

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
Tuesday, February 11, 2020  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Alan Mesecher.....Chairman  
Suzanne Perry ..... Vice Chairman  
Ben Meadows. .... Member  
Robin Craig-Hunt.....Member

**Members Absent:**

None

**Staff Present:**

Mike Kunst, City Manager  
Kelvin Knauf, Director of Planning & Community Development  
Wendy Lloyd, Planning Secretary  
Leigh Anne Dallas, Event Manager & EDC Assistant

**City Council Members Present:**

Brad Childs

Chairman Mesecher called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

None

**REGULAR BUSINESS - APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

Member Meadows motioned to approve the December 10, 2019 meeting minutes  
Vice Chair Perry 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Vote: 4 - 0**

**Motion Carries**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Consider allowing artwork in the historic districts**

Mr. Knauf stated one of the things the city is looking at is improving the quality of life and the appearance of the city through artwork. Mr. Kunst, it is one of his ideas of ways to improve Orange and that would be throughout the city but also in the historic districts. It's not something we've discussed but it's something I think would be very valuable and very attractive to help improve the appearance not only of the community but the historic districts. There're just different ideas that we're kind of kicking around.

City Manager, Mike Kunst stated again to beautify our city through art. Other communities do it. There is some here in Orange, but we'd like to do it more. This is on the door side of the library. It's fourteen by six and a half and so we had the idea of let's paint something on there. So, I contacted Terry Businger who I've worked with before and so he came up with this little design. Obviously, the rest of these books would be painted. I think its very eye catching and could appeal to people. So, what we may want to do other places, specifically, the city owns a piece of property on Park and Simmons. My idea would be for us to build a small sign similar to like what's on Simmons Field, that small sign. We start small and see how it goes. What would it look like? I don't have a clue. When I asked this guy and said this is what I got and come up with something. He said what's your idea. I said if I could come up with these ideas, I wouldn't be asking him. So, he comes out with this that night. I don't know if he did that in five minutes, seconds or what but it's a lot better that I could have come up with it. So, to say that this what we want to put there on Park and Simmons on this wooden sign about the same size as Simmons Field, I don't know. Obviously, we would want something that would enhance the city. The overall idea, when Chick-Fil-A and Starbucks comes, people are either going to the casino or are on their way home. People need to stop and get a cup of coffee or get something. Somewhere in there we have something that entices them to go a little bit further, a little bit further until they are finally in historic downtown Orange and they can see all these cool things going on here. We want to be a good neighbor. This is kind of what we have in mind. I do not have this master plan of strategic places in the historic district. It's just something that one spot and this is on the library. I'm hoping that creative people will say, hey I got a side of a building I own. That's what we really want is for a business owners and private citizens to say that I got something that will work well in our community. The only reason I am showing you this is that we want something that is done nicely and that will be eye appealing and add to the city and our neighborhood. Every neighborhood is different so what will work in one neighborhood may not work in a different one. So, I just wanted to throw that out there.

Mr. Knauf stated I think it would be neat if we took some of our pictures, the old-time pictures like on this one with the vehicles and the people and paint that as a mural on maybe a wall in some different parts, especially in the historic district. Maybe this sign that Mike has in mind for the entrance to the historic district, take some of these old historic pictures and paint them. I think that would enhance the historic district and also the community as well. I think that or we've got pictures like this of the horses. I think people would find it really interesting and would add to the quality of life in Orange. I think people would look at it and go wow.

Member Craig-Hunt stated I have a different view on it. Because I knew that this was what was going to be coming up which is essentially considered street art. That's what you're proposing to do. Also, just so you know a little background, I am an artist. For thirty years, I've been an interior designer, I've done art, event planning and all that for thirty years. I come from a sense of experience. I think that it's a grand idea. I think both sound great. We've gone to historic areas that have murals like that because the business commissioned it. It was the business that owned it and was commissioned to be done by that person who owned that building. One of things, I did a little research about street art versus vandalism and my only concern and I'm just putting this out there as a red flag. I understand you all. I'm new to the area and I don't want darts at me, and I don't want to be the most hated woman in Orange. I love this city. I have a home here. We bought the old Mazzola house. So, I am a die hard and I adore the historic area

