

PLANNING SERVICES

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD

February 12, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Ritz, Danny Grundhoefer, Kurt Larson, Ryan Wiggins, Nina Campbell, Laurie Murphy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nathan Monk

STAFF PRESENT: Brandi Deese, Assistant Planning Services Administrator, Leslie Statler, Planner, Robyn Tice, Clerk's Office, Ross Pristera, Advisor

OTHERS PRESENT: Daniel Rivera, Teresa Hill, George Biggs, Laurie Byrne, Bobby Kickliter, Barbara Mayall, David Peaden, Derek Cosson, Fred Gunther, Drew Buchanan, Marcie Whitaker, Sandy Boyd, Councilwoman Ann Hill, Councilwoman Sherri Myers

AGENDA:

- Quorum/Call to Order
- Swearing in of New Member (Laurie Murphy)
- Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 8, 2019.
- **New Business:**
 1. **Consider Rezoning for 3100 Navy Boulevard from C-1, C-2 to C-3.**
 2. **Amendment to LDC Section 12-12-5 Building Permits - Historic Building Demolition Review**
- Open Forum
- Adjournment

Call to Order / Quorum Present

Chairman Ritz called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm with a quorum present and explained the Board procedures to the audience.

Swearing in of New Member (Laurie Murphy) The Clerk's Office swore in new board member Laurie Murphy.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Wiggins made a motion to approve the January 8, 2019 minutes, seconded by Mr. Larson, and it carried unanimously.

New Business

Consider Rezoning for 3100 Navy Boulevard from C-1, C-2 to C-3

Mr. George Biggs on behalf of Centennial Imports, LLC is requesting to rezone the property located at 3100 Navy Boulevard from Commercial (C-1 and C-2) to Commercial (C-3). The current future land use category of Commercial would accommodate this rezoning and so this request does not include a change to the future land use designation. The property is currently occupied by Centennial Imports, LLC, a used car dealership. The applicant indicates the reason for this request is to make the zoning consistent. This request has been routed through the various City departments and utility providers with no significant comments received.

Chairman Ritz stated this was of a serious nature due to C-3 being the most intense commercial district and requested that Mr. Biggs speak.

Mr. Biggs addressed the Board on behalf of John Mobley, the owner. Mr. Mobley had acquired the lots as they became available, and his intent was to refurbish the area, but the design was difficult to accomplish within the three zoning districts. Ms. Deese confirmed the largest parcel was C-3. Chairman Ritz reminded the Board and the audience that if approved as C-3, anything allowed in C-3 under this owner would be available to future owners as well. Mr. Biggs advised the current car dealership was within the C-2 and C-3 districts. He then provided an overlay to demonstrate what the owner planned to develop, and Ms. Deese confirmed the owner needed C-3 for a car dealership. Mr. Biggs pointed out there would still be the required buffers and landscaping.

renovated the Mercedes Benz recently which included Volvo, but Volvo now wanted their own space; this was the used car building on the other side of Davidson Street. Chairman Ritz explained this homogenizes the zoning, and this had been a car lot for some time and there were protections for the R-1A district north of it. He felt this would likely improve the entire area and was in favor of approving the request. Mr. Grundhoefer stated he was also in favor of the request since when the zoning maps were drawn, they could easily have been drawn as C-3.

Mr. Larson made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Campbell, and the motion carried unanimously.

Amendment to LDC Section 12-12-5 Building Permits - Historic Building Demolition Review

On October 11, 2018, City Council referred to this Board for review and recommendation an Amendment to the Land Development Code to include the addition of a Historic Preservation Commission. Planning Board discussed this agenda item during their November 13, 2018 meeting as well as the January 8, 2019 meeting. This Board directed staff to bring back a previous agenda item that was a recommendation to City Council on November 8, 2016 which addressed this concern from a different angle. The proposed ordinance from 2016 amends Land Development Code Section 12-12-5 Building Permits and sets out a process for review of demolition requests for historic buildings citywide. This would provide standards to be met before demolition permits are issued instead of the creation of a Historic Preservation Commission.

Chairman Ritz pointed out this version references buildings built before 1940 and refers to the Planning Board for some determinations on the historic aspects. Mr. Grundhoefer explained the Board had felt there was no need for an added commission for historic demolition delay. Mr. Larson added the discussion was about the City putting out additional funds for a historic commission and obtaining grant funds.

Chairman Ritz advised the Board would be making the City create additional boards and commissions, whereas this document sticks with what is in play now, and the Board did not believe this would not place an undue burden on this Board. He then asked for audience input.

