

M I N U T E S

Stakeholder Workshop for the MacDonald House

February 8, 2017

7:00 PM

The Casements

25 Riverside Drive
Ormond Beach, Florida

Ms. Laureen Kornel, Senior Planner, City of Ormond Beach, welcomed everyone to the MacDonald House Stakeholder's public workshop. Ms. Kornel introduced City Manager, Joyce Shanahan, and Commissioner Selby and Commissioner Littleton. Ms. Kornel stated that if anyone wants to follow the progress of the reports, they can do so by going to the Ormond Beach web site and following the link found under News and Announcements. The City has enlisted the services of Bender and Associates, who began the structures report last fall. The purpose of the report is to assess the historical significance of the MacDonald House, along with the current conditions, and there will be recommendations in the report. The report is expected to be completed by the end of April this year. Ms. Kornel introduced Mr. Bert Bender, who is leading the project, along with Mr. Jim Miller.

Mr. Bert Bender stated that he and his associates have been quite excited by the reaction they have seen from the community. It is always fascinating when people take a sincere interest in their heritage and the historic buildings in the area. Mr. Bender introduced Mr. Jim Miller who will review the history of the building.

Mr. Jim Miller stated that his background is in archeology in Florida. He also studied city and regional planning. While working as an archeologist, he worked up around the Palm Coast area and along the St. John's River. So, he has some background in this area, and this project has been fascinating, and he is really pleased to be part of it. Mr. Miller stated that he would present the results of the historical research and set the historic context of the MacDonald House. A majority of the research has been done by Mr. Jonathan Lammers, who grew up in Ormond Beach, and is an architectural historian. He became very excited about this project, and did a great job of researching the project. The results have been surprising and voluminous. It is now possible, through the internet, to do research at a level of intensity that could not have been done even five years ago.

Mr. Miller established the geographical context of the area, and pointed out several buildings that were prominent in the history of the MacDonald House. Mr. Miller reviewed the chronology of events that are relevant to the history of Ormond Beach and the history of the house, starting in 1845 and ending in 1997 when the City acquired the building. (Details of the chronology can be found in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.) The research revealed that the MacDonald House was built in 1903 for Margaret A. Stout, who was a close friend of John Anderson and J.D. Price, developers and co-founders of the Ormond Hotel. Ms. Stout was a department manager at the Hotel

and lived seasonally at the house for nearly 30 years, where she also operated a shop, a boarding house and a library. The house was designed and built by Sumner H. Gove, a prominent Daytona Beach architect, known especially for his grand houses and hotels in the area, often featuring towers like the one at the MacDonald House. Margaret Stout died in 1933 and the building was sold to William MacDonald and wife, who operated Billy's Tap Room two doors east.

Mr. Bender stated that the building has been gone through extensively. There is a basement under about ¼ of the house, with a door back by the pro shop. It appears to have been used as a root cellar, and it might have had some kind of mechanical equipment in it. There is water in the basement. From the basement you can see the underside of the floor to the main house, which is in quite good condition. The structural engineer that went through the house was quite jubilant that there was a basement, which saved him a lot of crawling underneath the structure to examine it.

Mr. Bender continued showing pictures of the main floor of the house, which has been renovated and is being used for several things. Mr. Bender showed many pictures of the 2nd and 3rd floors and the condition of the stairways, plastered walls, flooring, detailed trim work and hardware. Everything is quite recoverable and repairable.

Mr. Bender stated that part of the history that is so strong is the connection of the different facilities – the art museum and gardens, Billy's Tap Room, the MacDonald House, the Casements, and Rockefeller Gardens. There is a fence by the tennis courts that blocks off a small park that could be incorporated into the rest of the community. All of these elements could work together as a downtown complex of connected public spaces if the fencing and walkways could be rearranged between the tennis courts to allow circulation.

Mr. Jerry Valcik stated that his professional background is in civil and environmental engineering, and he had gone to the city web site and the material that had been published so far by Bender and Associates is excellent. Mr. Valcik asked if there is any evidence in the basement as to how high the water has ever been. Is there a serious water problem in the basement? Mr. Bender stated that the only evidence of water is the level that is in there right now. Since the walls are brick and the mortar joints are in relatively good condition, it is highly unlikely that there has been a lot of water down there. The Bender representatives were here shortly after Hurricane Matthew, and they feel the water was mainly from that storm. Mr. Bender was told that there is a similar issue at the Casements, and they had a sump pump installed in the basement to pump out the water. Mr. Bender stated that they will routinely dig a sump pit and put a sump pump in basements when they do restorations.

