



Memorandum

TO: Chris Jordan, City Manager

FROM: Sara Javoronok, Associate Planner

DATE: April 12, 2010

SUBJECT: Establishment of a Historic Review Board

Staff is seeking direction from the City Council regarding the establishment of a Historic Review Board, its size, and the qualifications for membership prior to initiating a code amendment process to establish the Board.

Background

In the 1980s, the City established an intergovernmental agreement with the Clackamas County Historic Review Board (CCHRB) to provide for implementation of the portions of the Community Development Code (CDC) pertaining to historic properties. This includes reviewing new construction and alterations to structures within historic districts, providing recommendations for the designation of historic landmarks or districts, applying architectural design review standards within the Willamette Falls Drive Commercial District, and reviewing and making recommendations on proposed partitions of properties designated as landmarks. The CCHRB reviews approximately 4-5 applications annually for the City of West Linn.

In 2009, Clackamas County terminated this agreement. The City has a one-year transition period to establish a Historic Review Board. This period ends September 30, 2010. The City needs to establish a Board to assume the duties that the CCHRB currently provides for the City.

In 2006, the City established the Historic Resources Advisory Board (HRAB), which meets monthly. The HRAB serves in an advisory capacity and does not have authority to approve or deny projects. However, it does perform some of the traditional functions of a historic review board. These functions include educating the public, coordinating local preservation groups, monitoring the City's historic inventories, researching and recommending property owner incentives, coordinating with Clackamas County and the CCHRB, seeking funding for preservation work, and providing a facility for West Linn historic artifacts and materials. Under the direction of the HRAB, the City has applied for and completed several Certified Local Government (CLG) grants with matching

funding from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), including one for National Register designation for the Willamette Falls Neighborhood Historic District.

The establishment of a Historic Review Board will assist the City with maintaining its status as a CLG, which it attained in 2006. Currently, program elements are completed by both the HRAB and the CCHRB. The program is administered through the SHPO for the Department of the Interior. It has several requirements for governments, which are as follows:

- Establish a historic preservation commission and appoint interested and qualified residents to serve. As available, members should meet professional qualifications for history, architecture, architectural history, archaeology, and related fields;
- Pass a preservation ordinance that outlines how the local government will address historic preservation issues;
- Agree to participate in updating and expanding the state's historic building inventory program. (The SHPO maintains a master database and provides matching grants to survey additional properties);
- Agree to review and comment on any National Register of Historic Places nominations of properties within the local government boundaries. (Nominations are usually submitted by the property owners themselves or other members of the public. The SHPO administers the National Register program); and
- Affirm that it will fulfill its obligation to enforce existing state preservation laws.

Options for establishing a Historic Review Board

Staff proposes two options for establishing a Historic Review Board for consideration by the Council: (1) establish a single Board that is responsible for the functions of both the CCHRB and the HRAB or (2) retain the HRAB and create a new Historic Review Board that assumes the role of the CCHRB.

Option 1: Single Historic Review Board

Under Option 1, the City would establish a single board composed of 5 to 7 members performing the functions of both the HRAB and CCHRB. This would entail revising the existing code language for the HRAB to create the new Historic Review Board.

With this option, staff recommends a standing monthly meeting schedule for any public hearings, with a workshop session prior to the meeting to discuss projects and items that do not require a public hearing. These meetings could be cancelled if there is not an agenda item for the meeting.

Most communities have a single body that performs the functions of the existing CCHRB and the HRAB. The potential benefits of this option are that a single Board would

require less staff time; the limited available pool of qualified and interested people would not be spread among two boards; and the board members may gain a greater understanding of the range of historic preservation issues facing the City by reviewing applications for renovation, working on preservation planning efforts, and other projects.

Option 2: Separate HRAB and Historic Review Board

Under Option 2, the HRAB would retain its current duties. A new Historic Review Board, comprised of 3-5 members, would perform the duties that are currently completed by the CCHRB. This group would meet on a quarterly or as needed basis. The HRAB would maintain its monthly meeting schedule.

It is uncommon for a community of West Linn's size to have two boards. There is concern with splitting the local expertise among two boards rather than a single board. There is also concern that if there were two boards that they would be working on overlapping issues without sufficient discussion or coordination between the two groups. In addition, the two boards would require more staff time than a single board.

Membership qualifications. It is important for the Historic Review Board to have an architect experienced in historic preservation and professionals in fields related to architecture and preservation that can provide additional knowledge. With either option for establishing the Board, staff recommends the following:

- The members of the new Board shall have a demonstrated interest, knowledge, or competence in historic preservation and in one of the following fields: architecture, landscape architecture, history, archaeology, construction, real estate, engineering, urban planning, law, or local history.
- At least one member must be an architect.
- The majority of the members should live in the City of West Linn.

Training. Some training will be required for the new board members. The type and amount of training needed is likely to vary between the individual members and their area of expertise. Planning staff, the City Attorney and the SHPO will train the new Board.

HRAB Comments and Recommendation

On April 6, 2010, staff sought input from the HRAB regarding the alternative approaches described above. Generally, the HRAB supported the establishment of a new, single board to handle CCHRB projects and the HRAB's duties. The HRAB recommended a transition period during which the new board and the HRAB would meet jointly to provide information on previous projects and existing historic preservation issues. It also recommended having one position available for a member of the CCHRB to help provide continuity between the Boards and, potentially, to fill a needed professional role.

All of the HRAB members expressed interest in serving on the new Board, but stated that at least one, if not more, architects needed to be on the Board. The HRAB members also recognized the need for additional training for the design review and other approvals that the Historic Review Board would handle.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends establishment of a single body, a Historic Review Board, rather than maintaining the HRAB and a separate Historic Review Board. Performing the duties currently spread among two boards will allow members of the new board to gain increased local knowledge of historic resources issues affecting the City of West Linn. It will also ensure that those interested in historic preservation will not have to decide between two boards, and it will make more efficient use of staff time.

Next Steps

Either option described above will require changes to Chapter 2 of the Municipal Code and several chapters of the Community Development Code (CDC). Following the work session, staff will prepare the required draft code amendments to create the Historic Review Board. Staff will then seek input regarding the draft code from the HRAB, present the proposal to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation following a public hearing in June, and return to the Council in late July for a public hearing and approval. We will also ask the Council to initiate the process for appointing members of the new board following public hearing with the Planning Commission in June.