Mr. Gunther was troubled by the idea of this being controlled by a City employee who was hired and controlled by the Mayor, and it would make more sense to hire someone like Mr. Pristera to determine if the property was historic. Also, it was unclear to him if you wanted to make an application to demolish something, you had to have permits or drawings for what was to replace the structure. He felt this was a little onerous since someone could conceivably be working on plans for replacement while the demolition is ongoing. Ms. Campbell explained she was on the Architectural Review Board (ARB), and when a request is received for a demolition, it is in their comfort zone to know what will replace the structure. In the event the person requesting the demolition has not done all the due diligence, it is in their comfort zone to see what is coming. Mr. Gunther stated that made sense to him in the historic district, but for large areas downtown, it would delay the process unnecessarily. Mr. Grundhoefer explained the intent was that if you want to demolish a building and build something, it helps move the process along since the Board would see the plans for replacement. Ms. Wiggins pointed out Mr. Gunther was not wrong about the mayor, and agreed we have a great mayor. However, she works with another community and had concerns about the current mayor's integrity; he used his staff to punish people who were not his supporters, and she thought that was a point well made with having this in the hands of a City staffer. Ms. Deese clarified this would come before the Planning Board and not as an administrative decision. Chairman Ritz explained the request would come before the Building Official as far as formality and then would be referred to the Board. Ms. Deese read from Page 3, Section (2) Buildings Subject for Review. Ms. Campbell referred to Section 3 Criteria for Determining Significance and the building not necessarily being historical, and this language would be something reviewed by the Board.

Teresa Hill thanked the Board for trying to obtain answers. The demolition of the Sunday House resulted in a demolition moratorium. She advised this process is for districts with no protection, and this ordinance was fully vetted through workshops with public input, however, it was pulled from Council just before the Hallmark demolition. She pointed out the actual existing process to get a demolition required \$100 for the application in which the applicant agrees there is no asbestos, etc., but there is no preemptive site visit; she referred to 1207 Cervantes Street where two houses were demolished. She stated there needs to be some kind of review or public notice for people who might have breathing difficulties. She explained the public was asking for help in protecting areas like Longhollow and Tanyard, giving breathing room for when the demolition permit is issued to when it actually happens.

Mr. Cosson stated he understood the desire for no additional boards. He explained Florida has the Certified Local Government program which is the gateway to national Park Service Grant opportunities for historic properties. Two requirements for becoming a Certified Local Government specifies a Historic Preservation Ordinance which conforms to State guidelines, and a Historic Preservation Board; it is not enough for the duties to be placed on another board, but it requires an additional board to obtain grant monies. He encouraged the Board to consider this path to open up opportunities for Pensacola. Ms. Wiggins indicated the Board spent the majority of the time in the last meeting discussing the positives and negatives of that path.

Mr. Pristera stated he examined the document and the 1940 date.

He pointed out as time marches on, eventually that date would have to be revised and suggested staying with the National Standard of 50 years; if that was not comfortable, try 60 or 75 years, but remove any mention of a hard date. He pointed out the UWF Historic Trust was mentioned in the document as a reviewing party, and that would be a part of their services offered; they could provide research and an unbiased review for determination by the Board. He explained having them as part of the review was critical. He pointed out historical significance was also a National Standard where we use the building to tell a story. He felt it was easier to stay within the National Standard which had already been developed and was the model for many other locations. He also stated if a building was delayed in demolition, it would give his team enough time to document if it was deemed significant and placed it in their records; if it was approved for demolition, they would have some evidence of what it looked like. Mr. Pristera indicated he was not able to get inside of the Hallmark School and was not able to work with anyone to salvage pieces or come up with plans on what could be done afterwards, and this document would give time to consider other solutions.

Mr. Peaden suggested going out and finding what was on the ground before passing a new ordinance or form another layer of regulation. Concerning other alternatives for the applicant to consider, how much can a city or board tell a citizen what they can or cannot do with the property they are trying to get the best use and value out of.

Councilwoman Hill stated she supported the ordinance in 2016 with the delay on demolition, the six-month moratorium, and had worked with Mr. Pristera at other locations and appreciated his thorough job. Taking a demolition one at a time was less time consuming than a full review of the city, and she wanted the Board to support the ordinance.

Chairman Ritz considered Mr. Peaden's suggestion to consider what is here and meshing that with 50 years old designation. Many subdivisions north of I-10 are more than 50 years old which would create huge swaths of the city to be considered historically significant. He considered how much level of effort he would want to go through in order to tear down his own home for something new. Ms. Wiggins pointed out just because a structure is old does not mean it is historic. She also explained we need to be careful with categorizing. Because of its time period (ranch houses), it would be classified historic. She also asked who would maintain the structure if it was determined historic. She agreed with Mr. Pristera that at least the structure should be documented before demolition. She asked if a property owner had a specific plan for a property and was not interested in any alternatives, should they have to wait 120 days. Mr. Grundhoefer explained that delay allowed the Board some time to vet the request. Mr. Larson asked if we allowed everything to be demolished just because someone bought the property, considering shotgun houses, we could lose the history; where would we put the brakes on to say we value the history or we tear down and build new structures. Ms. Wiggins explained there was a cost to maintain the property, and if the City did not maintain it, would it be put on the property owner; we may not want to keep that property since it might become dilapidated. Mr. Grundhoefer pointed out the Board did not have the authority to demand the structure not be demolished, so within a four to five-month period, a house in bad condition would not be in worse condition; he stressed we are trying to preserve our history. Mr. Larson explained we are taking a second look at the requests.

Councilwoman Myers advised she supported this effort even if the Board could not force someone to do something; pushing the pause button was very important since our heritage is quickly being destroyed.

