- 3) **Approval of Agenda**

Approval of agenda by Chair Woodson.

4) Update on the demolition of non-historic elements of the Gonzales-Martinez House, located near the corner of 1st Street and Farmer Avenue. The presenter is Zachary J. Lechner, City of Tempe Historic Preservation Officer.

Dr. Zachary Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer, gave an update on the Gonzales-Martinez House. There was a partial demolition of the building, specifically demolition of the non-historic portion of the building as well as the outbuildings. Mr. Bob Graham of Motley Design Group was onsite to verify everything went according to plan. The adobe walls are holding up well despite the level of decay and deterioration. The developer then proceeded with a mothballing plan under the supervision of Mr. Graham. This included putting up plywood over the new openings in the house and painting it to blend in with the rest of the home. In addition, some additional fencing was installed around the house. Dr. Lechner spoke with Mr. Todd Marshall, who is part of the development team of 1st and Farmer, and asked for his thoughts on moving forward with the next steps. The next steps would be coming up with an adobe restoration/stabilization plan and then the larger rehabilitation plan for the house. Mr. Marshall stated they want to get through the platting process and entitlements and then they can begin on the design work. Mr. Marshall was unable to provide a timeline. Dr. Lechner said he will continue to check in and follow up with the development team.

Commissioner Robinson asked if the developer has any intention of incorporating this house into their development. If they are going to build a high-rise next to the house, are there any distance requirements that they must maintain? Dr. Lechner stated that is one of the things the City will be evaluating once it has a design proposal in hand. The high-rise will likely dwarf the house to some extent; the key thing is making sure it is far enough away to mitigate the severe height difference. The City will work with the developers and provide feedback to ensure that the house is incorporated in such a way that its status as a historic landmark is honored. Commissioner Robinson stated that there is an obvious desire to preserve the historic integrity of the house. She asked if it is going to be become a monument or relic that 1st & Farmer can then incorporate in a viable way into their development even if it is within the site context. Dr. Lechner stated yes, it is going to be part of the redeveloped property. The developer will eventually own it, and they are tasked with rehabilitating it. In terms of how they will incorporate it, that is not known yet. It is very early in the planning stage.

Commissioner Davis stated that she has no opinion on the mothballing plan because that is not her area of expertise. Will there be any periodic monitoring of the property by the developer since it will be some time before rehabilitation plans are put into action? Dr. Lechner stated yes, the idea is for the developer to continue to monitor the site and take the necessary steps to keep it safe.

Commissioner Kurooka asked if the high-rise plan was approved yet. Dr. Lechner stated that there is no specific plan yet and that once developed it would have to go through the entire City planning review process. This process will not require HPC approval because none of the two parcels involved have historic overlays.

Chair Woodson asked for confirmation that the developer has not yet acquired the City parcel, but that this transaction is in process. Dr. Lechner stated yes. Chair Woodson asked if once they do make the purchase, will the two parcels both be part of the development? Dr. Lechner stated yes. Chair Woodson asked, how much time are we talking about between now and when the project might begin construction? Dr. Lechner stated there are too many unknown factors at this time to give answer. Chair Woodson stated that the Commission would like to hear updates as the process unfolds. Dr. Lechner stated that the developer's first step will be rehabilitating the house before building the high-rise. Chair Woodson asked if there is a rehabilitation plan at this time Dr. Lechner stated that if they enlist Mr. Graham with the rehabilitation task, he will then have to come up with a specific plan. Chair Woodson asked how the site will be secured moving forward. Dr. Lechner stated that there is fencing around the parcels. There is additional fencing around the house itself. 1st & Farmer is not planning to implement 24-hour security. Dr. Lechner stated that he believes the house itself is secure. If it is seen that additional security is needed, the City will consult with the development team to ensure it is provided.

5) Update on the building condition assessment report for and redevelopment of the Watson's Flowers Building property, located at 2425 East Apache Boulevard. The presenter is Zachary J. Lechner, City of Tempe Historic Preservation Officer.

