

Meeting Minutes

Historic Preservation Commission

Regular Meeting

January 24, 2024 | 5:00 p.m.
Chandler City Council Chambers
88 E. Chicago St., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Velasquez at 5:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Commission Attendance

Chair Jeff Velasquez
Vice Chair Kevin Weight
Commissioner Cheryl Bell
Commissioner Erika Finbraaten
Commissioner Bryan Saba
Commissioner Devan Wastchak
Commissioner Mark Yost

Staff Attendance

David de la Torre, Planning Manager
Alisa Petterson, Senior Planner
Harley Mehlhorn, City Planner
Mika Liburd, Associate Planner
Thomas Allen, Assistant City Attorney
Julie San Miguel, Clerk

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Wastchak.

Scheduled and Unscheduled Public Appearances

Members of the audience may address any item not on the agenda. State Statute prohibits the Board or Commission from discussing an item that is not on the agenda, but the Board or Commission does listen to your concerns and has staff follow up on questions you raise.

Action Agenda Item No. 1 and Discussion

1. Election of Officers

Move Historic Preservation Commission elect a Chair and Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission.

CHAIR VELASQUEZ nominated Kevin Weight to serve as Chair.

COMMISSIONER SABA nominated Cheryl Bell to serve as Vice Chair.

Action Agenda Item No. 1 Motion and Vote

CHAIR VELASQUEZ moved for Kevin Weight to serve as Chair; Seconded by COMMISSIONER SABA.

COMMISSIONER SABA moved for Cheryl Bell to serve as Vice Chair; Seconded by CHAIR VELASQUEZ.

Motion carried unanimously (6-0); Commissioner Finbraaten was not present for the vote.

Action Agenda Item No. 2 and Discussion

2. Meeting Minutes of May 24, 2023, Historic Preservation Commission

Move Historic Preservation Commission approve Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of May 24, 2023.

COMMISSIONER SABA mentioned a possible correction, then withdrew the comment.

CHAIR WEIGHT confirmed there were no further comments or questions from the Commission Members.

Action Agenda Item No. 2 Motion and Vote

COMMISSIONER WASTCHAK moved to approve Item No 2 the Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of May 24, 2023; Seconded by COMMISSIONER YOST.

Motion carried unanimously (6-0); Commissioner Finbraaten was not present for the vote.

Action Agenda Item No. 3 and Discussion

3. PLH23-0066 SILK STOCKING HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER presented details regarding the request to establish a Historic Preservation District to recognize, honor, and preserve the historic architectural character of the Silk Stocking Neighborhood which is located generally on the northeast corner of Arizona Avenue and Chandler Boulevard.

Move Historic Preservation Commission recommend City Council approve PLH23-0066 Silk Stocking Historic Preservation District.

COMMISSIONER WASTCHAK recused himself from the item due to owning land within the proposed neighborhood and filed a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Memorandum.

COMMISSIONER BELL recused herself from the item due to being a property owner within the proposed neighborhood and filed a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Memorandum.

CHAIR WEIGHT confirmed there were no further comments or questions from the Commission Members for staff.

MELISA LALICH, 265 NORTH COLORADO STREET mentioned they have been working this project for quite some time and are thankful for the opportunity to present it for consideration. She stated that they are looking forward to what is next and what this becomes. She expressed eagerness to help other neighborhoods get started and stated they are looking forward to being a resource. She thanked the commission for the opportunity and let them know if there is anything they could do to be more cooperative or to answer questions, to please let her know.

COMMISSIONER SABA asked if there were any plans to engage properties that did not return a waiver.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER stated it was always a goal to attract more homes through community outreach during the public hearing process, given the tight margins they were operating under. He stated the process of gaining signatures was challenging but he hopes the public hearings would help the neighborhood gain more momentum.

COMMISSIONER SABA noted the amount of work already completed and mentioned he was curious if their efforts would continue.

MELISA LALICH, 265 N. COLORADO STREET explained that initially, a small group from Colorado Street and Washington Street had informally divided the task of collecting signatures. She stated that she believed that more signatures could be obtained from Washington Street once people saw the public hearing and progress made by the group. She mentioned Washington Street had more historic homes and would be encouraged to join once this passed and was more publicized.

CHAIR WEIGHT sought clarification on the level of support on the 300 block of Washington Street.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER explained that much of the outreach had been conducted before he joined the project and that while there was no strong opposition, there was also a lack of interest in signing waivers. He stated the program is in its infancy and through the project staff has gained a better understanding to how to approach this endeavor in the future. He explained that refined community outreach strategies to engage more residents in the future would be the best approach.

