

**CITY OF WEST LINN
HISTORIC RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

APRIL 7, 2009

Members Present: Gail Holmes, Sandy Carter, Charles Awalt and Midge Pierce

Members Absent: Tom Neff

Guest: Ian Johnson, SHPO; Jody Carson, West Linn City Council; Teri Cummings, West Linn City Council; Ruth Offer, Willamette Neighborhood Association

Staff Present: Tom Soppe, Associate Planner

Agenda Topics: Business Items; Minutes; SHPO Update; Miscellaneous Items of Interest

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

2. BUSINESS ITEMS

2.a. MINUTES OF 03/03/09

The Minutes of 03/03/09 were approved by unanimous consent of those members present

2.b. SHPO UPATE ON WILLAMETTE FALLS NEIGHBORHOOD NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION WORK FROM IAN JOHNSON

Ian Johnson, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), recalled the State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation had tabled consideration of the nomination at the first hearing in October 2008 because they had questions about the proposed boundaries; they had been concerned about the level of documentation; and they questioned casting Willamette Falls as a “company town.” He advised that the nomination might have had a better chance of being accepted at that time if the City’s consultant had been there to answer questions. He said that document had a good chance of being accepted with the “tweaks” the Committee had wanted to see.

After the state hearing, the HRAB had surveyed and agreed on new boundaries and hired researcher Natalie _____ to document the nomination. Mr. Johnson had asked the consultants for all their research; examined some books that offered information about West Linn and Willamette Falls history; and rewritten the nomination. He related that work had taken about 100 hours. He presented them with a 90% complete draft and asked them to correct spellings and dates, offer their comments about the approach, and suggest sources he could cite. He said Natalie’s research helped him connect more dots and make useful generalizations, such as that Sunset and Bolton had not wanted to be part of Oregon City so they formed their own towns

One of Mr. Johnson's challenges was an overall concern that dates were inconsistent or wrong. He used old newspaper articles to determine dates, but those were not always accurate. He asked the members to help him find material that would pinpoint dates, especially the date of incorporation of the City of Willamette. He had seen papers that indicated residents might have intended to incorporate it in 1908, but he had also seen incorporation papers dated 1913. Someone else thought it might have been 1912. Mr. Johnson said he would reexamine the documents. He suspected that a later document might have been necessary to correct a mistake related to the earlier incorporation document, which might not have been timely filed. He said when there was disagreement about dates he could insert a footnote that would say that reasonable information suggests it could be either date.

Mr. Johnson explained the approach that he was taking was that the Willamette Falls Historic District was significant as an example of community planning. He advised that was a good argument, except for the contention that it was a "company town." The original plat showed they planned modernized power and sewer services. The area still used some sections of the old tile sewer pipeline. Mr. Awalt had photographs of the old pipe he had had taken during a sewer pipe replacement project two or three years ago. He had seen tiles marked "Portland Tile," and he recalled that the new sections of sewer could not be pressure tested because that would have adversely affected the older sections. Mr. Johnson said he would add that information to the nomination. He suggested a copy of the City's Request for Proposals and Awalt's photographs might be good documentation. He said his approach was that Willamette did not happen in a vacuum. He set it within a larger context and pointed out it was far enough away from Oregon City that it could become its own town. HRAB members recalled the state Council had suggested adding more information about the school and providing a map showing how the town related to nearby communities. Mr. Johnson observed there was not much time before the Committee hearing. He said he would try to get it approved without the map unless Mr. Soppe could get one from the GIS staff in time.

HRAB members observed that Bernert Landing was an important part of the town's history. It had been a commercial port. Steamboats landed there too. They loaned Mr. Johnson a copy of the book, _____ by _____ Corning to cite as a source of that information. Mr. Awalt said he could provide oral history from Bernert family members who still lived in the area. He said there had been a railway connection to the port, which would be described in the history of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Mr. Johnson stressed that any information the members sent to him should cite the source.

Mr. Johnson asked for information that would show when the bridge was opened. He said sources he had seen indicated it could be 1888 or 1889. Mr. Awalt reasoned that it had been built before the power plant because the bridge supported the power transmission line. Mr. Johnson said he would footnote that.