Dr. Lechner gave an update on the Watson's Flowers Building. Last year, the City Manager directed Community Development to take additional steps to address the concerns that Chair Woodson and Vice Chair Fackler expressed in a letter to City Council and the Mayor. This letter strongly recommended preserving the building. The building is still under the ownership of the Tempe Coalition for Affordable Housing (TCAH, aka, the Affiliate). The Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA) has a pending purchase agreement for the property but does not yet own it. There is little protection of this building due to it being only a Historic Eligible (HE) and National Register-eligible property. Under direction of the City Manager, after consulting with Dr. Lechner, Mr. Bob Graham, of Motley Design Group was hired by the City to complete a building condition assessment for the Watson's Flowers Building. This study focused more on the architecture than the history of the building, which has been documented elsewhere. There are a series of other buildings on the site that date to the 1960s and 1970s. They do not have any historic integrity. There is no issue with those being demolished. The Watson's Flowers Building itself has a couple of walls left from the original circa 1920 structure. There were 2-3 eras of additions. There was some enlargement beyond the adobe walls that occurred between 1934-1953. There is also the 1953 addition, which consists of the concrete wings that represent the majority of the building today and that make the building what it is today from a visual standpoint. Mr. Graham recommended in his building condition assessment report that the vast majority of the building be preserved. Mr. Graham stated that most of the rear portion of the historic building potentially could be demolished, if necessary, as it did not have much of a historic connection to the rest of the building, which has historically functioned as a flower shop. The City paid for Mr. Graham's assessment and provided the information to TCAA. Shortly after receiving the full report, TCAA held a board meeting at which they made a determination to demolish the Watson's Flowers Building in its entirety. There are some issues with the site that are still pending. For example, the City of Tempe is building affordable housing all along Apache Blvd. There is federal funding being used for the development of the sites, so they fall under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. That requires consulting with Tribal Nations and various stakeholders. In the Historic Properties Treatment Plan for the Apache HUD (Housing and Urban Development) project, there is a provision about possible archaeological mitigation of the Watson's Flowers site, because when it was written, there was a sense that the Watson Flower's site might be incorporated at some point into the Apache HUD project. Per the HPTP, it does not make a difference whether Watson's is privately or publicly owned. Either way, if it were to be demolished, then the whole site would be subject to Section 106-mandated archaeological mitigation and consultation procedures. It would be the responsibility of the City of Tempe to ensure that the Section 106 requirements are implemented. Specifically, the City would be tasked with ensuring that there is archaeological mitigation of the site, either prior to or after the demolition of the Watson's Flowers Building. That means that TCAA would have to hire an archeological firm to come up with a plan to excavate a percentage (perhaps around 4%) of the site. Depending on the findings, if the City of Tempe decides additional mitigation is needed, the archaeological firm would enter Phase II of archaeological work. The overall Section 106 process can take many months to complete, and it expensive. Dr. Lechner met with Mr. Jeff Tamulevich, Community Development Director, and representatives from TCAA to let them know about these requirements and that the City of Tempe does not have the funding to pay for it. It would be TCAA's responsibility to pay for the Section 106-related work on the site. TCAA has been in the process of reaching out to various archaeological firms to determine if one of them would be able to perform the necessary work on the project. TCAA is actively trying to get this archaeological work completed because they must meet a May deadline in order to move forward with purchasing the property.

