

Public Comments – Meeting July 11, 2018

(01:14:00) Mark Crosslin

I think you all need to split out the expansion from the historic district. Those processes are very different things. Having lived through one, I don't think you can do a one size fits all. Then it brings up issues like the expansion really gets down to the individual owner who are using a small group, not 200 or 300 people. I think what you have here may be fine for the overall district, but I don't think it applies well for the expansion.

When the property owners get to landmark commission meetings, I think they need to be treated individually, heard and allotted a specific amount of time for each one. What happens with us, all the property owners were all forced into five or ten minutes vs the community for five or ten minutes. I think the community clearly can state their decision about initiation. I felt like we were cheated to have to share a time. I couldn't discuss the attributes of my property.

Something was said in the last few minutes talking about forcing property owners into the group status. This feels wrong. I think that every property should be able to appeal individually. I also have some concerns about landmark commissioners creating the statements and providing, what I think is going to be a biased view. What we currently have is the staff creating a report in 180 days. The staff has more accountability, they fear for their jobs, which might come back on them if they produce fraudulent information. I'm worried there are not good reports back to landmark commissioners. I would rather see the staff create any documentation so it can be confirmed and the citizens can trust the civil servants are producing something fair and accurate. If landmark commissioners are going to provide information then they probably ought to recuse themselves from voting on it. This goes back to one of the comments Mark Doty made at the beginning of this meeting which was you need to have a process for city council reviewing its own things.

Something was said about the desire to speed up the process. I reviewed the video from the 25 minutes that our appeal was heard and nowhere did I hear the council talk about speeding up the process. I think all that does is prevent the property owner's rights.

If you're going to go with one size fits all in this process, it doesn't really sound like it's addressing what the city council wanted to do which was bring the property owners' voices into it. From what I can see when Mark Doty used the term "beefed up" the community meeting, it really sounds like a lot of opposition from ten property owners vs hundreds of neighbors. I'm concerned about thinking you're going to beef up the report from the committee meeting.

Again, after reviewing the video, I think there was some confusion on what was actually given. I'm worried about whether the group is working towards the spirit. **The gentleman stated he was pleased to hear the commissioner's voice (Mateo). ** A lot of commissioners are looking at

this process as a way to “box in” the property owners more, and I think the spirit of what the city council was looking for was property owners rights.

(01:20:15) Don Maison

I’d like to make a statement regarding the difference between the commencement of a historic district and the expansion. In our case there were 11 properties that were included. We were “railroaded” into this thing, which caused a problem and the appeal.

(01:21:10) Traswell Livingston

The process was withdrawn and how it was that an appeal was filed, because it felt bumpy going through that process. I was enlightened that was a rare occurrence. So if that’s the case, I’m trying to understand as far as “beefing up” the designation report. The tone of the meetings I was talking about seemed a bit lopsided. The discussion to request to speak at the city council meeting by the landmark commissioners, meaning let’s get one more chance to speak our case. I argued this like court. The landmark has pushed this whole process, and deliberated and had three members or whatever. Now, we want to have one more shot to speak and argue the case. This was the owner’s last minute “hook in the sand” to stop this from happening. Yet and still we want to focus on balancing it out so that we get one more voice to argue against this. I think odds are stacked against homeowners already based on resources and they’re having a life. Responding to this randomly, to be forced to do that I don’t think it is part of the spirit of balancing it out, in my opinion. We’re all sensitive and get defensive but at the end of the day we were trying to make this process something that engages the community or at least allow a balanced dialogue. That’s why I talked about educating the community with not just resources of possible tax savings but also just about the process and how they can educate themselves with everything they’re going to be involved with. Because they may have gotten this random letter in the mail and they may not know anything about this and you all are experts on not only properties but the process. If you’re talking about a property and trying to get feedback from everyone, it’s just an open forum to hear. It’s not about “hey let’s strengthen this side so that we can defend it better as we go along and beef it up.” I think that spirit is the wrong spirit. I love the idea of having the recusal of the three recommended landmark commissioners. To me that helps the balance. If you’re arguing something and it speaks for itself, then the vote should go without those three.

Last thing, completely different subject, I am a little biased because I live in a historic district that is a low income zip code of Dallas, and there is a financial burden on the historic district. I know there are tax incentives or rebates, but that’s different for the cost savings burden than putting money in your pocket to fix up your home. It’s different than saving money because I spent 30 thousand, I saved 5. I would like to see more thought and time spent into it. A comment was

made that this slows gentrification. If this slows gentrification, I would like to see how this is linked to financial opportunities for some of the homeowners. In my district, where the average age is about 59 and the income is about 35 thousand, I just don't see the upside. Although we have beautiful homes in and out the district, I think there's a financial burden, I know personally, and I think consideration should be a priority just in general with landmark. Think about the meetings and how they take place, its 30 days' notice to get your information put on the docket. That is time and money for the homeowner while they're waiting. I think these are all layers of the historic district that some people with resources are burdened with differently than others. I think if we can consciously think about opportunities or benefits for them, I think that's valuable.

(01:31:55) Landmark Commissioner Evelyn Montgomery

One thing we would love is to find an effective way to get education out to everyone that could be affected by historic preservation. It would be lovely if everyone knew they lived in a preservation district and chose to be there. We haven't found a way to that yet. We wish education would let them know that fixing an emergency such as air or a roof is often a quick process of just sending pictures to the staff and they give a staff approval CA. You're going to be forced with changes. I was a little troubled by some of your implications that if we were able to speak about why we thought something should be initiated, we would be a biased advocate. We're on landmark commission because there are various areas of expertise that apply. We have lawyers, real estate people, people with some input, and we go in there wanting to look at what's the best form of preservation for Dallas. What things merit being preserved balanced with other considerations and what don't. Therefore we are not always going to be able to side preservation of a particular building that's before us. We must first be convinced using our judgment. We can be an unbiased advocate for the convincing argument that we have heard. We do not go in and say preserve every building. I hope that we can be credited with using good judgment, fairness and not just being an advocate and that we look at everything in a balanced manner. I prefer to be characterized as that.

(01:33:55) Landmark Commissioner Michael Amonett

What I found missing at the appeal was an advocate for the building and for the neighborhood. I like what I heard that commissioners going forward would be able to be the advocates for the buildings at the council meeting. We're talking about districts and neighborhoods. It will be the neighborhoods left with the demolition and whatever is built in its place. It's the neighborhood that's invested time and money so at the very least I think it's the neighborhood that should have an opportunity to on the impact it would have on the neighborhood. At the hearing, it was like the neighborhood wasn't involved at all and we know they were there and spoke. The decision was supposed to be about whether or not the properties were worthy, and majority of the

conversation became about the process, which is why we're here today, and I think that's a good thing.