and I want so much to see it thrive. What Orange doesn't realize is what you already have. You guys need to realize what you've got here, and I don't think you see it. People have moved here for your houses. When people come from Chick-Fil-A and Starbucks because they want to look at a historic district, it's because there is some gorgeous homes downtown and they want to drive around and see the landscaping and the roses growing over the arbor and that it's clean. Your community is so important that it's clean. I come from the Woodlands and the reason it is so popular is because it's clean. I lived there for fifteen years and never saw a drop of trash for more than an hour on the side of the road. That being said, I want to read what I found from Christopher Hawk. He was a retired twenty plus police patrol veteran and he says "There's a fine line between and vandalism and it's up to the property owner to draw that line. While street art can be inspiring and uplifting or thought provoking. It has its problems too. Not all street artists have the talent or develop the skills to actually create good art." You are talking about it being tasteful and that is subjective. So, you're going to run into a little problem there. It says, "One street artist might decide to deface one piece of art in order to create his or her own masterpiece." That's where in these cities, it becomes vandalism that starts to happen because they see that and want to just paint right back over it. It says, "Poor quality or excessive street art can also drive property values down resulting in financial loss for the property owner". So, I just feel like while I know what you're saying that it's going to be tasteful. I think that looks great. I have to admit that's photoshopped, but it looks amazing and if that was painted, I get it, that would be pretty. I think though that you're saying you don't have a plan. I just feel like you need to have the plan and you need to know what you want to do, where it's going to go. Is that business copasetic about it? Do they want that on the side of that building?

Mr. Kunst stated all I am proposing right now is on city owned property. We aren't asking anybody to put in on their private property. Member Craig-Hunt stated right but I just think that you're really going into an area like if I'm traveling through a town, what's going to make me want to go is that you're going to have a really hard time saying what's tasteful and what's not tasteful. Some people won't think that is tasteful. They'll think aww that's boring. It needs to be more exciting than that. So, where do you draw that line? Mr. Kunst stated so if we are going to use city funds, they have to have a committee to approve the design.

Member Meadows stated we are not talking just people to just sign up and paint on a wall. Mr. Knauf stated my advice would be that you consider it on a case by case basis, but you would have to have the property owner's permission otherwise you would be trespassing. But things you like more than others I mean what's art and what's graffiti. Sometimes that is what you have to be careful about. Member Craig-Hunt stated well, and I have a couple more articles that I read about that and that's a very, very fine line. In most urban communities like Chicago, where you have the run down, that's where they put up these urban murals. They usually have a political voice to them. They are trying to invoke thoughts of what the people are there, and it is thought to be uplifting for that community, but it can also have negative as well. So all I am saying is just please consider when we have to take this vote or whatever you are going to do that it's on the outskirts seems good but I just feel like it has some repercussions that could happen. We are in a community with people who could easily want to tag over that. They see it as an opportunity, and I think that is what I'm concerned about. I think that looks great and no one can sit here and say that's not attractive but then you're going to have some people who don't want whatever books that your showing. It's always going to create some gray area. Mr. Kunst stated

I agree. I certainly understand all those concerns and we again don't want to just do designs that would not be reflective of the neighborhood. Would some well as Kelvin said who defines what art is, certainly not me or others. Member Craig-Hunt stated well but your proposing to put this art on our public buildings that we have to look at but you're saying you can't define it. That's where I'm saying that gray line, you're crossing into street art, the public buildings especially. Mr. Kunst stated well if it's a public building, we are going to have a committee that will review the design.

Council Member Childs stated the signal boxes in Beaumont, do they have a criteria before the artist goes and does those. Member Meadows stated yes, they have to sign up and get approved. You are talking about on the traffic controllers. Council Member Childs stated the traffic controllers. Member Meadows stated yes. Member Craig-Hunt stated I just heard somebody at a restaurant talking about the boxes in Groves or Bridge City, not Beaumont, but they said oh they're the ugliest thing I've ever seen. They drew attention to something I don't want to look at. So, you're never going to make everybody happy. I do understand that. All I am saying is, really think about this before you go forward to do this. Red flags are flying up in my head like crazy. I would say that a community does better by keeping it clean, landscaping, making what you have already structurally beautiful. You have so many buildings here that are insanely awesome. I'm excited about living here and every time I see a house and somebody else is fixing it up. As a designer, I did a lot of work in the Heights. You guys have what the Heights is before it was the Heights. I don't know if you all know where that is in Houston and those homes are going for \$2.5 million and you have it right here. If we could get enough between the industry and the income, keeping it clean. You guys have an amazing thing here. I just think you should focus on that. Shang-ri-la, oh my goodness. Who wouldn't come turn into Orange to go see Shang-ri-la, the art museum? I wish the Starks Museum would be open more. That would attract people. You already got some great stuff to attract people. I don't think murals are the answer. I'm sorry, I just had to voice it. Mr. Kunst stated if we all agreed we wouldn't be here. Member Craig-Hunt stated I just don't want to see future vandalism happen to it. That's my biggest concern.