She was most concerned with the Board of Education building on Garden Street which has historical significance relating to WWII and the WPA where women were trained to support the war effort. She stressed before the building is demolished, the public should be able to speak on its preservation. She indicated that building is the rightful heritage of women, and inanimate objects without power to speak for themselves need humans to speak for them before they are destroyed. She also advised the City of Milton has a Historic Preservation Board along with many other cities in Florida.

Chairman Ritz explained whether it was the cultural significance or historical significance of houses or other buildings we may have lost, trying to balance that with someone's economic forward movement for the city was what he wrestled with personally. He explained his father owned the former Sacred Heart Hospital on 12th Avenue, purchasing that building so it would not be torn down; there are few people who would want to make that their life's labor. However, his business makes money in designing new buildings but also in restoring old ones. Mr. Grundhoefer stated there should be a Preservation Board. If this document passes and we see what level of involvement the Board will have and how many projects are referred to the Board, should it become overwhelming, then the City may possibly determine a Historic Board should be developed. He was not prepared to accept the language in the previous document, but this was a good first step, and maybe three to ten years from now, another board could be developed. Chairman Ritz pointed out the powers of this Board did not want to extend beyond what was appropriate by creating another board or saying for the City to create another board; he felt it should originate from the City. Mr. Larson asked if the Board recommended this document to Council, could it ask the question was it the intent of Council to have a Certified Local Government; that would change the whole complexion of the discussion. They had asked the Board to pass a Historic Preservation Commission to maintain our history, but after discussion, the Board did not feel that was in the best interest financially for the City at this time. If their goal is to become a Certified Local Government, then that should return to the Board at that time when that is their focus.

Chairman Ritz pointed out the Board could amend the document for the 1940 hard date. If the date was 1950, there would be a lot of structures such as the Cordova Park, Camelot and entire subdivisions being considered. Ms. Campbell explained if the Board saw the workload becoming overwhelming, then a separate board would be encouraged. Ms. Murphy pointed out some gray areas in determining significance and thought it was a lot of responsibility for the Board. She asked if there was a consultant available for determination for historical or historical significance. Chairman Ritz explained the Board could request outside input, but the document did not guarantee outside input. Mr. Grundhoefer stated the Board had asked Mr. Weeks, the Building Official, how many demolitions were requested; he advised there were only two or three per month at that time. Ms. Deese pointed out demolition permits were issued by Building Inspections, but she remembered the number in 2016 being fewer than they anticipated. Ms. Campbell was interested in the last three years, and Mr. Grundhoefer understood that most of the permits were for unsafe buildings. Ms. Wiggins was more comfortable with razing than demolition as outlined in the document since a remodel fell within a demolition. If she wanted to remodel her home in Cordova Park, it would be considered a demolition because she wanted to remodel a room with an exterior wall facing a public street, and she would come before this Board with a wait of 120 days. Mr. Grundhoefer pointed out the Board was not tasked to review additions like the ARB, however, the exterior wall would come before this Board.

Ms. Deese advised in 2019 there were 98 demolitions, in 2017 99 demolitions, in 2018 90 demolitions, and in 2019 10 so far; this totaled 297 in the last three years for commercial and residential.

Chairman Ritz indicated the direction of the Board could be to fine tune the document, and it would still go through a process for approval with Council. He pointed out except for designated districts, there was nothing citywide for protections.

Ms. Campbell made a motion to change the language from built prior to 1940 to over 60 years old (page 3) and recommending approval of the ordinance as submitted. It was seconded by Mr. Larson. Chairman Ritz was still concerned with the 25% removal of roofs or exterior walls (page 2). **The motion then carried 5 to 1 with Ms. Wiggins dissenting.** Since Council was meeting twice a month, Ms. Deese advised the ordinance would most likely be considered at a March Council meeting. Mr. Grundhoefer wanted assurance this item would not be dropped, and Councilwoman Hill said she would make sure it was not.

Open Forum – Mr. Larson stated since Councilwoman Cannada-Wynn asked the Board to look at a Historic Preservation Commission, could the Board ask if that was their goal to be a Certified Local Government, and if so, that would change the complexion of why the Board said no to begin with. He asked if the Board could ask Council if their goal was to be a Certified Local Government. Ms. Campbell advised this had been tossed around for so long even with Mr. Spencer, and he never pursued it. Chairman Ritz agreed the Board could ask that question to Council and await an answer. Ms. Deese referred to the Board's previous meeting where the Council Executive did touch base with Councilwoman Cannada-Wynn and reported back that the basic concept was she wanted some protection for those areas outside the special review districts, and it may or may not be in the form of a Historic Preservation Commission. Chairman Ritz confirmed the conversation was centered around a protection issue. He advised that as the Council read the minutes, they could determine if it was important at that time or as it develops. Ms. Deese stated the Council meetings were on March 14 and 28, and the ordinance would probably be placed on one of those agendas.

Adjournment – With no further business, Chairman Ritz adjourned the meeting at 3:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Brandi C. Deese
Secretary to the Board