Ms. Holmes asked if the new research made it more plausible to bring in the commercial district along Willamette Falls Drive. Mr. Johnson advised the core question was the number of contributing and non-contributing properties and the improvements that had been made in that area. However, he said the HRAB might be able to gather enough information to consider using a Multiple Property Submission (MPS). It would take a grant and a couple of years to research, but it would describe the development of the

entire town and how sections of Bolton and Sunset and the commercial district fit into that history. If some owners of individual structures did not want to be included that would not harm anything. The MPS could be written in such a way that any original building in Sunset, such as isolated houses here and there and the Bolton store (even though it had been moved a few feet and would never be nominated on its own) could be included.

The Willamette Falls plat had changed over time. Mr. Johnson did not have all the plat maps. One side had been abandoned. An area referred to as “Winsor” had simply dropped off the map. It might have been an area that eventually was just considered a part of Sunset. Mr. Johnson advised the HRAB that the presence of new buildings in photographs was typically simply acknowledged and then the narrative moved on. Mr. Awalt stressed that most of the original houses in the district were still there today. Mr. Johnson advised the only “sticking point” at the hearing might be the proposed boundaries. He said that in places he could not find a good explanation for something he had to “reinvent” the logic. Mr. Awalt had emailed Mr. Johnson some information, including a copy of a deed that specified connection to plumbing was required and information about the Willamette Falls Locks. Mr. Johnson said he had not received it and asked Mr. Awalt to send it again.

Board members were to continue to examine the document and send their corrections and comments to Mr. Johnson as quickly as possible. He explained the timeline for the process. April 24th was the 60-day mailing date. He would mail the finished nomination document back to the HRAB and ask them to evaluate it. He needed them to respond quickly because he was not sure he would have time to make more revisions between the time he got their responses and the next deadline (30 days later) when the nomination had to be forwarded to the Committee, but he would try. That version of the nomination was the official, legal, copy that was to be made available to the public for comment. He showed a copy of the public notice to homeowners to be sent at the 60-day mailing date. He reported that the record currently contained a response from one dissenting property owner. The hearing was set for June 26th in Salem. Mr. Johnson said he would take a more active role in the presentation that he usually did because he had helped prepare it.

When asked Mr. Johnson confirmed that people could submit a summary of the names and addresses of persons who supported the nomination for the record. He said if the state Council agreed with the nomination, there was another 90-day revision period when the HRAB could make changes. Then the document went to the Keeper of the National Register for another 45-day required public comment period. That was followed by an announcement in the Federal Register. He anticipated the entire process could be concluded by early November. Ms. Holmes recalled the HRAB had been working toward this nomination for all three years the board had existed.

During the questioning period, Mr. Johnson confirmed the HRAB could buy a book that related local history and donate it to the state library. . He observed as a consensus that “West Oregon City” referred to an “area” not a “town” because it eventually just dropped off the Sanborn maps. He explained the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company were not geographers, they just wanted to record buildings for insurance purposes and tended to call everything by the largest town people would recognize and small towns frequently were dropped off the maps.

The group corrected narrative that said the first wood school in Willamette had been torn down. They said it had burned down. And two subsequent schools built on that site had burned down and been torn down. The source of that information was the book, Willamette Treasures.

Mr. Johnson asked for any sources that offered more information on Bernert Landing, the railroad, and the old tile sewer. Mr. Awalt said he would send his photographs of the old sewer system and Mr. Johnson said he would include a sentence in Section 7 that, “the remnant sewer system is still in place and in some places still being used,” and refer to the photograph. He would look for the information about the school in the book. He confirmed he had old photographs of the trolley, railway and power poles. Board members said in the 1890s people in the town could see an electric trolley and a town with all the utility and telephone liens

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to clarify whether the nomination was for local significance (important to your town), state significance (important to your state), or national significance, (important to the entire nation). He confirmed that Willamette Falls Locks were considered of national significance, as were the two submarines, the USS Blueback and LCI 713. He advised that most historic districts were local and he assumed that was what the current nomination had been written for. He noted that local was already “proved,” but to contend it had statewide significance would require a statewide comparative analysis. The HRAB agreed to submit it as a locally significant historic district.

