



MINUTES
WORKSHOP CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 17, 2024, 6:00 P.M.
NEPTUNE BEACH CITY HALL
116 FIRST STREET
NEPTUNE BEACH, FLORIDA 32266

Pursuant to proper notice, a Workshop City Council Meeting of the City Council of the City of Neptune Beach was held on Monday, June 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in Council Chambers, City Hall, 116 First Street, Neptune Beach, Florida, 32266

Attendance**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Elaine Brown
Vice Mayor Kerry Chin
Councilor Lauren Key
Councilor Nia Livingston
Councilor Josh Messinger

STAFF:

City Attorney Zachary Roth
Chief of Police Michael Key
Public Works Director Deryle Calhoun
Parks and Sustainability Colin Moore
City Clerk Catherine Ponson

**Call to
Order/Roll Call**

Mayor Brown called the workshop meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and Councilor Messinger led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Dr. Wayne
Wood
Presentation**

Dr. Wayne Wood, Hon. AIA, Dr. Wood is widely regarded as one of the foremost chroniclers of Jacksonville's history and architecture. He presented information on historic preservation in Neptune Beach. Dr. Wood reviewed what makes a property historic, including sufficient age, of at least 50 years old, a relatively high degree of physical integrity, and suitable for preservation and historical significance.

Dr. Wood stated Neptune Beach is filled with eligible historic buildings. He added that some are not so obvious. It is important not just to savor the most beautiful of all the houses but to savor those on the street that are contiguous, connected and make up a neighborhood.

PUBLIC COMMENT

**Public
Comment**

Alison Ronzon, 221 South Street, Neptune Beach, reported that in a 10-block radius from her home, 22 of Neptune Beach's historic homes have been demolished. A few of the lots where these homes once stood, still stand empty. We are losing the history of our small town at an alarming rate. The historic preservation committee has drafted a thoughtful proposal to help encourage owners of our older homes to renovate and restore them so that they don't get so frustrated with the variance process that they choose demolition.

Candy Sullivan, 220 South Street, Neptune Beach, lives in an historic home and is interested in this process. She added that Neptune Beach has a unique opportunity to protect the character of our City.

Pat Hazouri, 207 Florida Boulevard, Neptune Beach, spoke regarding historic homes and thanked everyone responsible for getting this process started.

Lesley DeRusso, 1815 Twelve Oaks Lane, Neptune Beach, stated that this all comes down to what kind of a town do we want to live in. You can modernize without destroying the original aesthetics. This is happening in cities and towns all over the United States. She added that the value of restored homes aside from their intrinsic beauty puts them pricewise well above new builds. With some guidance, common sense and code flexibility, Neptune Beach can maintain beauty and character.

Historic
Preservation
Subcommittee

René Atayan, Chair of the Historic Preservation Subcommittee, explained the process of how to grant variances to historic properties was started in November of 2023 by the formation of the Historic Preservation Subcommittee. This was based on the CDB receiving applications for variances and being denied. They were denied due to setback issues. This ended up with tear downs. The subcommittee is trying to use a thoughtful, legal process that Council is comfortable with and would preserve the integrity of this community.

The process began with a 2003 Historic Survey. The information on the survey was entered into a spreadsheet to give a clear picture of the historic buildings in Neptune Beach. She stated that a two-part process makes sense. She mentioned that at the last meeting, there was a responsibility that Council wanted to take. She pointed out that the historic subcommittee along with the CDB could handle the requests. The two-month long process would not be a good use of time. The criteria used would be agreed upon by Council. She also agrees that there should be a supermajority vote.

Vice Mayor Chin questioned what safeguards would be in place and is there a limit to how much a person can ask for? What is to prevent them from doing more once they have achieved the historic status?

Ms. Atayan explained that the historic nature of the home must be maintained. If they continue to change it and it continues to morph, it loses its historic character. The applicant must present a plan and stick to what has been given permission to do.

City Attorney Zachary Roth confirmed that any variance granted is tied to the land and not the house.

Councilor Key expressed her support for this and stated she would like to see it stay with the CDB and the historic subcommittee and not come before Council. She understands the supermajority vote but would not want that to be a hindrance. She would support not having a supermajority. Each home is unique and everything would be on a case-by-case basis.

Councilor Livingston stated that she is okay with the application going through the historic subcommittee and CDB and not coming before Council. She does want to keep the supermajority vote to remain.

Mr. Roth reminded everyone that the historic subcommittee is a subcommittee of the CDB. The members of the subcommittee must be made up of CDB members. A separate committee could be created or there could be change the ability for non-CDB members to be on the subcommittee.

Councilor Livingston commented she would like to see the ability to put non-CDB members on the subcommittee explored as citizens have spent time working on this.

Councilor Messinger pointed out the idea of "bad actors" is a concern. His concern is also how we are defining this and that there could be a board that would not be diligent in keeping Neptune Beach's charm. He would like to see more definition. Right now, during the variance review process, someone does not have to bring in architectural detail and show how they are going to keep the character of a structure. There just has to be a site plan and basic elevation. If someone is using this mechanism, and they care about their home, we should ask for more detail and a deeper layer of architectural work from the applicant. There needs to be checks and balances on the system that prescribes the vision as explained to future board members.

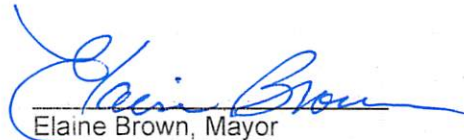
Councilor Key stated that she would like to see from a code enforcement perspective not allowing homes to go into disrepair. Individuals are left with no choice but to tear them down. We need to discuss code enforcement and what that looks like for our City so we don't have so many dilapidated homes. She stated that there are different prescriptions for different neighborhoods and what that looks like for being historic. There is not a one size fits all in Neptune Beach.

Mayor Brown thanked Dr. Wood and everyone who spoke. She pointed out that the more complicated it is for someone, the less likely someone will try and save their home. She likes where this is going and what has been said. We all want to help people preserve their older homes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment Pat Hazouri, 207 Florida Boulevard, Neptune Beach, spoke regarding new homes being built and parking. She stated it was good to hear the discussion at this meeting.

Adjournment There being no further business, the workshop meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.


Elaine Brown, Mayor

ATTEST:



Catherine Ponson, CMC
City Clerk

Approved: _____

09/03/2024