Chairman Mesecher stated do we want a motion to table this. Mr. Knauf stated what does the commission want to do. Member Craig-Hunt stated I feel like we need to know what buildings to get an idea of what the impact of it is. I just don't feel like there is enough information.

Member Meadows stated I was under the assumption that would be a designated artist to do these on city buildings. Mr. Knauf stated not a particular artist, it's the design that could come from any number of artists. It wouldn't be just one person can do the art. Member Meadows stated when I say designated, I don't mean a single but there would be somebody designated to do this work. Ms. Dallas stated the artist would go through an approval process as well.

Mr. Kunst stated what we are doing for the library and also Sunset Park on the skateboard ramp, a couple three or four of us selected an artist because we wanted to have something done to show other perspective artists that this is what we want. Besides that, just to get a couple of examples out there and say here you go, now be creative and bring us some designs. Now where those things are, we don't have all those identified. My first thought again though was to build a relatively inexpensive simple wooden sign on Park and Simmons. The city owns that piece of

property and to see if anybody would have some kind of idea for some kind of art for that sign and again go through an approval process with that.

Member Craig-Hunt stated I have a question. So, let's say that the vote was yes absolutely it's going to be fabulous. So, at that point, it's your committee that chooses the art. Mr. Kunst stated if it's on city property. Member Craig-Hunt stated ok so at that point it's out of our hands. Mr. Knauf stated unless it is in the historic district. Member Craig-Hunt stated so ok just in the historic district, we have to. Mr. Knauf stated that is all you have jurisdiction over are the historic districts. Mr. Kunst stated say a business owner like Brad over here and say he had a section of wall. I saw this like Romano's shoeshine place they have a wall where they have some artwork on it and that would be cool. We certainly can't tell him not to do it. Council Member Childs stated I am actually considering getting a railroad car put behind, I have the Ace Hardware, but put a railroad car back there and have the Orange County logo put on the long side and on the short side put the antique Ace Hardware logo so when you are stuck at that light. But that's not part of this but I am considering it. Member Craig-Hunt stated that's a great idea and I see what you are saying. Council Member Childs stated have you seen the Orange County artwork they have come up with. Member Craig-Hunt stated no I have not. Mr. Kunst stated you know as a city administrator, I would rather private citizens beautify the town. I don't want to spend tax dollars. I'd rather spend it on sewer, water and public safety but I realize we have got to kind of get them going here and show them what we are trying to do. Again, if it doesn't work out, we will paint over it. If somebody vandalizes it, we will paint over it.

Council Member Childs stated so this is a case by case basis. If you all do it, this will go back to city council and this is the artist we agree to put on this building. Mr. Kunst stated on this one, we picked it out but now coming forward, I'm going to say we need some money and you all will say here's so many dollars or whatever you decide. It's kind of a pilot program. But again, the things the city is supposed to do is sewer, water, drainage, public safety. This is the icing on the cake or the spice of life. It's not where all our tax dollars are going to go but we are hoping to see the citizens to go out there and do some creative things. Member Craig-Hunt stated well I guess that would be my fear is that you are going to have people go do some creative things that are citizens that were not hired to do it. That's just the biggest red flag I have about it through some other research that I did about communities that do this.

Council Member Childs stated does an ordinance have to be written. Mr. Knauf stated hadn't discussed that.