When asked if oral histories should be included in the nomination, Mr. Johnson advised that the National Register nomination was intended to pose a “surgical” argument that it should be listed, but that listing was not intended to serve as a comprehensive history of a town. However, he hoped the listing would spur local awareness of the community’s history and encourage more projects, such as an oral history project. He suggested they keep a copy in the local community and send another copy to a statewide organization with a dependable archive such as a university or the state library. He said it was very likely that as more information surfaced the City would want to revise Historic District documents to include it. They would not have to reapply. They could hire a consultant to update the information and ask SHPO to add it to the original documentation.

Mr. Johnson concluded by advising that the existing draft would stand at the hearing. If the Board found information about Bernert Landing they could ask his office to add it to the documents after the Council hearing. He did not want to change the nomination document too much because that typically made the Council members more wary of it. He cautioned them not to bring unsupported material to the hearing. He confirmed the Board members could come in turn of the century costumes. He advised them to keep any presentation displays small enough to be passed between Committee members. He suggested offering scanned photographs of them. He clarified that it was only necessary to “tweak” the original nomination to make it stronger because the Committee had liked it, and would accept it after it was fixed. The HRAB said they appreciated Mr. Johnson’s efforts.

3. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS OF INTEREST

Ms. Holmes advised the two City Councilors at the meeting that the Board very much appreciated Mr. Soppe's help.

Mitigation for Buck Street Houses

Mr. Awalt asked if the board was still going to ask the city for mitigation for the Bolton neighborhood's loss of Buck Street houses at the site of the new fire station. The board had asked their consultants to write a letter to SHPO about it. Mr. Johnson explained that there were no administrative rules to support enforcing the applicable state law (ORS 358.653), so it was only enforceable through a civil suit that the Oregon State Attorney's office and SHPO would not undertake. It would only be enforced after an individual got so irritated he/she decided to take it to court. He explained that an historic structure did not necessarily become ineligible for the National Register if a few windows were not original, and an historic district did not necessarily become ineligible if it lost a few houses. He advised an MPS would help the city determine what made the district eligible. He said SHPO did ask a developer to think about alternatives to demolition, such as moving a structure, but a local government had the power to deny the application if they had demolition delay or denial authority.

Mr. Soppe reported that Sue Smith was going through the permitting process that would allow her to move the Landmark house to a lot on Lowry Drive and she hoped to buy nearby vacant lot to which she would move another one of the Buck Street houses.

Clackamas County Historic Review Board

At a previous meeting the board had discussed whether to send a letter Mr. Soppe had drafted to the county board, but had decided to wait and try to find out why that body did not want to serve West Linn. Meantime, a West Linn resident had volunteered to be the city's appointee to the county board. Councilor Carson explained that the Council had not voted on this matter, but the HRAB did not need City Council's permission to send the letter. Ms. Holmes explained the local board was not prepared to take over the county board's duties yet and they wanted to keep their arrangement with the county board. She had been advised that there was no one particular issue, but a long history of issues that had caused the County board to decide not to continue to serve West Linn. She said Chris Kerr, Acting Planning Director, had agreed to talk to the county board staff and tell them about changes the city was making that would result in better enforcement of the code and a stronger code. He would tell them the city wanted to move forward with them in a positive way. Ms. Holmes polled the board and observed a consensus to send the letter. Mr. Soppe offered to have Mr. Kerr deliver it when he and Mr. Spir met with the county staff the following Thursday. It was suggested the Board and City Council schedule joint session to talk about the matter.

Industrial District Code Revision

Mr. Soppe reported that Peter Spir was working on code for a Willamette district, but not an industrial district. Board members suggested Mr. Soppe talk to the Acting Planning Director about putting industrial district code on the Planning Department's work plan.

The City Councilors reported the City Council and the Planning Director were in the process of discussing how to prioritize the department's work schedule.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Holmes adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

**ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR THE MEETING OF
APRIL 7, 2009**

Agenda Item	Title	Doc Date	Document Description	Document Number

MINUTES APPROVED:

Gail Holmes, Chair

Date