

**DRAFT**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF OPA-LOCKA**  
**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2024**  
**7:00 P.M.**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Historic Environmental Preservation Board (HEPB) meeting was called to order at 7:29 p.m. on Tuesday, July 30, 2024.

An opportunity was given to the public to email the HEPB Clerk prior to the HEPB meeting with any questions/comments/concerns on items to be heard on this evening's Agenda.

**2. ROLL CALL**

The following members of the Opa-locka Historic Environmental Preservation Board were present: Vice Chair Alexander Van Meel, Board Member Romer Ferguson III, Board Member Frances MacIntyre, Board Member William Robert Smith, and Board Member Nikisha Williams. Also present were Planning and Community Development Director Gregory Gay, Assistant City Attorney Jordan Gary, and Board Clerk Diana Cheng.

Absent Board Members: Chair Mykeshia Fenn and Board Member Zamarr Brown.

**3. MOMENT OF SILENCE**

All present observed a moment of silence.

**4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**5. ADD-ON ITEM(S)**

None.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- **HEPB 04-11-24**

**Motion** made by Board Member Williams, seconded by Board Member MacIntyre, to approve the minutes. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (5-0).

## 7. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)

None.

## 8. RESOLUTIONS:

1. **A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OPA-LOCKA, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD TO ISSUE A SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE STRUCTURE AT 721 SHARAR AVENUE FOR THE INSTALLATION OF 19 WINDOWS AND 2 DOORS ON THIS REGISTERED HISTORIC PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Board Member Williams requested clarification of whether or not the windows to be installed on the historic property were hurricane-resistant. Planning and Community Development Director Gregory Gay replied that the property owner is making a “one-for-one” change to its windows, which ensures that no stylistic changes will be made to the property. He added that if the owner were not installing impact-resistant windows, they would need to place additional protection over the structure’s windows.

Board Member Smith advised that including photos of the subject property and the proposed windows in the Board members’ information packets would have been helpful in allowing them to determine the appropriateness of the request. Director Gay confirmed that this will be done going forward.

**Motion** made by Board Member Williams, seconded by Board Member MacIntyre, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (5-0).

2. **A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OPA-LOCKA, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD TO ISSUE A SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE STRUCTURE AT 806 JANN AVENUE TO ALLOW FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR SYSTEM ON THE ROOF OF THE REGISTERED HISTORIC PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Vice Chair Van Mecl recused himself from hearing or voting upon the Item and left the dais. He ceded the gavel to Board Member Williams at this time.

Board Member Williams asked if the solar panels would be visible or would be placed flat on the roof. Director Gay observed that due to the nature of solar panel installation, it is likely that a portion of the panels facing the south may be visible from the public right-of-way. He was not certain of whether or not the panels may be adjustable.

**Motion** made by Board Member Smith, seconded by Board Member MacIntyre, to approve. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously (4-0). (Vice Chair Van Mecl recused himself from hearing or voting upon this Item.)

Vice Chair Van Mecl returned to the Board at this time.

## 9. DISCUSSIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Director Gay stated that a conference of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is scheduled to take place in West Palm Beach on Wednesday, July 31 through Sunday, August 4, 2024. He asked if any Board members planned to attend.

Board Member MacIntyre advised that although she would not be able to attend in person, a registration fee has been paid for a City Staff member if they wish to attend.

Vice Chair Van Mecl stated that he plans to attend the conference and give a lecture on the City's history, with an emphasis on inventory, archiving, and documenting historic sites. The lecture is scheduled for Sunday, August 4, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. He encouraged other Board members to attend if possible. Board Member Williams suggested that the offer of attendance be expanded to include other City residents, including City Commissioners.

Director Gay continued that there have been discussions of the process by which Certificates of Appropriateness are issued. The rules currently require most activities addressing historic properties to be brought before the HEPB. Staff is working to determine how this process could be modified. He concluded that he would like to bring the proposed modifications back to the next Board meeting for presentation.

Director Gay further clarified that the proposed changes include the following:

- Certain types of minor repairs would go through an administrative process for their Certificate of Appropriateness, which would be handled by Planning and Community Development Staff
- Larger, more significant items will continue to be brought before the HEPB

Board Member MacIntyre recommended outreach to the Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board, pointing out that their review process is divided between Staff and their board. Vice Chair Van Mecl recalled that in the past, the Board has discussed using Miami-Dade County's matrix for administrative and Board approval processes.

Director Gay continued that the City's Historic Preservation Grant is now available to owners of historic homes. Staff has hand-delivered information on this grant to many of these properties. The grant will help owners make improvements to their historic homes. Applications will be brought before the HEPB and the City Commission for approval.

