
MINUTES
LANDMARK COMMISSION
March 22, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Stacie Flood, Chairperson
Kevin Bazner
Barney Brock
Christy Graham
Jackie Lebow
Andy Lee
Cindy Ramirez
Michele Derr

■ Members
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■ P&Z Liaison
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Matthew S. Prouty, Planner II
Amy Krikorian, Municipal Court Prosecutor

■ City Staff
■ Legal Dept.

ABSENT:

Karen Montgomery-Gagné, Planning Administrator
Michael Smith
Cindy Cotton

■ Staff
■ Council Liaison
■

I. Call to Order, and Introductions

Chairperson Flood called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

II. Review & Approval of Minutes from February 23, 2016

Chairperson Flood called for review and approval of minutes from the February 23, 2016 Landmark Commission meeting. Mr. Kevin Bazner recommended the correction of his name. Mr. Bazner made a motion to approve the minutes. The commission voted on the motion; motion passed unanimously.

III. Discussion/Recommendation For: Morningside National Historic District, Status of Design Review.

Mr. Matthew Prouty apologized on behalf of the heads of the neighborhood group, they were unable to attend based on medical issues. The group would still like the issue to come up in future, hence the issue will go into closed status until the neighborhood group is to bring it back before the commission.

IV. Discussion Item for: WFISD Alamo/Holland Schools.

Mr. Matthew Prouty stated that the schools are not registered historical landmarks, and that staff received several emails and phone calls expressing concern over the proposed demolition of the two schools. It was decided to bring the subject before the Landmark Commission for discussion with the objective of finding possible alternatives that can be presented to the community and school district leadership. Mr. Prouty mentioned that Early Head Start was interested in the kindergarten section of Alamo School and that the

school district expressed some interest in talking to R.C. Graham Inc. about the potential reuse of the school building.

Mr. Andy Lee had at one point considered the land Holland school sits on for multi-family purposes, and stated concern that the school board chairman thought it best to demolish the properties. Mr. Lee pointed out the tax value of Holland School would be \$80,000 over ten years and that tearing it down would be unwise. He stated that the Holland School is a key asset to TIF #3 and that there was \$253,000 in the TIF fund district that had not been allocated to a specific project. If someone were to take on Holland School as a project, they could possibly apply for ten percent of the costs through TIF #3. He also stated that Holland School has a long history linking back to the city's forefathers, and that J.H. Barwise was the original name of the school. The school evolved into a library and a history was been done on it by Arthur Bea. Williams. Mr. Lee listed several alternative uses for the building such as affordable housing, or using the cafeteria for a culinary arts program. He pointed to the fact that the schools had been originally established in the area due to the density of the residential area, and that it would be best to build the area in a way that would provide value to the still densely populated area.

Mr. Lee went on to talk about Alamo School, stating it was on the tax rolls at 1.8 Million and that it had been renovated four times, the most recent being a library, which was a 4 million dollar addition to the building. He expressed concern that the school district would do a 4 million dollar renovation and then tear the building down. He stated Alamo was built in 1913, and sits on 4 ½ acres, and land alone had a tax value of \$70,000. After converting all of the tax entities into profit, the property could generate \$690,000 in tax revenue over 10 years. To convert for affordable housing would be a benefit to the neighborhood. Mr. Lee stated taking into consideration the demo costs, added to the building costs for a proposed parking lot, as well as continued maintenance, didn't make any sense.

Mr. Prouty stated that, to the best of his knowledge, Parks and Recreation had not been consulted. The proposed parking lot would become a liability to the City in terms of maintenance and policing of the additional area. He also stated the true costs of demolition were not included in the current budget and also the roof on Alamo was fairly new.

Mr. Kevin Bazner stated the demolition costs would not be the only ones incurred, that the building would also have to be fully abated. Mr. Bazner recommended it would be more sensible to put the property on the market as is.

Mr. Lee pointed to the case of Barwise, which sold for 5.2 million dollars. As a residential appraiser he believed that the property could have been sold for substantially more. He stated the school board, elected by the tax payers, was not using good asset management. Mr. Lee then referred to the Washington Village apartment project and the fact that the demolition and abatement of the cafeteria section of Booker T. Washington School, which approximately 10,000 to 15,000 sq. ft., cost approximately \$250,000. From a historical perspective Alamo, Holland and Sam Houston are all potential landmark buildings.

Mr. Lebow pointed out that Sam Houston had bigger problems, and noted a structural investigation/environmental study was completed and that the engineer had to wear a hazmat suit to go into the building's crawl space.

Mrs. Christy Graham stated that a lot of historical buildings have been lost in our city's downtown, most recently the Women's Y, which had been built by the WPA, was lost because it was not considered a historical landmark. It was torn down to make a parking lot. Ms. Graham suggested the possibility of writing a recommendation to WFISD.

Mr. Barney Brock asked if the City Council could write a resolution and send it to the school board. Mr. Prouty stated that he could see this being a possibility. He stated that there had been discussion at the City and that the recommendation to allow the property to be rezoned from single-family to general commercial to facilitate reuse of the property would be supported by planning staff.

