

SAN FRANCISCO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



Meeting Minutes

Commission Chambers, Room 400
City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

11:30 a.m.

Architectural Review Committee Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Pearlman, Black, Johns
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Hyland

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER BY COMMISSIONER PEARLMAN AT 11:31 PM

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Patrick Race, Jorgen Cleemann, Director John Rahaim, Tim Frye – Preservation Officer, Jonas P. Ionin – Commission Secretary

SPEAKER KEY:

- + indicates a speaker in support of an item;
- indicates a speaker in opposition to an item; and
- = indicates a neutral speaker or a speaker who did not indicate support or opposition.

A. COMMITTEE MATTERS

1. Committee Comments & Questions

Commissioner Pearlman:

I just wanted to say today we have two substitute Commissioners here from our usual panel, Commissioner Johns and Commissioner Black. I know for Commissioner Black it's her first time on this so be kind to her. Other than that I don't have anything to talk about.

B. REGULAR

2. [2015-000937CWP](#) (P. RACE: (415) 575-9132)
CIVIC CENTER PUBLIC REALM PLAN – Review and Comment - The Civic Center Public Realm Plan is an interagency project led by the Planning Department that is working to create a long-term vision for the design and activation of the Civic Center's public spaces and streets. The Plan area is roughly bounded by Gough Street, Golden Gate Avenue, Market Street, and Fell Street and encompasses the Civic Center Landmark District. The Plan is being closely coordinated with the Civic Center Commons Initiative, an on-going effort to improve Civic Center as a neighborhood gathering space and public commons for all San Franciscans. The Plan is currently midway through its design and community engagement phase. This informational presentation will provide a general update of the Plan's development and design work to-date, including an overview of design options. The project team seeks comments on the proposed design options and their compatibility with the Civic Center Landmark District.

Preliminary Recommendation: Review and Comment

SPEAKERS: = Patrick Race – Staff presentation
 + Speaker (CMG)
 + Jim Haas – supportive of the Historic District
 = Mike Buhler – Design options, process

ACTION: Reviewed and Commented

ARC COMMENTS

Project Planning and Outreach

The Committee complimented the breadth of outreach and engagement, recognizing the challenges of capturing feedback from the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the city as a whole. The Committee also noted the challenges in coordinating a large interagency and consultant team praising the team's attention to the area's Beaux Arts context and subsequent public space interventions.

There was concern that the preferred design alternative (to be presented at a final Community Open House in fall 2018) would be selected without additional HPC involvement. Chair Pearlman indicated that the project should be brought before the full Historic Preservation Commission with ample time for in-depth discussion and review of the design alternatives prior to the selection of a preferred design alternative in fall 2018.

Conceptual Design Alternatives

Neighborhood Context

The Committee generally agreed that Civic Center Plaza, Fulton Street and UN Plaza must provide neighborhood-serving amenities while also

accommodating large civic gatherings, a hallmark use within these spaces.

- Commissioner Johns indicated that the design team is going too far in treating Civic Center as a neighborhood park and that the Plaza should remain a space of citywide significance, citing the extensive outreach within the Tenderloin and surrounding neighborhoods as too localized. Given the evolving context of the surrounding neighborhood, Mr. Johns underscored the importance of not relying solely on the opinions of current residents for guidance, but also recognized the challenge of anticipating the needs and desires of future residents. Mr. Johns requested that the team broaden their engagement strategy to look beyond the surrounding neighborhoods and toward the broader community.
- Commissioner Black echoed Mr. Johns' comments and commended the design team on their community outreach strategy and further emphasized the importance of the civic gathering function of these spaces in addition to their neighborhood-serving function.

The Committee discussed the varied population being served by these spaces.

- Commissioner Johns urged the design team to examine how these spaces are being used today and how they will be used in the future. Mr. Johns recognized the vibrant arts and cultural identity of the area but commented that this is also the legal center of San Francisco and that it's not evident how the design frameworks are accommodating the parking and access needs of the surrounding courthouses.
- In addition, Mr. Johns prompted the design team to think about the homeless population, those engaged in illegal drug activity and other users of the space in order to understand how future public realm improvements will affect these users. Mr. Johns specifically recommended the designs provide additional showers and bathrooms in the space to alleviate some of the burden placed on the public facilities located within San Francisco Public Library.
- Mr. Johns reiterated that benches would not be supported in the area due to the potential of becoming places to lie down and the possible obstruction of crowds that Civic Center must accommodate.

Historic Context

Overall the Committee agreed that the new designs should fully acknowledge Civic Center as a National Historic Landmark and strongly relate to the Beaux Arts architecture that defines the area. Chair Pearlman highlighted the fact that the Civic Center area of San Francisco contains the finest collection of Beaux Arts period buildings in the area and that any public realm improvements need to relate to this context.