Chair Woodson asked if TCAA owns the property yet. Dr. Lechner stated that they do not own the property yet. Chair Woodson asked if the TCAA had a copy of the report before they decided to demolish the building. Dr. Lechner stated that Mr. Graham sent out an executive summary of the report, which TCAA received a couple of weeks before he issued the final version to the City of Tempe for Dr. Lechner's review. Once it was reviewed, Dr. Lechner received the go-ahead to send it to TCAA. Dr. Lechner stated that he followed his supervisors' instructions to hold off on putting out the information about TCAA's proposed demolition due to the rapidly evolving nature of the situation. The City wanted to make sure things had

reached a point where it could share a more complete picture of what was going on with the Watson's Flowers property. Chair Woodson asked if it was so rapidly evolving, why didn't you bring it to our attention at the time? Dr. Lechner stated that he was carrying out instructions. Chair Woodson asked why they would not want the HPC to be aware of the fact that TCAA was not acting in good faith. He said City management knew the HPC had made recommendations on this site. Chair Woodson stated that TCAA didn't even have a copy of the final report before deciding to demolish the building. That seems like information that would have been useful. Dr. Lechner stated that, yes, they had already made the decision, and in his view, they probably made the decision several months ago. Chair Woodson asked, why make the City and Commission go through all of the motions if TCAA had already made the decision? Dr. Lechner stated he cannot speak for TCAA. Chair Woodson stated that this is very discouraging and disheartening, and he is very upset about the decision.

Commissioner Robinson asked if Dr. Lechner received any input from TCAA about their decision to demolish the building. Do they feel like they cannot build what they need to build without demolishing the building? Dr. Lechner stated that TCAA has not provided any specifics to him, but that is his understanding. TCAA has not shared a lot of information regarding its plans for the Watson's Flowers Building with the City. Commissioner Robinson asked if TCAA has shared any information, such as diagrams, that would indicate that they absolutely can't build what they need without demolishing the Watson's Flowers Building. Dr. Lechner stated that TCAA did not provide him with a response to whether they believed that they could incorporate Bob Graham's preservation recommendations into their desired project design.

Vice Chair Fackler asked if Dr. Lechner can define what the partnership and ownership of the three parties (City, TCAH, and TCAA) are. Dr. Lechner stated TCAH and TCAA are both private nonprofits. City of Tempe is of course the municipality. Vice Chair Fackler asked who makes up the TCAH and is the City of Tempe a party in that group? Dr. Lechner stated no, TCAH is not a public agency; it is not part of the City. Vice Chair Fackler asked if the City of Tempe owned this property at one point. Dr. Lechner stated no. Vice Chair Fackler asked, so the City does not have any position in relation to this property? Dr. Lechner stated that is correct. The ownership of the property went from the owners of the Watson's Flowers business [HPO note: Actually, the owners who leased the building to the Watson's Flowers business] to the TCAH.] The business has been relocated. Vice Chair Fackler asked where the Affiliate got the money to buy the site from. Dr. Lechner stated he is not sure; he does not know the funding sources that TCAH uses. Dr. Lechner stated that he knows TCAA has state and some federal funding that it plans to use to purchase the property from TCAH. Vice Chair Fackler stated that, regarding the site, Mr. Graham stated that this building makes up less than 10% of the site, and given the setbacks of the building, once it is torn down, Vice Chair Fackler said TCAA will put a 25-foot strip of landscaping along Apache Boulevard and then the rest of the building site will no doubt be a parking lot. Basically, while they will put in affordable housing, stated Vice Chair Fackler, there will be other functions on the site, all of which could potentially be put into the Watson's Flowers Building. Dr. Lechner stated that he does not know what will be replace the historic building, though Vice Chair Fackler might be right, Dr. Lechner said. There are some proposed uses for the site, including some space for City of Tempe offices. Dr. Lechner stated that, personally, he is very disappointed in the decision. The City, from a historic preservation standpoint, does not have many options in this situation other than persuasion, which can only get one so far. Dr. Lechner stated that he met with TCAA representatives and Mr. Graham on site several months back. Mr. Graham was in the middle of evaluating the Watson's Flowers Building at that time. Mr. Graham wanted to provide TCAA a sense of his current thinking. Dr. Lechner got the sense that TCAA would be going into the project with an open mind and if they were able to work the building into their design, then they would try. But ultimately, they chose to go a different way. Vice Chair Fackler asked if the architect was RSP. Dr. Lechner stated yes and added that RSP is also the architectural firm that is designing the high-rise on the former Penny Saver building site, along the old Ash Avenue roadway. RSP is also handling the design for the redevelopment of the property that includes the First Congregational Church in downtown Tempe. Vice Chair Fackler stated that he knows RSP very well, and if a developer asked them to create a design that incorporates all of a site's public uses into the historic structure and places the housing farther back on the site, then they would do it. Obviously, TCAA is not having that conversation with RSP. Vice Chair Fackler asked if anyone from TCAA has stated that they would come and give a presentation to the HPC. There hasn't been any discussion why this building can't be saved while still building new housing on the site. Dr. Lechner stated he has not had a