Mr. Valcik asked if it would be possible to expand the size of the basement. Mr. Bender stated this was not a viable option. They typically look at restoring buildings, returning them to what they were originally. Most of the projects that they work on, end up removing later additions that were put on the original building, and they return them to their original configuration. Expanding the basement wouldn't be appropriate.

Mr. Valcik asked if Bender & Associates have come up with a cost estimate yet. Mr. Bender stated that they are working on that right now. There are people pricing out

plaster, windows, doors, and there will be a cost estimate, along with grant resources for possible funding of the project.

Mr. Valcik asked if it was possible to relocate the building from a structural standpoint. Mr. Bender stated that there is no such thing as cannot do. If there is enough money, anything can be done. The main issue with moving this building, is that the cost to relocate the building and put a new foundation under, exceed the monies that would be received for the underlying property. Also, if the building stays in its current location, it retains its historic integrity and is now eligible for state grant funds and other grant funds that would not be available once it is picked up and moved. If there were a proposal to move the building, it would lose its entire value, and it makes no sense at all.

A member of the audience asked when the next meeting was being held. Ms. Kornel stated on Tuesday, February 21 in Room 103 at City Hall, starting at 5:30 p.m.

An audience member asked what the major work is that needs to be done to the building to preserve it. Mr. Bender stated that the priorities would be to stop water intrusion, which is a roofing issue, and the siding needs to be repaired. There is a major roof and wall leak in the tower and the condition of the plaster in the building has been ignored for many, many years.

Mr. Bender explained that when they talk about preservation, it really involves three things – preservation, rehabilitation and restoration. Preservation is the aspect of maintaining the property in good order. Restoration is returning a building to a specific period in time. Rehabilitation involves modifications to the building for adaptive use. In the case of the MacDonald House, there will be several suggested uses of the building in their final report. If the 2nd or 3rd floors were to be used for some kind of office space or commercial activity, there would have to be an elevator provided, or some kind of vertical access, in order to meet requirements of ADA. Once a project is completed, then we talk about preservation. What we call preservation in America, the Europeans call maintenance. It's taking care of the building that you have, and maintaining it in good order. There is no way that the MacDonald House could be replaced. It represents far more than just a place to lay your head. It represents your heritage. It is always cheaper to repair what you have, than to tear it down and start over.

A gentleman in the audience stated that he has lived in Ormond Beach for six years and believes it would be a crime to do anything with this building but restore it. He has had 40 years in the restoration business in Philadelphia and he saw the write-up in the newspaper and that is why he is attending this meeting. One question he has is, what is the basement constructed of? Is it stone rubble? Mr. Bender stated that it is brick. The gentleman asked if there was a party wall with the neighboring building. Mr. Bender stated that there is no party wall.

Mr. Phil Dotson stated that he did the design work to make the MacDonald House into a museum, and he has 40 years' experience in commercial design. He stated that Mr. Bender showed that there were two flights of stairs coming down, where there is now one. Mr. Bender stated that the second stairway is the one that goes to the third floor. Mr. Dotson stated that there is a double-wide stairway going from the first floor to the

second floor. Mr. Bender stated that he would like to talk to Mr. Dotson about that detail, because he didn't find that kind of framing.

Mr. Dotson stated that it would be easy to get a 2-story ADA lift to go to the second floor at the back of the building, because the lift is a lot different than an elevator. The lift won't go three stories, but two floors would have a possibility to move along and do whatever is decided. Mr. Bender stated that the report will discuss different options for ADA access.

Another gentleman in the audience asked if there were any asbestos or lead paint issues. Mr. Bender stated that there was an extensive lead and asbestos survey done, and there is some asbestos, but it is pretty minor, in a small area where some glue was used on a vinyl floor. There is some lead paint. The gentleman then asked during the renovation, if the building would be brought up to code for energy efficiency. (*Note: although not mentioned at the meeting, historic buildings are exempt from the energy code.*) Mr. Bender answered that many times when more insulation is put in; the walls will trap moisture which can rot the walls out. The energy savings is difficult to justify sometimes. At the recently renovated Historic Depot Building in Gainesville, the energy models showed that it could take up to one hundred years to pay back the cost of the insulation in energy savings. If they allowed for inflationary trends, it still could have taken 56-63 years. You have to weigh the pros and cons. At first it seems like the thing to do to save energy is to add insulation, but it isn't the best option in the long run, especially considering the energy used to procure replacement materials that rotted due to trapped moisture.

