

El Cerrito Historical Society

Minutes of Board meeting September 10, 2022

Present: David Weinstein, Dianne Brenner, John Falconer, Tom Panas

Guest: Sara Leavitt

****Indicates Action Items****

- 1.) **Minutes**: Dave pointed out an error in the minutes of the previous meeting and John said he will make the necessary correction to the minutes, as they are already on the website.
- 2.) **Comments from the Board on non-agenda items: none**
- 3.) **Treasurer's Report**: Tom Panas reported income of \$90 from dues, and expenses of \$50 for supplies for the Shadi Room. The balance in the checking account as of August 31, 2022 is \$20,999.12. The Undesignated Assets balance is \$15,449.12 and the Designated Assets total balance is \$5,500.
- 4.) **Comments from Public**: Sara Leavitt made a presentation on the subject of Neighborhood Preservation. She is advocating that El Cerrito require the installation of story poles on proposed residential construction projects which require an exception or variance for size, etc., and she is seeking support from the EC Historical Society. Story poles are constructed on the existing house to show the size and shape of the proposed changes which require an exception to normal rules. Without them, neighbors and other interested parties may not fully understand the impact of the proposed changes to a home's size and shape. She emphasized that story poles would be required only for projects requiring an exception or variance.
 - a. El Cerrito does not have a design review process for single-family homes. We are mindful that El Cerrito also wants to expand housing, with multi-family buildings, ADUs, etc.
 - b. Questions include: What cost would this add to a project? Unknown. How long would the poles be required to stay up? From 14 days prior to the hearing, until the end of the appeal period.
 - c. Apparently, zoning administrators can require poles now on a case-by-case basis.
 - d. Dave suggested we should continue to discuss the issue, and he suggests we should seek language that limits our support to requiring story poles on homes that are deemed to be of historic value. Story poles are a potential tool to support the goal of historic preservation. EC Historical Society supports the consistency of appearance and value of neighborhoods.

****Dave will send to Board members Sara's language/proposal so that we can discuss it more at our next meeting.****

- 5.) **Forge distribution:** We have been providing free copies of The Forge in the racks at City Hall, at the library and at events. Dave wants to return to this model, providing lots of free copies to the community. Dianne suggested that every issue should have a member sign-up form and the website address. There was some discussion of what other local historical societies do in this regard (providing free copies to the community). There was a consensus among those present that we continue giving away copies. There are several events coming up where we might find out how other historical societies handle this question, including a meeting of Contra Costa historical societies, which Dave will attend, and the East Bay History Fair at the Stanford House in Oakland on September 10, which John plans to attend. They can ask other societies about their policies on distributing their newsletters to their communities.
- a. We want to look into having a table at the Solano Stroll in future years.
 - b. In order to provide value to society members, we briefly considered hosting member-only events.

5 ½.) **Re-formatting our brochures:** ****Dianne will send the brochure files to John****, who will look into re-arranging the panels of the brochures to revise how the panels fold, so the cover opens like a book, hinged on the left side.

- 6.) **Blake Garden Tour:** Dave reports we currently have about 50 people signed up for the tour. He will allow a few more to sign up, to allow for no-shows. Dave said he will get refreshments, to be offered for free to attendees.
- 7.) **Matchbox covers event:** We have been asked to co-sponsor this event. We need to assess that these items being sold are copyright free before we decide about participating. Dave will ask about this and get back to us.
- 8.) **Events at Realtor Open Houses:** A real estate agent has suggested that the Historical Society seek to partner with realtors to offer events like a broker open house for our members when an architecturally significant home comes on the market. The Board was generally in support of this idea. Perhaps there could be opportunities for events at significant homes in addition to when they are for sale.
- 9.) **Website:** John reports he has done lots of cleaning up and updating of the website. The Search feature is now more prominent, articles and documents are searchable. Dianne suggested refreshing the background color and she and John will work together to find suitable colors.
- 10.) **Archiving:** Dave says the Society has recently received several scrapbooks.
- 11.) **Copyrights:** We need more information about what materials we do and don't need to provide credits for. ****Dave will check with reference and archive professionals about the rules for this.****
- a. Dianne suggested that the link to the book "Harem Scarem in El Cerrito" should be removed from the website, as it is a copyrighted book, until and unless we

can confirm that we have permission to offer it for free. ****John said he will remove the link.****

- 12.) **Security certificate for our website:** This task is still pending.
- 13.) **Capability to accept on-line payment of dues:** ****John will look into arrangements for being able to accept on-line payment of dues.**** Currently, we are only set up to accept checks.