conversation with TCAA about presenting to the HPC, but he will reach out if the Commission requests that TCAA come to an upcoming meeting. Vice Chair Fackler stated that he thinks that is a minimum first step. Vice Chair Fackler stated that when Dr. Lechner talks with TCAA to let them know that the HPC is aware of the federal requirements and that TCAA is looking at anywhere from 3-4 months up to 18 months of additional work before they can move forward. Unless we can get some reasonable satisfaction of why their housing project can't work around this historic structure and utilize the structure, Chair Fackler said, he is not of the mind to make this process any easier for them to tear down the Watson's Flowers Building. Dr. Lechner stated that the HPC does not have any role in the decision of whether to approve a demolition permit application in this case because the property is only Historic Eligible. Per City Code, the request would not go through the Commission. Dr. Lechner stated that he will reach out to TCAA and invite them to present to the HPC. Vice Chair Fackler stated that he was very encouraged by Mr. Graham's report. The condition of the building was reported better than what he thought it was. Vice Chair Fackler said he was shocked that this work was done for no reason at all other than to get someone off TCAA's back, and their decision was already made.

Commissioner Robinson stated that she agrees that it would be nice to hear from TCAA about their proposed plans. If not the entire building, then at least a significant portion of the building could speak to its historical significance in Tempe. The building could be incorporated into a very nice design for affordable housing. TCAA would have to ask their architect to do that. If they are looking for a modern structure, it would not have to be attached to the historic building. Dr. Lechner stated that he will ask TCAA to come before the HPC; he just cannot make any guarantee that they will agree to appear. They are under no obligation to speak to the HPC.

Commissioner Kurooka stated that she knows that the City Manager is a TCAA board member. Is she aware of the letter written by Chair Woodson and Vice Chair Fackler? Dr. Lechner stated yes, she is aware of it. The City Manager had made the decision and directed the Community Development Director to commission the Watson's Flowers building condition assessment. The point of the assessment was to determine if the building could be used in an adaptive reuse project. The City Manager was very interested in making sure the HPC's concerns were addressed in a concrete way. Commissioner Kurooka asked if the City Manager could share why the TCAA board voted the way it did. Dr. Lechner stated he does not know the answer to that, or even if a discussion happened at the board meeting. Commissioner Kurooka asked if the Planning Division can give TCAA something in exchange for keeping the building. Can such a thing be done? Dr. Lechner stated that unfortunately that is likely not allowable. The Planning Division will conduct site plan reviews for the project and make sure that it meets all zoning and building requirements. In those types of situations, the City relies on the Historic Preservation Ordinance to provide protection to buildings. We cannot go beyond that.

