

Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission

The regular meeting of the Historic Landmarks & Records Commission was held at the Sunnyside Library on March 19, 2009.

Members present: Randy McFarland, Don Shantz, John Baltierra, Roger Taylor, Aileen Bos, Susan Pappas, Elizabeth Laval, Nancy Enloe, Ethan Kytile, Bud Olson, David Berkey, Penny Raven

Members absent: Steve Barile, James Kus

Others present: Bill Secrest Jr, Louise Yenovkian, Bill Darnell, Jules Tuggle, Ed Lane, Karen Bosch Cobb, Elida Mendoza

AGENDA ITEMS

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Randy McFarland.
2. Welcome: Chairman McFarland welcomed all guests.
3. Adoption of Agenda: The agenda was adopted as distributed.
4. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of January 15, 2009 were approved with the following corrections/clarifications. 1) Commissioner Roger Taylor was absent. 2) Mrs. Bosch Cobb clarified the report under "Centennial Communities." Friant and Miramonte were part of the first 56 communities designated. There will be no more communities added this year.
5. Comments from the Public: Ms. Louise Yenovkian from the Fig Garden Homeowners Association spoke about the Association's interest in obtaining historic designation status for the Fig Garden area. Their interest in obtaining a historic designation has become more important now that mass transit plans for the region are being discussed; the Board of Directors met with representatives from the City and County to explore how the Fig Garden area will fit into those plans. Ms. Yenovkian said the Board has considered designating the entire neighborhood a historic district, and/or including the trees. Chairman McFarland discussed the application process, and he said that all property owners must be notified if a historic district application is to be considered. Commissioner Laval offered to provide photographic documentation for the application from her archives.
6. California Room Acquisitions: Mr. Bill Secrest Jr. circulated a new book about the Kings Canyon National Park. He will bring information to the next meeting about another major acquisition for the California Room.
7. Records – None.
8. Landmarks
 - a) Inventory of Historic Sites in Fresno County
 - 1) Pending Applications – L.C. Wesley Super Garage (Arco)
This application was approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 3, 2009.

2) Applications Under Review

- a) Hall of Records – The application for National Register status was mailed to the State of California Historic Preservation Officer on March 18. The next step will be a review of the application by the State of California Historical Resources Commission.
- b) Sierra Sky Park – Prior to taking action on this application, Mrs. Bosch Cobb asked Commissioners to review the Historic Districts policy. There were no questions about the policy, and discussion moved to the next steps in the application process.

Mr. Darnell summarized the information in the application; he said there is adequate support from the residents to move forward with it. The Sky Park has existed for at least 62 years, and he described it as the first residential airport in the United States and the world.

Chairman McFarland thanked Mr. Darnell for organizing a trolley tour of the Sky Park on February 16. The group was especially appreciative of the trolley because it was cold and raining that day. Mrs. Doris Smilie, widow of founder William Smilie, accompanied the group on the tour and answered questions.

A letter of invitation will be sent to all property owners to invite them to the May meeting of the Commission. In the letter Mrs. Bosch Cobb will let them know that the County does not have an historic ordinance. She will also say that the Sky Park historic district nomination is based on the concept of the Sky Park, not on the architecture. Mrs. Bosch Cobb will work with Mr. Bernard Jimenez of Fresno County Public Works to develop the letter. Mr. Darnell said he does not think CEQA issues would apply to this application.

There was no further discussion, and it was moved by Commissioner Olson, seconded by Commissioner Baltierra and carried to schedule a public hearing for this application on Thursday, May 21, 4 p.m., at the Fig Garden Library.

- c) Fig Garden Swim & Racquet Club – Commissioner Laval introduced Mr. Ed Lane from the Fig Garden Swim & Racquet Club, and she said there was no question that everything in the application has been documented.

Mr. Lane invited everyone to tour the Club, and the Commission discussed the possibility of meeting there. There were no further questions, and it was moved by Commissioner Laval, seconded by Commissioner Pappas, and carried to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to place the Fig Garden Swim & Racquet Club on the County's List of Historic Places.

3) Suggestions for other applications

- a) Inventory – During discussion of possible candidates for historic designation, Commissioner Baltierra mentioned the oil pumping plants in Firebaugh that were built in 1908. Commissioner Enloe is looking at the Masonic building in Selma and the National Hardware store in Pinedale.
- b) Centennial Farms – Commissioner Taylor reported that per Mrs. Sheldon's request, he completed an application for National Register status for the Gefvert Farm and sent it to the State of California Historic Preservation Office. He does not expect to hear from them until January 2010.
- c) Centennial Businesses
 - 1) Commercial Transfer, Inc. - Commissioner Pappas volunteered to work on gathering more information on the Commercial Transfer application. She commented about her meeting with Mr. Tim Fortier, the current CEO. The company is owned by Mr. Fortier and his family. Through her research she has been able to substantiate that the business has been in operation since 1891.
 - 2) Lyons Magnus - A letter to Lyons Magnus to invite them to apply for historic designation. No response has been received yet.
- d) Centennial Communities: No discussion.
- e) Courthouse Park grounds markers/memorials and sculptures – None.
- f) Discussion of threatened buildings in the City of Fresno – Commissioners commented about some of the houses on L Street that are being restored for various uses.
- g) Discussion of threatened buildings in the County of Fresno – No discussion.

10. Reports and Administrative Action Items

a) Chairman's Report

- 1) Report on Trip to Pinedale Assembly Center & Sierra Sky Park: The Sierra Sky Park trip was discussed above. Chairman McFarland said "The ceremony was wonderful! The weather was awful!" It was rainy and cold that day. Commissioner Laval mentioned that Mr. Phil Sanchez's family still lives in the Pinedale house where he was born in the 1920's. He is the only former ambassador from Fresno, and Commissioner Laval said that is one reason the house may be a good candidate for historic designation.
- 2) Planning for Three Rocks Trip – Commissioner Kus expects the date to be set at the next meeting of the Archeological Society. Mrs. Bosch Cobb will forward that information once she receives it. The tour will probably require a 4-wheel drive vehicle. Chairman McFarland described some of the unique sites to see on this tour.
- 3) Other: A possible summer trip to the Shaver and Dinkey areas was discussed again. Commissioner Enloe volunteered to work on gathering information for a historic district application to include the logging camps around this area.
- 4) Election of Officers: The annual election of officers will be held in May.

b) Vice-Chairman's Report – Commissioner Taylor will have an update on Del Rey at the next meeting. He also commented about an article in the Fresno Bee about a building restoration project underway in Laton.

c) Secretary's Report

- 1) Attendance Report: A written report was distributed. There was no discussion.
- 2) Status of Vacancies: Commissioners Enloe, Bos, Raven, and Taylor have been reappointed. Applications from Ms. Pat Hunter and Ms. Janice Stevens were forwarded to the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors for consideration by the Board. Mrs. Bosch Cobb and Chairman McFarland reviewed an application submitted by Mr. Lou Catallo who was recommended by Mrs. Peg Bos. His application will also be forwarded to the Board.
- 3) Other: Mrs. Bosch Cobb reported on the work Fresno County is doing to create a historic element in the General Plan. Recent layoffs in the Public Works department have delayed work on this project, but it is not completely on hold.

Mrs. Bosch Cobb shared a couple of books with the Commission. One of the titles was Tending the Wild, and the other was a John Muir book on botanicals.

d) Commissioner's Reports

Commissioners reported on various events and projects of interest to the Commission.

11. Announcements – The next meeting will be on May 21 at the Fig Garden Library.
12. Adjournment - There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.