

City of Alamo Heights
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES
April 18, 2023

The Architectural Review Board held a regular meeting at the Council Chambers of the City of Alamo Heights, located at 6116 Broadway St, San Antonio, Texas, and via Zoom with teleconference on Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

Members present and composing a quorum of the Board:

John Gaines, Chairman
Karl Baker
Larry Gottsman
Grant McFarland
Lyndsay Thorn

Members absent:

Phil Solomon
Adam Kiehne, Alternate

Staff members present:

Phil Laney, Assistant City Manager
Lety Hernandez, Director of Community Development Services
Eron Spencer, Planner
Richard Lindner, City Attorney

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gaines at 5:35 p.m.

Chairman Gaines announced that the October 18, 2022 meeting minutes were not available for review and the item had been rescheduled for the next regular meeting of May 16, 2023. No action was taken.

Mr. Thorn moved to approve the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Gottsman seconded the motion.

The motion was approved with the following vote:

FOR: Gaines, Baker, Gottsman, McFarland, Thorn
AGAINST: None

Case No. 893 F – Request of Brian Voges of Voges Design LLC, applicant, representing LADSA, LLC, owner, for the significance review of the existing main structure located at 280 Retama Place in order to demolish 100% of the existing single-family residence and accessory structure(s) under Demolition Review Ordinance No. 1860 (April 12, 2010).

Ms. Hernandez presented the case. Brian Voges was present and addressed the board. He informed that the residence has been vacant for years and went on to say that the structure was not livable.

The board questioned regarding the removal of trees and the applicant responded speaking of the current species and stated that they were attempting to keep as many trees as possible.

Chairman Gaines opened the public hearing at 5:45pm.

Those requesting to speak regarding the case were as follows:

Linda Mitchell, 250 Halcyon (Neutral)

Deborah Brodigan of 276 Retama (Opposed)

Concerns of those speaking regarding the case were the overall number and types of demolitions, preservation of current structures, impact to environment and flood plain, lack of plans for replacement structure, surrounding projects, renovations versus demolition, and impact to heritage trees.

Chairman Gaines closed the public hearing at 5:50pm.

An open discussion followed regarding requests for demolition without review of a replacement structure and the current ordinance.

Mr. Lindner, City Attorney, spoke regarding the current ordinance and ability of owners to submit a request for demolition without a replacement structure. He went on to speak regarding legislative updates in 2019 limiting the City's ability to regulate and designate historic properties. He went on to clarify regarding the significance criteria and recommendations.

Sara Reveley, resident, requested to address the board and spoke regarding the current ordinance and significance criteria.

Mr. Lindner clarified regarding Section 5-136 of the City's Building Code. He went on to clarify regarding other sections of the Demolition Review Ordinance.

Chairman Gaines spoke regarding the prevue of the board. A discussion followed regarding previously approved projects. It was stated that a structure that is old did not mean it should be kept.

At that time, Mr. McFarland moved to declare the existing main structure as not significant and recommended approval of the proposed demolition as requested. Mr. Thorn seconded the motion.

The motion was approved with the following vote:

FOR: Gaines, Baker, Gottsman, McFarland, Thorn

AGAINST: None

Case No. 894 F – Request of La Pila Ventures, owner, for the significance review of the existing main structure located at 859 Estes Ave in order to demolish 100% of the existing single-family residence under Demolition Review Ordinance No. 1860 (April 12, 2010).

Ms. Hernandez presented the case. Myles Caudill, applicant, was present and addressed the board.

The board questioned if the applicant had considered renovating the structure and the applicant informed that renovation was considered but not viable. Mr. Caudill added that they had also considered relocating the main structure.

The board expressed concerns regarding the demolition affecting the character of the street. The applicant spoke regarding previous renovations and additions to the residence and compared to the project at 209 Albany St. It was stated that the residence was occupied until it was sold.

Chairman Gaines opened the public hearing at 6:25pm.

Those requesting to speak regarding the case were as follows:

Sara Reveley, 436 Corona Ave (Opposed)

Deborah Brodigan, 276 Retama Pl (Did Not State)

John Bloodsworth, 863 Estes Ave (Opposed)

Jeff Selig, 777 Estes Ave (Did Not State)

David Brigham, 775 Estes Ave (Did Not State)

Pete Tassos, 872 Estes Ave (Did Not State)

The board recessed at 6:42pm and reconvened at 6:54pm. The public hearing continued.

Emily Smolik, 862 Estes (Did Not State)

Vincent Sullivan, owner (Support)

Concerns of those speaking regarding the case included significance of the main structure, design, existing heritage trees, renovations to the building, the existing floorplan, exterior of the building, overall state of the residence.

The owner spoke to the concerns of the neighbors and stated that he is a 3rd generation resident and planned to build something that belongs.

John Bloodsworth requested to address the board and stated that the project on Normandy Ave was not reflective of the character of the neighborhood. Chairman Gaines closed the public hearing at 7:00pm.

Chairman Gaines addressed the board. An open discussion followed regarding whether or not the structure met the significance criteria and how the criteria is broad enough it can be subjective. Chairman Gaines asked for clarification regarding the term "Centennial Homes" and Mr. Lindner responded that the term was not listed or defined in the current code; however, significance did have an age component. He added that agency and society had not been defined, either.

Chairman Gaines read a letter at the request of Richard Garison, Architect, and resident, for the record.

Mike McGlone, resident of 732 Patterson Ave, requested to address the board and expressed his opposition.

Board member Baker expressed concerns regarding making a recommendation prior to seeing a replacement and added that he felt the last two (2) criteria applied. He went on to say that there was potential for rehab and did not see the harm in asking the applicant to return with a design of a replacement structure. Board member Thorn agreed adding that there was not enough information to justify the demolition. Board member Gottsman stated that he was hoping to see a replacement design to feel more comfortable. He informed that he would be abstaining at the request of the City Attorney and Mr. Lindner confirmed.

Board member McFarland reminded that the board was there for the significance review and not compatibility. Board member Baker stated that he interpreted the code to require compatibility. An open discussion followed regarding significance and possible recommendation to delay. Mr. Lindner read from the current code to clarify regarding the actions to be taken by the board regarding its review.

At that time, Mr. Baker moved to recommend a delay pending review of additional information with regards to the design of a replacement structure. Mr. Thorn seconded the motion.

The motion failed with the following vote:


FOR: Baker, Thorn
AGAINST: Gaines, McFarland
ABSTAIN: Gottsman

An open discussion followed regarding the board's recommendation to City Council and the lack of Compatibility Review. Chairman Gaines stated that he would entertain a motion, within the confines of the board's limitations, pertaining to significance review.

Mr. Baker moved to table the case for the next regularly scheduled meeting of May 16, 2023. Mr. Thorn requested an amendment asking the applicant to provide additional information. Chairman Gaines addressed the board and spoke regarding the failed motion. After discussion, Mr. Baker withdrew the motion to table. Chairman Gaines stated that he was disappointed that the board could not find consensus.

There being no further business, Mr. Gottsman moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Baker seconded the motion followed by unanimous consent of the board. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45p.m.

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING ARE ALSO DIGITALLY RECORDED, AND THESE MINUTES ARE ONLY A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING. THESE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND DO NOT PURPORT TO INCLUDE ALL IMPORTANT EVIDENCE PRESENTED OR STATEMENTS MADE.



John Gaines, Chairman
(Board Approval)

05/16/2023
Date Signed & Filed



Lety Hernandez, Director
Community Development Services