The conceptual design alternatives incorporate contemporary elements that embody a 21st century commons.

The Committee recognized the need to accommodate modern uses and to relate the design to the 21st Century, but to do so within the Beaux Arts context.

- Chair Pearlman indicated that contemporary elements should respect the grand collection of buildings that have been celebrated since their construction.
- Commissioner Johns agreed, saying that the Design Team cannot ignore the identity of Civic Center being a grand civic space with an ennobling spirit defined by architecture dating back to 1915.

In response to the three public space design alternatives that were presented, the Committee had the following recommendations for how to integrate 21st Century needs within the Beaux Arts context:

- Ensure that any paving patterns and space geometry respect the context of the surrounding architecture and are suitably muted without being overly trendy.
 - Chair Pearlman voiced concern that the design alternatives express an organic, curvilinear geometry that is unrelated to the surrounding Beaux Arts architecture.
 - Commissioner Johns indicated that many of the design alternatives fight the existing Beaux Arts framework. Specifically, Mr. Johns referenced the lack of symmetry being proposed by the design alternatives as well as the organic forms being proposed. Mr. Johns commented that the flex plaza shown in front of City Hall is jarring when compared to the symmetry and linear nature of the existing plaza design, citing that the designs should continue to embody the grandness that the current design provides.
- Evaluate how the shape, massing, and entrances of new buildings on the plazas relate to the surrounding grand architecture and Beaux Arts context.
 - Chair Pearlman highlighted the incongruous nature of the organic shaped Brooks Hall entry, citing that the location of the entrance is appropriate, but the shape may not be appropriate from an on-the-ground experiential point of view. He encouraged the Design Team to design the entrance structures so that they have an architectural relationship with what's already there.
 - Commissioner Black expressed concern over the 'wedge' entry feature in the Public Platform framework indicating that it may impact visibility into the Plaza from Grove Street and limit flat areas within the Plaza, which is a commodity in a city of hills.
- Locate any new uses on the periphery outside of the civic axis.
 - Commissioner Black stated that San Francisco has the most astonishing Civic Center and that it's important to preserve as much of

what makes it great as possible. While it's important to keep the Civic Center vibrant and attractive with new features and activities it's equally as important to preserve the unique spirit and grand alignment that defines the Beaux Arts design of Civic Center Plaza.

- Recognize the ennobling spirit of Civic Center and ensure that design elements don't contradict the Beaux Arts context or the ability to accommodate large civic gatherings and emergency/safety response teams.
 - Commissioner Johns urged the team to consider the access needs of emergency response teams (fire, police) during larger events and ensure that the management of large groups of people is not compromised.
 - Commissioner Black underscored the importance of these spaces to be able to accommodate large groups of people, citing the SF Giants victory gathering and large political events.

United Nations Plaza Fountain

The Design Team presented design alternatives for United Nations Plaza (UN Plaza) including three design alternatives that address the existing fountain in different ways. When discussing the alternatives' approaches for the fountain, located on axis with Leavenworth Street in UN Plaza, the Committee generally agreed that the location, operation, maintenance, and design of the fountain is a challenge. The committee noted that while feelings towards its aesthetic character are a matter of taste, they all indicated a strong preference for seeing it preserved as an example of the work of a master designer, Lawrence Halprin.

- Chair Pearlman indicated that the fountain's location on axis with Leavenworth Street is a critical node in UN Plaza and that the node is not fully addressed by any one of the design alternatives. Mr. Pearlman questioned the need to replace the fountain with another water feature citing that this location may not be most appropriate considering the existing challenges with the fountain.
- Commissioner Johns agreed that the Halprin fountain occupies a legitimate period of time, but that there are significant challenges associated with it which are not caused by design alone. Mr. Johns indicated that the design may be able to be altered to mitigate some of the problems currently being experienced. He also questioned the need to replace the fountain with another water feature citing the potential for the existing problems to resurface with a new feature.
- Commissioner Black echoed the other Commissioner's comments noting that the fountain is a significant work by a Bay Area-based, world renowned landscape architect and advised the Design Team to look very carefully at it in terms of preservation.
- Overall the Committee indicated that a new, interactive fountain, as proposed by the Public Platform design alternative, should not be located where the current Halprin fountain is sited.

The Pioneer Monument

Each design alternative assumes that the Pioneer Monument within Fulton Street would be relocated off the main civic axis and elsewhere in the Plan area. The Committee agreed that this was worth investigating as removal would strengthen the Beaux Arts axis from Market Street to City Hall. Chair Pearlman commented that while possible, the relocation of the monument would likely be difficult.

