

# CITY OF BENSON

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2014 – 10:00 A.M.

#### MINUTES

Chair Ruth Wilson opened the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Members present: Ruth Wilson, Joanne Sturgeon, Phyllis Little, Alwine Frega, Irma Bernal and Gus Figueroa

#### **CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

Councilman Jeff Cook introduced himself and acknowledged that the big question is whether or not City Council would provide funds to move the Hi Wo House. Mr. Cook pointed out that the city also owns 101 S. Patagonia so that would be another potential location of move the house and that possible trades could be made to help cover the cost of moving. He stated that because this issue is time sensitive, it is possible for the Mayor to call an emergency meeting with 24 hour notice (the earliest being Monday, February 17.) Mr. Cook further stated that he understands that the church's cost and schedule is important, but should not be the deciding factor.

Commissioner Alwine Frega asked Mr. Cook if the issue of the Hi Wo House demolition had been discussed between Councilmembers. Mr. Cook replied that the issue had not been discussed by Council and he himself had only spoken to Councilman Peter Wangsness about the issue, but he thinks Mr. Wangsness would be amenable to providing, or at least looking into, funds to save the house.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

Commissioner Phyllis Little moved to approve the minutes of January 30, 2014. Commissioner Joanne Sturgeon seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Chair Ruth Wilson explained that a local engineer had visited the structure and deemed it solid enough to move. She stated that his recommendations included removing the asbestos siding and reframing and covering the rear wall when the addition is removed.

Planning Technician Michelle Johnson explained what she had found about moving a structure. She stated that there does not seem to be disapproval of the idea of moving the structure and placing it on city property. Having spoken to a structural mover, there would need to be a foundation built for the structure to be placed on and the type of foundation construction would depend on whether the site would be the new permanent location of the house or a temporary site. Michelle Johnson told the Commission that a true estimate couldn't be given because the mover hadn't been to the site, but a short move around 1 corner that doesn't cross a State Highway starts around \$10,000. This estimate does not include bracing the rear wall or building the foundation. She noted that this estimate came from the one structural mover who she was able to contact, based in Prescott, so a structural mover located closer may be less expensive due to travel costs.

Commissioner Alwine Frega asked Father Michael Bucciarelli about the schedule to demolish the LDS church in St. David to determine if there would be more time for the city to investigate options. Father Mike Bucciarelli and Michelle Johnson confirmed that demolition on the LDS church begins Monday, February 17.

Commissioner Irma Bernal asked about the cost difference to demolish the house now in conjunction with the LDS church as opposed to demolishing the house in the future. Father Mike Bucciarelli responded that the price doubles, from \$4500 to \$8000 or more.

Planning Technician Michelle Johnson suggested an idea that had been discussed in her office. Namely that the back addition be demolished and the asbestos siding be demolished next week with the LDS church, leaving the original house to be water-and-weather-proofed until funds could be raised to move it. The church would have additional area to park around the original house, though it wouldn't be a parking lot since it wouldn't yet be paved or striped.

Father Michael Bucciarelli disagreed with that suggestion, saying he didn't want the liability of ½ house on church property and that he didn't think insurance would cover the property if left in that state. He would be willing to consider the suggestion if the city would cover insurance costs.

Commissioner Alwine Frega mentioned that Cheryl from the Benson Museum was aware of a family across from the church willing to donate a narrow strip of land to the church. She stated that she initially thought this land could be used as a parking lot, but upon looking at the parcel, she realizes it is too narrow for a parking lot.

Chair Ruth Wilson simply stated the Commission doesn't have sufficient funds to cover the cost of moving and/or repairing the house. Commissioner Joanne Sturgeon expressed her wish that there was funding to save the house, but logically she feels it does not make financial sense to continue the fight for the house. She acknowledged it would likely be years to raise funds, during which period the house will deteriorate further. Based on the current physical condition of the interior of the house, she also expressed her opinion that little remains of the historic appearance, except of the high ceilings. Joanne Sturgeon also noted that the church deserves an answer in a timely fashion because it is their private property that they want to use.

Chair Ruth Wilson noted that there are few grants available for construction or rehabilitation of historic properties.

Commissioner Phyllis Little stated her agreement with Commissioner Joanne Sturgeon, noting that she is disappointed with the loss of a historical building but the high costs and potentially long timeframe are discouraging just to save a building.

Commissioner Irma Bernal asked how the house was listed on the National Register to which Chair Ruth Wilson responded that it is a contributing structure to the Barrio District.

Commissioner Joanne Sturgeon moved to allow the demolition of the house at 393 E. Fifth. Commissioner Phyllis Little seconded. Motion passed 4-2 with Commissioners Gus Figueroa and Alwine Frega voting nay.

Chair Ruth Wilson stated that it often comes down to money and no one wins but to be prepared for potential backlash against the Commission, the City and the Church.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30am.