A woman from the audience asked Mr. Bender to clarify the fireplace status, and is the shaft sealed over. Mr. Bender showed where the stairs go up to the 2nd floor, there is a door to what is being called the dining room, and showed where a fireplace was located, and where there is a hearth. When they pulled up the carpet, there was tile floor from the hearth. On the second floor there is a closet, and that is where the chimney came through the floor. You can actually see where the floor was patched. The chimney then continued up and through the roof, and there is physical evidence where it was patched in the roof. There are photographs that show that a chimney existed. This is an element, if you want to do a true restoration, you would put the chimney back no matter what the cost might be. In a case where the building is being rehabilitated for a new use, whether it's a museum or a store with apartments or offices on the 2nd and 3rd floor, it is difficult to justify putting the chimney back.

A gentleman stated that earlier Mr. Bender had stated that if you move the building, it would lose its historical significance. The City lets the Historical Society have their offices at the MacDonald House because they run the Welcome Center. They get over 1700 visitors a year asking questions about the town. If they moved the building, they probably wouldn't get that many people in the building anymore. Mr. Bender stated that the location for this type of activity, a visitor center or museum, is a good one. Mr. Bender stated that their job isn't to tell the City what to do with the building. Their job is to assemble valuable information, present it to the City, provide different options, and assist the Commission in making an informed decision.

Someone stated that if the fireplace and chimney were not going to be replaced, wouldn't that be a good place for an elevator. Mr. Bender stated that was an excellent question. That would be an excellent option, although the size would be pretty small, but it is something that he will look into.

Another gentleman asked if Mr. Bender had looked into the issue of the elevator getting to the third floor. Mr. Bender stated that the way the ADA works, a lot depends on what is done with the space that is there. Mr. Bender hasn't worked with the City's Building Official, so he doesn't know how certain things will be interpreted. If the 2nd and 3rd floors were to become apartments, then an elevator would not be needed. If the 2nd and 3rd floors become office space, there has to be an elevator, or it has to have some other form of vertical access. The gentleman asked if there was a problem getting an elevator to the 3rd floor. Mr. Bender stated that if there is enough money, there is nothing you can't do. One option would be to put an elevator at the back of the building to access the 2nd and 3rd floor. In the analysis that Bender & Associates is doing, they will give a lot of different options for consideration.

Elysha Petaschauder, Executive Director, Ormond Historical Society, asked if Mr. Bender would be meeting with the Fire Marshal and Chief Building Official prior to completing his report, to see what codes they may require. Mr. Bender stated that is typically not a requirement of theirs for the report, but he doesn't have a problem meeting with them.

A gentleman asked what material the joists were made out of. Mr. Bender stated that the structural joists were made from pine. There are some structural issues that have to be addressed, but Mr. Bender was surprised that there wasn't much termite damage.

A woman stated that there is a noticeable dip in the floor about where the basement goes to the crawl space, in the hallway by the men's room, and wondered what is causing that. Mr. Bender stated that there are no issues with the foundation. They did find a couple of beams in the floor that were rotted. There are also some beams that have a span that is too long. There is an area in the back, on the first floor, that was not level, and he suspected that someone had added something on top of the floor, and that is why there is a bump.

Mr. Dotson stated that he had heard that the structure was balloon construction, and wanted to know if Mr. Bender found this to be the case. Mr. Bender stated that several people within the company do different phases of the assessment of the house, and he did not do the structural part. Mr. Bender doesn't recall that it is balloon framing, but given the period that it was built in, it could be balloon framing. Mr. Dotson asked that if it is balloon framing, and they wanted to move it...Mr. Bender stated that it doesn't matter if it is balloon framing or platform framing; they just raise the house up and put a new foundation under it. Moving buildings is not an insurmountable thing that can't be done. It is just a matter of deciding what you want to do. For example, if there is a sink hole and the only way to save the historic building is to move it, then you would be able to get an exception to move it, while still retaining its historic significance.

A woman in the audience stated that there is an underground river in Ormond that runs under the MacDonald House and up John Anderson, and there is a house on Riverside Drive that has a sump pump. She also added she is glad to see all of this happening, but

this is all like re-inventing the wheel. Twenty-four years ago the Casements Park Steering Committee was formed with the Historic Trust and Garden Club and the Casements Guild, and they lobbied the City. The mayor wanted the MacDonald House torn down and wanted a double-wide put there as an office for the tennis courts. All of these groups fought it, and Mrs. Chapman Rupp gave the money to hire a structural engineer from Jacksonville to do the same kind of assessment. Since that time the City has not maintained the structure and here we are again, and she is so grateful that the City hired Bender & Associates and that they have come up with such a positive report. It is ironic that if they had maintained the building for the past 24 years, there wouldn't be all of these issues and it wouldn't cost that much more to restore. Historical awareness has really risen because so much has been lost. This is now the flagship building on Granada, and needs to stay where it is.