Commissioner Williams asked about the zoning in the area. Is it mixed use or strictly residential? Mr. Ryan Levesque, Deputy Director of Community Development—Planning, stated the property itself is zoned CSS, Commercial Shopping and Services District with a Transportation Overlay District. The property does have standards, setbacks, and some additional allowance for height. There is an ability to process a Use Permit for residential up to 25 dwelling units per acre. Mr. Levesque said he understands that it is TCAA's intent to file for the process to meet as many of the zoning standards that exist today for the property. To date, they have not expressed any interest in going beyond the typical development standards for the CSS Zoning District. They have been focused on designing a three-story building. Toward the front of the property, there will be a circular driveway that runs from east to west around property, with surface parking lots. TCAA has shared very limited plans; no elevations or floor plans have been shared at this time. Commissioner Williams asked if the property needs to go through a rezoning. Mr. Levesque stated that it does not have to unless TCAA cannot comply with the development standards for that CSS Zoning District. This would include things like setbacks, parking requirements, height, or lot coverage. Commissioner Williams stated that there has been some movement to preserve certain neon signs from historic buildings, and she referenced a photograph of the Watson's Flowers Building that shows a very unique neon sign that spells out "Watson's Flowers." She asked, will there be any potential of preserving that sign in some way as a reminder to the City and its residents of the iconic building? She said she's sure that the local historical society has done extensive research on the history of the Watson's Flowers Building to reveal the building's

significance to the community. Dr. Lechner asked Commissioner Williams if she is referring to the sign on the building or the freestanding neon sign that used to be on the site. Commissioner Williams stated she's referring to the sign that is on the wall. Dr. Lechner stated that he was unsure if that sign would be considered historic. There was a freestanding sign that dated to around the mid-20th century; that sign was very iconic and is considered historic. The free-standing sign was taken down at some point and is in the hands of the Mesa Historic Preservation Foundation. Watson's Flowers is in Tempe but at times had dual addresses in Tempe and Mesa. Dr. Lechner stated that he spoke with Mr. Vic Linoff, a member of both the Tempe Historic Preservation Foundation and the Mesa Historic Preservation Foundation about the sign possibly being returned to Tempe. Mr. Linoff said it would be possible but only if the building was going to be preserved. The sign is in poor condition. It would take about \$100,000 to restore it, which does not include the cost of shipping it back to Tempe for reinstallation. In terms of the sign on the building, there might be a way to preserve the sign; it would need to be looked into.

Chair Woodson stated that the HPC has been aware for some time that there is no regulatory or legal hook that the City has to protect this site. In no uncertain terms, it been expressed in many ways that this is a very significant and iconic building for the city. Chair Woodson said he really feels betrayed in some way by TCAA, which apparently already made this decision some time ago. The fact that they never came before the HPC shows that they don't really care. It would be nice if they would come and present something to the Commission. Regarding Council and City management, even though there is not any kind of regulatory hook, people in the City have influence over this project, Chair Woodson stated. This is a City-initiated project [HPO note: The Chair was referring to the Apache affordable housing project], and the City is partnering with TCAH and TCAA on this parcel. Even though this is not a City-owned parcel, the City has a lot of sway and influence when they have otherwise no legal or regulatory influence. It is great that the City Manager requested the building condition assessment study, but it doesn't seem like it has amounted to much. This is very disappointing for the Commission and for him personally, Chair Woodson said. He feels like the City and community is going to be losing something iconic and special. This would be different if this was a private development, but it is a City-initiated project [HPO note: Again referring to the City's Apache affordable housing initiative]. I feel like the HPC did their part but there is only so much it can do.

6) Update on the proposed amendments to City Code, Chapter 14A (Historic Preservation Ordinance). The presenter is Zachary J. Lechner.

Dr. Zachary Lechner gave an update on the proposed amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance in the City Code. The HPC passed a motion recommending approval of proposed changes several months ago. Community Development is working with the City Attorney's Office to vet the proposed amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Mr. Tamulevich, Mr. Levesque, and Dr. Lechner are planning to meet soon with the Deputy City Attorney to talk further about this and to make sure everyone is on the same page about the proposed revisions. If there are alterations to the proposed changes that must be made, it will be worthwhile to bring those changes back to the HPC for consideration of a request for a recommendation of approval.

Chair Woodson stated that he agrees that the item should come back to the Commission for that level of review.

7) Discussion of the National Park Service's designation of Tempe as an American World War II Heritage City. The presenter is Zachary J. Lechner.