MELISA LALICH, 265 N. COLORADO STREET emphasized the potential interest in the neighborhood, the effort needed to pursue it, and maintain interest to prevent it from dwindling. She mentioned needing a break from the continuous efforts but is optimistic that publicity will attract more interested neighbors.

CHAIR WEIGHT confirmed there were no further members of the audience who wanted to speak on this item and closed the floor to the public. He asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commission Members.

COMMISSIONER FINBRAATEN asked about updating the National Register nomination to extend the period of significance beyond 1973, if there was any interesting in moving the date.

CHAIR WEIGHT mentioned he prepared the nomination in 2011 and at the time he was advised by a historian at the State Historic Preservation Office to extend the period of significance to 1973, which was done and past the Arizona Historic Sites Review Committee. He further stated the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, DC, they asked to revise the nomination to limit the period of significance to the early 1960s. He pointed out that it may have had something to do with the 50 year cut off at the time and this is something that we could raise with the State Historic Preservation Office or with the Keepers Office to see if it can be extended.

COMMISSIONER FINBRAATEN pointed out the property tax benefits for those listed as contributors to historic preservation and suggested that updating the National Register could motivate more residents to support the initiative.

CHAIR WEIGHT thanked the Commission Member for her perspective and extended gratitude to everyone who was involved in bringing this initiative forward. He commended the efforts of staff and the neighborhood as they have been working on this project for quite some times and it is a wonderful undertaking. He mentioned his involvement in the National Register listing back in 2011 and stated this was the first historic residential historic district to be listed in Chandler on the National Register and it is only fitting that it be the first local listing as well on the Chandler register.

Action Agenda Item No. 3 Motion and Vote

COMMISSIONER SABA moved to approve Item No 3 PLH23-0066 Silk Stocking Historic Preservation District, subject to conditions recommended by staff; Seconded by COMMISSIONER YOST.

Motion carried unanimously (5-0); Commissioner Finbraaten was present. Commissioner Wastchak and Commission Bell recused themselves.

CHAIR WEIGHT asked when this item would go before Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER confirmed that the proposal would next go to the Planning and Zoning Commission on February 21, 2024, then would go before the City Council on March 21, 2024, for introduction and April 4, 2024, for final approval.

Briefing

Staff briefing on Certified Local Government (CLG) Status.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER thanked the Commission and stated that he would be providing a brief update on the City's CLG status. He announced that approval was given to pursue CLG designation, and that staff has managed to assemble the application and will be mailed out in the following week. He explained that once approved, staff would like to invite the State Historic Preservation Office to conduct a workshop and that it would be especially valuable since there were new staff members and commissioners since the last update. He stated the workshop would summarize the purpose and the privileges CGL status for Chandler and the opportunities it could provide.

COMMISSIONER FINBRAATEN stated last year in 2023 she attended the Historic Preservation Conference in Tucson and participated in the CLG training. She was unsure where the next conference would be held but highlighted the depth of training provided on the National Register and other essential aspects of historic preservation. She encouraged the Historic Preservation Commission Members to attend due to the valuable information shared. She mentioned the first conference was at the San Marcos historic hotel in downtown Chandler, which she helped plan while working for State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). She emphasized the importance of commissioner attendance, citing the educational benefits and the chance to engage with other commissioners from Arizona to learn about their challenges and successes.

CHAIR WEIGHT stated the 2024 conference will be held in Prescott at the Hassayampa Inn from June 26 through June 28. He mentioned he has also attended the conference and it is a good opportunity to network and receive training. He also stated it is not too late to submit a presentation for this year's 2024 conference.

COMMISSIONER VELASQUEZ asked if staff is given the opportunity to participate in the conference.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER confirmed that staff attended in 2022 but was unable to attend the 2023 conference as staff's schedule did not align. He stated he found the conference to be very rewarding.

Member Comments/Announcements

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER announced the meeting this date would be his final Historic Preservation Commission meeting as he and his wife were moving to Wisconsin. He thanked the Commission for their service and their commitment to historic preservation in Chandler.

COMMISSIONER FINBRAATEN asked if he has lived in the cold weather before. She stated her family is from Minnesota and the cold can be a big shock for someone unfamiliar with such climates.

HARLEY MEHLHORN, CITY PLANNER stated his family is from Alberta, Canada.

CHAIR WEIGHT extended a heartfelt thank you to Harley for his contributions to Chandler. He expressed the Commission's appreciation for Harley's work and stated he would be missed.

Calendar

The next Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be scheduled as needed.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Kevin Weight, Chair



David de la Torre, Staff Liaison for City Center
District Matters and Reviews