Director Gay added that there may also be additional funds provided through the 10 North Group, formerly known as the Opa-locka Community Development Corporation, which has matched the City's grant amount of \$100,000. The City is working through details on how they may accept the additional funds.

Board Member Williams observed that not all City advisory boards regularly bring reports about their activities to the City Commission, and suggested that a Board member consider sharing information on the Historic Preservation Grant with the City's elected officials. Vice Chair Van Mecl stated that he would provide this report to the Commission.

Vice Chair Van Mecl continued that he also felt the Board is overdue in providing an update on the City's historic identity, including the work recently done by University of Florida faculty and students to document the conditions of Opa-locka's historic properties, both registered and unregistered. This may be helpful in justifying the use of City funds toward saving historic structures. He proposed that the Board members and City Staff prepare to make a presentation to the City Commission in September.

Vice Chair Van Mecl requested more information on the grant program. He also asked for an update on the consideration of issuing new markers, pointing out that the City Commission recently approved the designation of the Harry Hurt House as a historic landmark.

Opa-locka Economic Development Director Sol Bankole stated that there are roughly 30 registered historic homes in the City. He estimated that the grant process would continue throughout summer and fall 2024 and would ultimately come before the HEPB and the City Commission.

Vice Chair Van Mecl requested more information on the program's timeline. Director Bankole replied that funds remaining from the \$100,000 awarded to the grant program would be carried over into fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025.

Vice Chair Van Mecl also asked for more information on the placement of historic plaques, beginning with the Harry Hurt House. Director Bankole stated that he plans to discuss this further with Director Gay.

Vice Chair Van Mecl briefly described the design of the City's historic plaques, which follow the design recommended by the United States National Park Service. He requested feedback on whether to retain this design for the 2024-2025 program or

modify it. He also noted that some historic properties no longer have their plaques, and asked whether the Board members felt new plaques should be provided to the subject properties.

Board Member Smith commented that some information to be added to the historic plaques were the year in which the home was built, the year in which it was designated as historic, and the architect. He also recommended including the City's seal in the design.

Board Member MacIntyre advised that it may be possible to secure grant funding to produce plaques. She recommended less expensive ceramic plaques rather than bronze.

Board Member Williams suggested that the existing plaque design is suitable and she did not feel their redesign should be a priority.

Vice Chair Van Mecl stated that a brass plaque of the existing design would cost approximately \$420 to \$450. While he did not want to prioritize the disbursement of several plaques, he was in favor of providing one to a property owner at 305 Dunad Avenue who recently received a historic designation. He concluded that there should be an immediate consideration of plaque design so the City does not miss the opportunity to further publicize historic preservation and the grant program.

Vice Chair Van Mecl requested an update on the restoration of Opa-locka's Historic City Hall. Director Gay replied that the City hopes to complete this project by the end of calendar year 2024, and suggested that the City's Capital Improvement Manager present to the Board at their September 2024 meeting.

## **10. BOARD COMMENTS**

Board Member MacIntyre recalled that a number of issues were discussed at the Board's April 11, 2024 meeting, including:

- Certified Local Government application
- 2024 Tree City USA status
- Including historic preservation on the City's website
- Urban Forestry update
- Bird sanctuary status
- Demolition of a property on Sesame Street
- Rules and criteria for Board members

Director Gay advised that Staff has been aggressively working on all of these items and will bring them back at the next Board meeting.

Vice Chair Van Mecl recommended a Resolution to amend the number of Board members, which is currently set at nine. This has made it difficult for the Board to reach a quorum at times. He requested that this be discussed further as soon as possible. Director Gay confirmed that Staff plans to present this Item in September as well.

The Vice Chair also recognized Board Member Williams for her service as a Board member.

Board Member Williams stated that there are a number of homes in the City which are historic but have not been designated as such. She expressed concern that the City may lose some of these properties if modifications are made to them without taking their historic nature into consideration.

Board Member Williams also reminded the Board that its Charter addresses environmental concerns as well as historic preservation. She pointed out that there are both national and local efforts to ensure the planting of trees, which can help combat rising temperatures. She strongly recommended that the Board address the City's tree canopy.

Director Gay reported that Opa-locka's designation as a Tree City USA has been updated and the City has received this award for 2024-2025. He added that the application process has changed, now requiring an annual update for participating municipalities. The City must provide a report on how many trees have been saved, planted, or transplanted in a given year.

Board Member Ferguson recalled that he and Board Member MacIntyre had advocated for the planting of more shade trees in the City. He pointed out that palm trees cannot provide shade.

Vice Chair Van Mecl requested additional information on how to pursue the historic designation of a home without the homeowner's consent.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.