

Louisiana National Register Review Committee Meeting

August 9, 2012, 1:30 p.m.
Capitol Park Welcome Center
702 North River Road
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Minutes

Chairperson Lynn Lewis called the August 9, 2012 meeting of the National Register Review Committee to order at 1:37 p.m. In addition to Mr. Lewis, members present included John Sykes, Dr. Rebecca Saunders, Glenna Kramer, Lestar Martin, Mrs. Sue Turner, Mrs. Ann Williams, Wayne Coco, Dr. Philip Cook and Dr. John Hall. Mrs. Mary Louise Christovich and Gary Cooper were absent.

Due to a request to address the Committee from Mr. Martin, Mr. Lewis asked for a motion to approve alteration of the agenda as previously posted. Dr. Hall so moved and Dr. Saunders seconded. This motion passed unanimously.

After this formality, Division of Historic Preservation staff member Alison Saunders welcomed the Committee and audience to the meeting. Ms. Saunders explained that the leadership of the Office of Cultural Development asked her to give the welcome because of conflicts in their schedules. She then expressed her support, as Tax Credit Program Manager, for the Corona Building nomination. If this building is listed on the National Register, it will become a tax credit project. After Saunders' spoke, National Register Coordinator Patricia Duncan introduced the members of the Review Committee to the audience. Next, Chairman Lewis asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2011 meeting. Dr. Saunders so moved, with Mr. Martin seconding. This motion also passed unanimously. Afterward, Mr. Lewis asked the audience if anyone other than the presenters planned to speak in support or opposition to a nomination. There was no response. The Committee then turned to the review of the sole nomination on the agenda.

Corona Building, East Baton Rouge Parish Erin Brush and Harriet Swift

Composed of glazed brick, the Corona Building is a rectilinear, two-story commercial building with large window openings for displaying retail products. Although it was expanded after the periods of significance, it remains recognizable to anyone from the historic period. The building is locally significant under Criterion A in two areas. These include: Community Planning and Development, as a rare surviving building associated with an early twentieth century Baton Rouge commercial corridor and streetcar suburb (period of significance, 1925-1940), and Ethnic Heritage/European for its representation of the Italian American experience in that city (period of significance 1925-1935). Served by streetcars that made transportation easy, newly emerging mixed residential and commercial suburbs like that around North and Dufrocq streets were a magnet for many rural working class people, immigrants, and businesses. Records show that the North Street Area (as the neighborhood was called) was thickly populated by Italian immigrants, families, and businesses owned or operated by Italians. The latter advertised the neighborhood's commercial corridor as a busy but affordable business location. The area's

immigrant history is illustrated by the career of Sicilian immigrant Luca Corona. After prospering in Louisiana's sugar cane fields, he moved to the North Street Area and went into the baking business. In 1925, he had the multi-use corner building constructed. He also lived in the immediate neighborhood and may have lived in the candidate while renting store space to other businessmen. Corona retained the building until the Great Depression destroyed his finances. As a result, the bank took control in 1935. Later the Olinde hardware and furniture store purchased and altered it.

After the presentation, Mrs. Kramer asked how the building will be used when rehabilitated. Kathy LaBorde of the Gulf Coast Housing Authority explained that it will be mixed use—apartments, retail and offices. Development will begin when and if the building is added to the Register. Mr. Coco asked if the building will be a tax credit candidate and if the first step in the application process has been submitted. The answer to both questions was affirmative. Dr. Cook asked the consultant to correct a factual error in the nomination. Dr. Saunders and Mr. Lewis asked about possible exterior changes. Project architect Trulie Renson responded that damaged glazed bricks will be repaired. Additionally she has worked with Division of Historic Preservation tax credit staff to choose an appropriate cornice and glazing to replace what has been lost from the building. Mr. Sykes inquired if the Olinde's use of the building might also be historic, but that does not appear to qualify under Register guidelines. Dr. Saunders then asked the number of residential units to be created; the number is 37. After discussion, Mr. Martin moved and Mr. Coco seconded that the Committee recommend the nomination to State Historic Preservation Officer. The motion passed unanimously.

Moving back to Old Business, Mr. Lewis recognized Mr. Martin. The latter updated the Committee on his problem in obtaining insurance coverage for his National Register property. Thanks to the resolution passed by the Committee last fall, he was able to get coverage at a lower price. Mr. Martin then asked that staff find a way to place the resolution in the hands of property owners to assist others who may be having insurance coverage difficulties. Staff agreed to research methods to accomplish this.

After the insurance discussion National Register Coordinator Patricia Duncan presented a short training program on the right of the public to comment on proposed listings and the right of property owners to object to listing. During the following discussion, Dr. Saunders asked if there is a way the Committee can be informed when the National Park Service disagrees with their decisions. Duncan agreed to share NPS rejection letters when they are received and discussed NPS's reasons for denying the Pleasant Hill Battlefield nomination and the appeal of the levee breaches nomination.

The next item on the agenda was the state-required Ethics Training, presented via a DVD. Mr. Lewis, an approved monitor, supervised the training. Mrs. Kramer, Mrs. Turner, Mr. Martin, Dr. Cook, Dr. Hall, and Mr. Coco, participated in the one-hour program. Mrs. Williams, Mr. Sykes, and Dr. Saunders did not take part because they had already received the training. During the video Mr. Lewis asked for confirmation that Review Committee members cannot lobby the Legislature. Coordinator Duncan promised to research the matter.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.