Mr. Bender stated that it is important to recognize that people tend to come together when it is time to say no. People should come together long before that. If this is a building that galvanizes the community, it is a wonderful thing to happen.

A gentleman asked if a complete restoration and preventative maintenance are in the future, could Mr. Bender comment from his experience about the longevity of the MacDonald House. Mr. Bender stated 100 years. He has routinely seen buildings that are hundreds of years old, and if they are properly maintained, they will last indefinitely. Mr. Bender stated that in the Czech Republic, he went through some of the old buildings, and they laugh at Americans who call 50 year old buildings "historical". They consider buildings that are 200-300 years old to be new. They are not considered to be old buildings.

A gentleman asked that if the state had given money for funding of the restoration of the MacDonald House, and the City demolished the house, would they have to give the money back? Mr. Bender stated that when money is given to a City for a special category grant, usually a 10 year covenant is signed. If the work that would have been covered by the grant was longer than 10 years ago, the money would not be returned. Even if the building had been demolished three years after renovation was completed, the litigation involved would cost more than the total grant, making litigation highly unlikely.

One of the audience participants commended the City for hiring Bender & Associates, a firm that can give people information and details that have been supplied, and that have a track record like they do. She asked what the next steps would be, assuming City Commission agrees that we want to preserve our heritage and save the building. What would need to be done for acquiring a grant, raising funds, and so forth.

Mr. Bender stated that the submittal the City has right now is the 60% submittal. The City Commission workshop will be a 90% submittal, which for all intents and purposes will be the final document, with only information obtained at that 3rd and final workshop to be added. The 90% submittal will have cost estimates, possibilities for grant funding, and they are now pricing out items to come up with costs. There will be variables, based on the final use of the building, whether it needs an elevator or not. So there will be a lot of flexibility in terms of what may or may not occur in terms of budget. In terms of funding, the property will qualify for a Division of Historical Resources (DHR) Special Category grant of \$500,000. The grant must have a 50% match from the City of

\$250,000, which would then give a total of \$750,000. There could be a possibility of an additional \$500,000 from the Echo Grant, which could give a return on the City's investment of 5:1. (*Note: the maximum ECHO grant is \$400,000 and requires a dollar for dollar match.*) The 90% submittal will have numbers, because everyone wants to know what this is going to cost.

A gentleman in the audience asked if he understood it correctly that with the money that is put into this project, and with Mr. Bender's experience, that the return on investment is 5:1. Mr. Bender stated that the return on investment would be if the City comes up with \$250,000, there would be \$500,000 from the state DHR, and another \$500,000 from the Echo Grant, that is tax money. The state is going to spend that tax money, whether this project gets it or not. If the City can get \$1,000,000 for putting up \$250,000, that is a great return on investment.

Mr. Bender continued that he had a conversation with Mr. Lewis Heaster, who wanted to buy the land that the MacDonal house sits on, and then the City would move the house at their expense. Mr. Bender stated that if the situation was reversed, and he owned the property, and he went to Mr. Heaster and told him that he wanted to buy the land under his property, and wanted him to move his building, and then spend money on land, foundations and moving the building, would you take that deal? Once the building has been moved, it no longer qualifies for any grant money. Does that make financial sense to anyone? The point is that Mr. Bender doesn't see a good side to demolishing or moving this building. He has a prejudice toward saving this building.

A gentleman in the audience asked why there is any discussion on moving the building. Mr. Bender explained that there was a proposal from someone to buy the land to expand the neighboring businesses. The only way to do that was to buy the building and move it, or to completely demolish it. Mr. Bender stated that he showed that person on paper that if the City were to restore the building with the \$1,250,000 that Mr. Bender talked about earlier, that he could then lease the building from the City, or buy it with a lifetime deed restriction that said he must maintain it in its historical configuration in perpetuity. Then the City could turn around and sell it to him. It just doesn't make sense to tear down a perfectly good building, whether it is historic or not.

Ms. Kornel thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. If there are any additional questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Kornel. Please remember that the next workshop will be at 5:30 p.m. on February 21, at City Hall Room 103.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Nagel, Recording Secretary

Minutes transcribed by Melanie Nagel