Dr. Lechner gave an update on the National Park Service's designation of Tempe as an American World War II Heritage City. There are two sets of criteria that the program requires applicants to discuss in the application. The first one is the City's contribution to World War II. The second one is how the City has commemorated World War II history. Many examples were provided in the HPC's meeting packet. The City was informed at the end of last year that it was selected. This program only selects one city per state. There had not been a city selected in Arizona, so Tempe is now Arizona's one and only American WWII Heritage City.

Chair Woodson stated that he was aware of this designation and was very impressed and surprised by the nomination and the award. Chair Woodson asked if there would be a commemorative monument or plaque put somewhere in the City. Dr. Lechner stated that he had not heard talk of it. The City Manager did recognize the designation at a City Council meeting a few weeks back. Dr. Lechner stated that he will look into the possibility of putting up signage.

Commissioner Robinson offered congratulations to Dr. Lechner for getting the application in on time and successfully. She said it is all the more meaningful that Tempe is the only city in Arizona with this designation. It would be appropriate to have a road sign that commemorates this designation. It's a big deal.

Vice Chair Fackler also offered congratulations to Dr. Lechner and expressed gratitude for putting together such a great report. He said he learned a number of things that he did not know before, including the Roll of Honor monument. It was erected at the corner of Mill Avenue and 5th Street, according to the nomination. Chair Fackler said he does not remember seeing any indication of that monument in the photos from downtown. Do we have any idea exactly where it was? Dr. Lechner stated he is unsure. That is information he received from Mr. Jared Smith at the Tempe History Museum. Vice Chair Fackler said it looks like it may have been in one of the parks on Mill Avenue. He'd be very interested to know where it was placed and what happened to it. It could have been on the site where the post office is now. Dr. Lechner said he will follow up on where the monument might be or where it went.

Vice Chair Fackler asked Dr. Lechner if the Commission could get physical copies of the application. Dr. Lechner stated he will bring them to the next meeting.

8) Chair/Staff Updates and Announcements

Chair Woodson stated that he has no updates or announcements.

Dr. Lechner stated that the Commission will have three new members starting in April. Commissioner Montero and Larson have completed their two terms on the HPC, and Commissioner Engnell will be relocating out of the city and will no longer be able to serve on the HPC. The new members' nominations will be voted on by City Council at a March meeting.

Dr. Lechner stated that in November the HPC heard a presentation on the City's 8th Street Multi-Use Path and Streetscape project. Commissioners heard about an Ancestral O'Odham-focused design that the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has been working very closely on with the City and the City's consultant, Logan Simpson. Vice Chair Fackler had mentioned that the plants that are involved in this site's design will take some special care. He had asked if Logan Simpson could add a specific maintenance plan to its scope, and Dr. Lechner let him know that, unfortunately, the City does not have the budget to do that but that he would look into what could be done. Dr. Lechner said he's had a couple of meetings with City staff, and they are in the process of working on a specific maintenance plan. Everyone involved saw the need for the plan.

Dr. Lechner said there will be March HPC meeting.

Dr. Lechner reported that Mr. Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner in Community Development (not present), wanted to let the Commission know that the City is currently planning to develop guidelines for Character Area 6, which is located in southwest Tempe. There will be an update provided at the March meeting.

Dr. Lechner stated that there will be a March presentation from a member of the Arts and Culture Commission, Lisa Roach. She made a request to make a presentation on Tempe arts and culture as it pertains to historic preservation.

Dr. Lechner provided information on the historic preservation items that will likely be included in the November 5th bond authorization election. Staff is proposing to Council inclusion of a total of \$12.3 million for historic preservation in the bond election. More information will be forthcoming at the March HPC

meeting.

Chair Woodson stated that the General Plan is on the ballot currently.

Meeting Adjourned by Chair Woodson.

Hearing adjourned at 7:54PM

Prepared by: Jennifer Daniels, Administrative Assistant
Reviewed by: Zachary Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer

jd:zl