Misc. Comments on Civic Center Plaza Design Elements

Regarding new/additional water features, the Committee expressed concern that a new mirror fountain located in Civic Center Plaza might recreate the challenges experienced with the reflecting pool previously installed in Civic Center Plaza and urged the team to learn from past challenges in the space.

For all buildings/kiosks proposed in the spaces, Commissioner Pearlman noted that while the architectural design of kiosks and pavilions in the framework plans might be diagrammatic placeholders, he urged the design team to be careful about how the buildings are depicted and consider how their architectural design would relate to the Beaux Arts context.

Street Design

The design team presented street design alternatives for Polk and Grove Streets.

- Commissioner Black expressed support for the proposed traffic calming and improvements associated with the 'Plaza Promenade' option for both Polk and Grove Streets and requested the project team consider loading and accessible parking spaces near institution entrances (Asian Art Museum, City Hall, and Library). Ms. Black commented that maintaining two-way access on Polk Street was preferred as one way would be frustrating and confusing for drivers.
- Commissioners Black and Johns expressed interest in reviewing any traffic studies associated with the proposed circulation changes.

Preferred Framework Designs

Chair Pearlman indicated that 'Civic Sanctuary' was his preferred design alternative, commenting that it was more in line with the Beaux Arts design and surrounding grand architecture.

Commissioner Black indicated that 'Public Platform' and 'Civic Sanctuary' were her preferred design alternatives, commenting that they appeared to accommodate large gatherings the best. In addition, the 'tree axis' was an appreciated design element as it helps keep some of the formal alignment within both of those frameworks and is in keeping with the original Beaux Arts plan.

3. [2012.0893ENV](#) (J. CLEEMANN: (415) 575-8763)
PIER 22 ½, aka FIRE STATION 35 – located on an irregularly shaped waterfront lot on Embarcadero between Folsom and Harrison Streets, Assessor’s Blocks/Lots 9900/022H (District 6). **Review and Comment** before the Architectural Review Committee on the proposal to demolish a section of bulkhead wharf and two finger piers, rebuild the section of bulkhead wharf, and install a new floating fireboat station in the Bay behind the subject property. The floating station would be two-stories tall, clad in corrugated aluminum panels, and attached to the wharf with pedestrian and vehicular bridges. On-site historical resources include the Port of San Francisco Embarcadero National Register Historic District and Fire Station 35, San Francisco Landmark #225. The project site is under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco; the Fire Station is staffed and operated by the San Francisco Fire Department. The project is sponsored by Public Works. The project site is located within a C-2 Community Business Zoning District, the Waterfront Special Use District No 1, and 84-X-2 Height and Bulk District.

Preliminary Recommendation: Review and Comment

SPEAKERS: = Jorgen Cleemann – Staff Presentation
 + Speaker
 + Alan Kawasaki – Design Presentation
 + Stewart Morton – Support
 + Tony Rivera, SFFD - Maintenance

ACTION: Reviewed and Commented

ARC Comments:

Commissioner Johns applauded the design, noting that it was both appropriate for and compatible with its historic setting. Regarding the bright red interior elements that would be visible through the proposed float structure’s glazed exterior, Commissioner Johns remarked that the project would be improved if the color of these elements were changed to more closely match the color of Fire Station 35’s terra-cotta tile roof.

Commissioner Black also approved of the proposal, and voiced support for the proposed bright red color of the visible interior elements, noting that they helped identify the building as a Fire Boat Station. Commissioner Black questioned the suitability of the proposed metal cladding material in a marine environment. In response, the project team produced a material sample and confirmed that it had been designed with marine conditions in mind, had performed adequately when used in a similar project on the San Francisco waterfront, and would not pose reflectivity problems. Finally, Commissioner Black expressed some concern that historic Fire Station 35 would not be maintained under the current proposal. In response, the project team stated that the San Francisco Fire Department would be entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port of San Francisco to ensure regular maintenance of the historic building and proposed new features.

Commissioner Pearlman also embraced the proposal and appreciated the level of detail that had been included in the design. After initially questioning the appropriateness of the angled vehicular ramp leading to the float structure, he concluded that this configuration made sense from a functionality perspective. Commissioner Pearlman also noted that the terra-cotta screens that appeared in a previous version of the proposal might have been interesting, but he ultimately agreed that it would not be appropriate for the building's utilitarian setting.

The Commissioners concurred with Staff's finding that the proposal conforms to the Standards.

ADJOURNMENT 12:50 PM
ADOPTED AS AMENDED AUGUST 1, 2018