

MINUTES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

A Regular meeting held in the Study Session Room  
at the La Quinta City Hall  
78-495 Calle Tampico, La Quinta, CA  
January 21, 2010

This meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Chairperson Redmon who asked for the roll call.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Maria Puente, Archie Sharp, Allan Wilbur, Robert Wright, and Chairperson Peggy Redmon.

Staff Present: Planning Director Les Johnson, Principal Planner Wally Nesbit, and Executive Secretary Carolyn Walker

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

III. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA: None

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR:

A. It was moved and seconded by Commissioners Puente/Wright to approve the minutes of October 15, 2009, as submitted. Unanimously approved.

V. BUSINESS ITEMS:

A. Historic Resources Section Report for the La Quinta Resort Draft EIR  
Applicant: MSR Desert Resorts, L.P.  
Consultant: Architectural Resources Group, Inc.  
Location: 49-499 Eisenhower Drive

Principal Planner Wally Nesbit presented the information contained in the staff report while Planning Director Les Johnson gave an explanation of the exhibits presented at the meeting.

Commissioner Sharp had asked if there had been any traffic or parking studies done with regard to the impact of the population influx; as well as whether or not there would be subterranean parking. Staff said this will be addressed in the environmental impact report. The review process was then discussed.

Chairperson Redmon then asked:

- If there would be any destruction of the bungalow units and staff said no.
- If they were going to maintain the existing spa and fitness facilities and would they be open to the public. Staff said the current spa was open to the public and the fitness center would be improved upon.
- About continuity in architecture and exterior design features and staff explained the design plans.

Commissioner Wright asked about the effects on the Morgan House and how many rooms would be torn down when demolition began. Staff said there would be no effect on the Morgan House, only improvements, and pointed out which buildings would be torn down.

Planning Director Johnson then explained how the report consultant was chosen and the benefits of that choice to the City and the applicant.

Chairperson Redmon commented on the impact of the removal of the date palm grove to accommodate eight hotel villa-style units and asked for confirmation that staff was recommending no date palms be removed. Staff said their recommendation was the date palm grove be retained, but said the applicant wanted to address the Commission on that issue.

Chairperson Redmon asked about traffic flow for guests and employees. Staff explained the shuttle stops, employee parking, and traffic flow patterns.

Commissioner Wilbur said the Commission's concern was the historic structures, and retaining the ambiance and architectural style of the

period. He then referenced the recommendations regarding the walkway, and the grove. He asked for confirmation there would be no impact on the Morgan House, the cove, or the casitas. Staff said there would be no impact beyond what was identified in the historic resources report.

Commissioner Wilbur asked if the Morgan House would be accessible or just preserved. Staff said the applicants would like to make it accessible but would address the Commission on their plans for historic resources on-site.

Mr. Ken Hoepfner, Vice President with Pyramid Advisors, One Post Office Square, Boston, MA, 02109, introduced himself and explained the purchase and background of the hotel and their goal to identify and preserve historic buildings on the property. He then explained the company's philosophy on the preservation and re-utilization of the historic buildings; including their goal of pursuing historical designations.

He then discussed the two areas identified in the report as sensitive and explained their plans for the trellis, the date palm grove area, and why those changes were needed. He explained their vision was to create a special lodging place and still make it complementary to the Morgan House and the other historical resources.

Rob Bernheimer, Attorney at Law, 45-025 Manitou Drive, Suite 3, Indian Wells CA 92210, introduced himself and commented on the thoroughness and benefits of the report done by Architectural Resources Group (ARG) and the fact they were chosen by the City and not the developer. He commented on Pyramid's goals and the fact that the Morgan House did not lose its historic significance by removal of the date grove.

He went on to discuss changing the shade structure from a hip-jointed roof to a trellis on the historical structure in front. He said they agreed with the ARG report; except their choice would be to extend the shade structure all the way up to the building. He then discussed the preservation of the ambiance of the hotel's arrival area and the need to create a trellis structure which provided shade right up to the building and maintained the historic character. He said they agreed with the rest of the report 100%.

Commissioner Puente asked how they would blend the four-story portions of the new buildings with the present hotel complex.

Mr. Rick Evans, with Oz Architecture, 3012 Huron Street, Suite 100, Denver CO 8020 (with the project designers), said the overall style was Spanish Colonial and explained what they would be doing to maintain and blend in with the present style.

Mr. Bernheimer commented on the positive impact of the well-established vegetation on the historical views, even taking into account the four-story buildings. He commented on the original master plan concept and the types of facilities needed to make the resort economically viable; including several examples of the type of hotel experience they hoped to promote.

Commissioner Sharp asked if the four-story structures backed up to Eisenhower. Mr. Bernheimer said they did not and noted their location on the exhibits.

Commissioner Wright said he was pleased the applicant recognized the historical aspects of the hotel and said there were only two issues for the Commission to address:

1. The date grove, which had no historical significance, and its viability.
2. The trellis, and its design, which could be worked out with the Planning Department to blend in with the historical style.

Chairperson Redmon and Commissioner Wilbur agreed with Commissioner Wright's comments.

Discussion followed regarding plant materials, the possible loss of the existing date palms, a compromise on keeping some of the palms, and the replacement of the cypress in the entrance.

Commissioner Puente asked who would be in charge of the process for the State Registry nomination. Staff explained it would be lengthy and gave the Commission an overview of the process.

There being no further comments it was moved and seconded by Commissioner Wright/Chairperson Redmon to approve Minute Motion 2010-001 accepting the Historic Resources Section Report for the La

Quinta Resort Draft EIR as recommended by staff with the amendment that the applicant could remove the date grove as long as they maintained the date palm ambiance/theme. Unanimously approved.

B. Paleontological Resource Inventory and Impact Assessment Technical Report for the La Quinta Resort

Applicant: MSR Desert Resorts, L.P.

Consultant: Architectural Resources Group, Inc.

Location: 49-499 Eisenhower Drive

Planning Director Johnson presented the information contained in the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department

Commissioner Wilbur asked if staff had received any tribal comments. Staff indicated they received a response from the Aqua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and a condition was included regarding their availability to monitor the project.

There being no further comments it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Wright/Puente to approve Minute Motion 2010-002 accepting the Paleontological Resource Inventory and Impact Assessment Technical Report for the La Quinta Resort as recommended by staff. Unanimously approved.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITTEN MATERIAL:

- A. Discussion of California Preservation Conference – Grass Valley/Nevada City, California – May 12-15, 2010.

VII. COMMISSIONER ITEMS:

- A. Quarterly Attendance Update.
- B. Commissioner Puente asked about upcoming projects. Planning Director Johnson said he would have staff give the Commissioners an e-mail update of upcoming projects.

VII. PLANNING STAFF ITEMS: None

X. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Wright\Wilbur to adjourn this Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission to the next Meeting to be held on February 18, 2010. This meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was adjourned at 4:17 p.m. Unanimously approved

Submitted by

Carolyn Walker  
Executive Secretary

DRAFT