

El Cerrito Historical Society

Minutes of Board meeting October 13, 2022

Board Members Present: David Weinstein, Dianne Brenner, John Falconer, Tom Panas, Pat Shaw, Michael Martin

Others present: Ed Crowley

****Indicates Action Items****

- 1.) **Minutes:** There were no comments on the minutes of the prior meeting.
 - a. We discussed the need for a way to regularly follow up on pending action items from previous meetings. Tom Panas suggested that we add an agenda item "Old Business", which would occur on the agenda prior to proceeding with new business. After some discussion, Tom made a motion to approve this idea, John Falconer seconded it and it was approved by a unanimous voice vote.
- 2.) **Treasurer's Report:** Tom Panas reported income of \$500 from dues and donations, including a new life member, and expenses of \$905.64, primarily for printing and mailing of The Forge. John and Ed will discuss the current cost of web hosting, to see if there is a way to reduce this cost. Tom reported the balance in the checking account as of September 30, 2022 is \$20,593.48. The Undesignated Assets balance is \$15,093.48 and the Designated Assets balance is \$5,500.
- 3.) **Comments from Board (not on agenda):**
 - a. We had received a request to co-sponsor a display of matchboxes from old El Cerrito businesses. We will not be co-sponsoring the event, but we will help publicize it.
 - b. Dave went to a meeting of the Contra Costa historical societies. Most of the other societies are larger than ours. This group will meet again in the future and will probably prove useful.
 - c. There is a video on Netflix about Creedence Clearwater Revival, a film of their performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London.
- 4.) **Public Comment: None**
- 5.) **Re-formatting informational brochures:** John has received electronic files of these brochures from both Dianne and Tom. ****He and Dianne will discuss**** how to change the layout of the brochure panels so the front cover opens like a book, with the fold on the left edge.
- 6.) **Story Poles:** At our last meeting a presentation was made, asking the Society to support a requirement that story poles be erected when a residential remodel project requires a variance. After discussion, the Board agreed that our interest would be

limited to houses that are of historic interest, not every project that might come up. Tom pointed out that neighbors within a defined radius of a proposed project are already notified when there is a request for a variance, and all relevant information is available to those neighbors. Further, he said that the city has been good about informing the Society about proposed changes to buildings that might be of historic interest. Tom made a motion to not support the request for support story poles on all variance projects. John seconded and the motion carried with one “no” vote.

Anyone can file paperwork to create a historic district or site. Ed suggested that the society should undertake to nominate certain neighborhoods. We will follow up with Planning staff regarding progress on the survey of historical properties in El Cerrito that was initiated several years ago. There are significant pockets worth of preservation, and several coherent neighborhoods.

Dianne mentioned that Albany appears to have a requirement that residential remodels retain the design style of the original house, so even when numerous (or any) houses add a second story, for example, the neighborhood retains its design character. That way, Albany seems to have largely avoided having a contemporary house being built in a neighborhood of bungalows.

7.) **Events:**

- a. **Blake Garden Tour:** Dave reports this went well
- b. **Camp Herms Tour:** This will not be happening any time soon, due to difficulties with communication with camp staff.
- c. **Sunset Cemetery Tour:** Tom agrees to leading a tour. The Cemetery has asked us to limit attendance to 50, because a larger group is disruptive to people who might be visiting. Tom will arrange with the cemetery for a weekend date for the tour, possibly after the start of the new year. He will let us know the date.
- d. **Flat-Top Smith:** This is a program that was postponed at the start of the pandemic. Dave will inquire about re-scheduling it as a live program in 2023.

8.) **Annual Meeting:**

- a. Chris Sterba has agreed to present a program on El Cerrito’s Ouija Board controversy as part of the Annual Meeting agenda, but he will only do it as a live program. Dianne suggested we offer the live program along with a Zoom option for those who prefer not to attend in person. ****Dave will ask Chris if this would be OK with him.****
- b. Tom raised the question about why the Annual Meeting always takes place in January, which is prior to the end of the fiscal year (Jan. 31). It would require a change to the by-laws to change the Annual Meeting to February.
- c. Dave plans to reserve the Garden Room at the Community Center for the meeting. John agreed to handle the technology and will need to look into WiFi access from this room if Chris agrees to the combined Live/Streamed type of meeting.

- 9.) **Website:** John asked for feedback on the changes he has recently made to the website. A few people have sent him comments, and ****Dianne said she would also.****
- 10.) **Security Certificate for the website:** We need a member of the California bar to sign the request letter for the security certificate. ****John will send Michael the template for the letter, and Michael will have a member of the California bar sign it.****
There should be no charge for this.
- 11.) **Archiving, Research, Donations:**
- a. Barbara Hill and Chris Sterba are making good progress on archiving materials in the Shadi Room. Once they get further along in this project, it may be possible for them to involve interns or students in ongoing maintenance of the collection. They will probably need to purchase some archiving materials.
 - b. We are getting requests for information on a regular basis. The new Fire Chief has requested information about the history of the Department. Dave will forward the Chief's request to Chris S., Tom P., and Barbara H. Ed Sterba expressed an interest in helping in the future with inquiries from the public. Ideally, a small team could be developed to respond to these inquiries.
 - c. Re-Opening the Shadi Room: Maybe by the end of this year, Tom will be able to meet people at the Shadi Room.
 - d. Dave has plans to meet a member of the family that has occupied a house on Navellier Street since 1926. The family is presently cleaning out the house.
- 12.) **Sparks and Forge:**
- a. Dave has two stories ready for the next Forge – one on the Little Hill Lounge, and another on barbershops in El Cerrito. A third article, written by Michael Martin on the subject of growing up in El Cerrito in the 50s and 60s is nearly ready. He is adding some photos and ****expects to have it to Dave by 10/17.**** Dave's goal is to produce 4 issues of the Forge in 2023.
 - b. The next Sparks should be out in the next few weeks.
- 13.) **Copyrighted Materials on the website:** Tom reported that we do have permission to offer a link to the book Harem Scarem in El Cerrito, so ****John will restore the link.****
- 14.) **Adjourn.**