Vice Chair Perry stated I guess my concern is we give permission for Christine to paint her fence, I know Christine and I know it will be first class but what if somebody else comes in and what will they paint. Mr. Knauf stated they have to have a COA before they can do it and that's true now. They still have to have a Certificate of Appropriateness. They can't just go out and do it. Chairman Mesecher stated it would be case by case. Mr. Knauf stated if you don't approve the COA then they can't do it. Mr. Kunst stated so what is done in the historic district is not the same as what is done in the city. I at least want to let you all know that here are some of the big picture things going on. Again, I'm not saying this lady's artwork you should approve or disapprove. Now in the future, say if somebody did come up and whether it be you all's or someone else's, we have a spot, we have something creative which may look nice and would be

well done, would you all consider that. So, the bigger picture and just to let you all know whether that Certificate of Appropriateness would be approved or not. The city is not putting anything on private property that the private property owner wouldn't approve.

Chairman Mesecher stated do we want a motion to allow artwork in the historic districts. Mr. Kunst stated there is probably not anything to approve or disapprove tonight except at that corner. Mr. Knauf stated or once we come up with a design for that location, bring it back to you but we need to know tonight do we come back to you with a design for that or not.

Member Meadows stated we can discuss it further but overall I don't think we have near enough to do anything. I like the idea but a little vague on the parameters. We can discuss that in depth. Mr. Knauf stated maybe do a workshop. Member Craig-Hunt stated my only thing is art is subjective and everybody keeps throwing around this word, good taste. I think that is fabulous but let's define what's good taste to you is not good taste to everybody else. Mr. Kunst stated for the historic district, that is you all's job. Member Meadows stated well let's have a workshop. Mr. Knauf stated but you are not opposed to it, you just want more.

Member Craig-Hunt stated so in the historic district would it just be private people's commercial property. Mr. Knauf stated well the city has property in the historic district. Member Craig-Hunt stated ok well I say we don't have enough information and it needs to be tabled.

Member Meadows stated I am not opposed to it. Member Craig-Hunt stated I am not opposed to it either, but I just don't feel like there's enough information. I think it's just very vague.

Vice Chair Perry stated but like Christine when she comes to us, I mean everybody is going to have to come to us as an individual. Mr. Knauf stated right.

Member Meadow stated we will take no action on this item for tonight.

**b. Consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness from Christine Vermeulen concerning painting artwork on a fence at 711 8<sup>th</sup> Street**

Mr. Knauf stated in your packet there is a diagram of what she would like to paint on her fence.

**Christine Vermeulen – 711 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Orange, TX:** Ms. Vermeulen stated it is not going to be that exactly. That's a little bit too bold for me but I had to send something. What I have is a stretch of fence that is attached to my house that goes to the street to the corner where the sidewalk is. That fence faces coming down 8<sup>th</sup> Street. You're coming down 8<sup>th</sup> Street and that is what you see and right now all it is, is just fence. I think it's boring. I'm a hairdresser. I own Maximum Effects Hair Salon, I have two buildings downtown, the old Orange townhouses or apartments and several houses so I pay my part. Now I really want to kind of spruce up my own place now. I want to get me some of those poles, those lighting poles that I've been fighting for two years now. Finally, I understand there are forms here and I'm going to pick that up and pay my dues. I want to put somewhere there around the center of that. If I have to get two poles, I will. But the look I'm going for, I like that sunflower. I want to antique the wooden fence not with the red antique but just with a brown subtle antique. Then, I want to paint that and want to

put vine and maybe one other like a white flower at the bottom. I don't want it like butterflies, sunflowers. That would make my eyes go like this. I'm not going to have that. I want it tastefully done. Then I want to come back and put in antique back over it to antique it again. So, it is very subtle. It looks older and it fits with the district, with the poles. I've already got some boxwoods that I'm doing, and I've got these angels that go up them so it's real pretty. I want to continue on with my plan for my yard on that fence.

Member Craig-Hunt stated ok I'm going to be the bad guy. Number one, what I would say is you really need to come back with what the actual plan is because this is harsh and garish. Ms. Vermeulen stated well yes that's harsh. Member Craig-Hunt stated I understand but your telling us something and this isn't what it is. Ms. Vermeulen stated I want you to use your imagination. Member Craig-Hunt stated I can, but it doesn't matter. So, what I'm just saying is you really need to come back with what's the actual design before we could ever even consider it. But in regard to saying that a fence is boring, it's just a plain old fence. There are multiple applications that could be added to a fence that are more tasteful. Ms. Vermeulen stated look we are going to stop right here. I'm going to tell you that your idea of tasteful and mine are two different things. My fence, my yard, my money, my house. I'm not going to sit and let you tell me what's tasteful. I'm done, bye. You can fix up your own houses.