Mr. Lee pointed out that none of the schools in Wichita Falls have Landmark status and yet numerous facilities are featured in the "Touring Wichita Falls History" brochure.

Mrs. Stacie Flood stated there had been some discussion with one of the previous WFISD superintendent about nominating some of the schools for landmark designation. The superintendent had supported the idea, but the proposed nominations never went to the school board because the Superintendent moved.

Mr. Lee stated that the school board elects not to participate in TIF, despite the very visible positive results experienced by the City and the County through their participation. He also stated that a beneficial use for the buildings, such as career centers, would be preferable to the demolition of structures with so much historical significance. Mr. Lee pointed out that Lawton has 24 elementary schools, and that Wichita Falls only has 11 or 12. He referred to national reports that have repeatedly shown Texas performing poorly in regards to education. He stated that property tax revenue is where the school district derives money, as well as the number of students that get counted for state funding, and that, were the school district to sell its assets, the real value would be derived from the future tax revenue generated.

Mr. Barney Brock stated what was done with Austin School had been successful, why not look at it the same. Mr. Prouty stated that one of the main concerns being expressed by the public calling in to staff was the preservation of the gyms. Mr. Lee expressed his opposition to the crude management of facilities and suggested sending a letter to express the commission's concerns.

Mr. Prouty asked if there was a line item in the current school bond that addressed the costs for demolition of any existing buildings. Mr. Brock stated that he assumed that the money for demolition would come out of the general revenue. Mr. Lebow stated that the net loss over the long term does not make sense. From the commission standpoint the goal is to preserve history and encourage reinvestment in a property that will increase tax value. There is no question to what the commission's position should be. He stated that the commission should encourage the selling of properties for redevelopment or repurposing the facility.

Mrs. Graham mentioned that she would refrain from making a motion because she had looked at possibly purchasing one of the buildings being discussed, but that from a preservation standpoint she would like to see Landmark Commission stand behind the writing of a letter of recommendation to the WFISD school board suggesting that they look at other alternatives before destroying another historical structure.

Mr. Jackie Lebow made the motion.

Mr. Lee added that part of asset management would be to consider the selling of the properties and asked if the school board had considered that option. Mr. Prouty stated the belief was that they had not and asked if there was a closing date for the request for proposal (RFP). Mr. Lebow stated that the RFP is closed, but there is no date for the project specific at this time.

Mr. Lee stated that the proposed letter should be sent to the Superintendent and all of the board members, in addition to the President of the school board. Mr. Bazner seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. Staff will draft letters for the commission to review.

V. Other Business

a) Monthly report: Depot Square Historic District, West Floral Heights Historic District, Morningside Historic District

Mrs. Michele Derr mentioned the Big C building appeared to have been purchased. Mrs. Christy Graham stated the couple who occupied the building were planning on reside in part of the building and utilizing the front portion for an event center. Mrs. Derr stated the Zales building is coming along and that The Yard would be opening this weekend with a charity event for The ARC. She also mentioned that there had been a chili cook-off at the Downtown Farmer's Market that was very well attended. Mrs. Graham stated the St. Patrick's Day festival had been very successful this year and reminded of the upcoming Cajun Festival on May 14th. Mrs. Derr stated the Farmer's Market would be opening on March 29, 2016. Mrs. Graham mentioned that The 7th Street Studio, The Lily Pad and H Creation, with possible involvement of The Art Association, would be initiating an Art Night to be held the 1st Monday or the 1st Friday of every month. There was Art Night on March 5th which was very successful. Mr. Prouty stated the owner of Napa Auto parts in Burkburnett was interested in purchasing a historic building in the area that was in some way associated with the automotive industry.

Mrs. Cindy Cotton was not present to talk about West Floral Heights. Mr. Prouty stated Mrs. Cotton reported there had been some consideration to take monies from West Floral Heights to replace the trees in the district that were lost during the drought. Staff is revising the landscape ordinance and an advanced copy be provided.

b) Administrative Review

Mr. Prouty reported on the four staff authorized minor alterations/repairs:
1608 Tilden (West Floral Heights) – Excavation permit/sewer repair.
1611 Tilden (West Floral Heights) – Replace asphalt roof with same (House), and metal roof with same (Covered Porch).
1301 Buchanan (West Floral Heights) – Upgrade electrical service.

1200 9th Street 1st Baptist Church – Registered Texas Historic Landmark, Replace low slope membrane roof with same.

VI. New Business:

- a) **Next Mtg.** – Tuesday, April 26, at 12pm
- b) **616 7th Street** – Mr. Lee brought to the Commission's attention that repair work had been approved by the Landmark Commission, but that the owner disappeared and the building has languished without repairs for approximately 3 months. Mr. Lee asked if they could be provided an update and if possibly another notification sent to the owner. Mr. Prouty noted a previous discussion during a weekly department coordination meeting discussed drafting a letter to the owner. The owner has resurfaced and efforts are being made to get the project back on track.

VII. Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 12:52 pm

C. Stacie Flood - Co-Chair

Stacie Flood, Chairperson

4/26/2016

Date