Member Craig-Hunt stated I'm sorry. Mr. Knauf stated no you are entitled to your statements. Member Craig-Hunt stated I wanted to give her other ideas that she could have done that would have been just as tasteful if not more.

Vice Chair Perry stated well it won't be tacky with her. I've known her for years and she would not put anything offensive. Member Craig-Hunt stated I'm sure. I mean I've seen her house. I just wish she would come back with that plan versus this because what she described isn't this at all.

Member Meadows stated I would not be averse to at least try. Vice Chair Perry stated I'm not either. She has a gorgeous fence. We have to agree on that. Member Craig-Hunt stated but that's not the new fence. The one that she wants to paint has a big hole at the bottom. Isn't that the one that she is saying - the one that is by the RV. Chairman Mesecher stated no. Member Craig-Hunt stated I don't care which fence it is. I personally think this is dangerous to let people paint on their fences. I just think these are dangerous areas where we have a community that could easily be constituted as let's start tagging things. I'm impressed that Orange doesn't have that because supposedly the crime rate is really bad. That was one of the deterrents I was told. Like everybody has told me that from outside this community. From outside this community, your perception is that you have bad crime. Vice Chair Perry stated well that is not true and I've been here a long time. Member Craig-Hunt stated I know I feel safer here than I did in the Woodlands and I'm being honest with you. If you all want to vote that it's ok for her to do it, then let's vote yes. I'm not trying to be a staunch whatever. I'm just telling you that you're in dangerous territory when you start letting people do this.

Member Meadows stated your perspective is that we are opening a can of worms. I don't think it will. But if it becomes one, how do we back out. Chairman Mesecher stated well each case will be. Member Meadows but if it becomes out of hand, how do we stop it. Mr. Knauf stated then

you will have to come out with a policy that you won't consider anymore artwork in the historic district. You just put a stop to it the same way the city would. I think the COA requirement is clear.

Member Craig-Hunt stated I love her house. I think it's gorgeous. If she had stayed here, I wanted to compliment her on that, but she didn't let me say the other part of the story. Vice Chair Perry stated well knowing her, I'm saying I think you would have to know the individual and make sure that they are going to do what they say they are going to do. Member Craig-Hunt stated but everybody that is going to sit in these seats we are going to know. You have got new people that are moving here like look I'm new. So, what are you going to do about those people? That is what I'm saying about dangerous territory. I get it you know her. If you all really have confidence and you think it's great. Vice Chair Perry stated well I've already had a member of the city council call me a couple of weeks ago and ask me about this. I don't have a problem and he doesn't have a problem. With her, I don't have a problem with her. I think we have to deal with it on an individual basis.

Member Meadows stated all those people will have to come get a COA to do anything. Member Craig-Hunt stated and if they don't, that is my point. We have realtors who are not being forthwith with people that buy in this area. They are not telling them. They didn't tell us. I just kind of assumed and knew. Vice Chair Perry stated well my realtor told me. Member Craig-Hunt stated that's my other red flag. People are going think well if she is going to do it and then everybody else is going to think it's ok that don't know that you have to do it case by case. Mr. Knauf stated well that's when we contact them and tell them they have to come before you. If it doesn't get approved, then they have to paint over it. Member Craig-Hunt stated so then we end up with a painted cedar fence. Mr. Knauf stated which is allowed now.

Member Meadows stated I personally think we ought to go ahead and approve this one. It's still a case by case situation. Member Craig-Hunt stated well you guys know better than me. At least I have had a chance and I appreciate you letting me express the red flags that could be some problems.

Chairman Mesecher asked for motion  
Member Meadows motioned to approve  
Vice Chair Perry 2nd

**Vote: 4 – 0**

**Motion Carries**

Member Meadows motioned to adjourn  
Vice Chair Perry 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Chairman Mesecher adjourned the meeting at 6:17 p.m.**