

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD (HPB)
RECOMMENDATION
to the
Board of County Commissioners**



Regarding: Proposed Landmark and Landmark Site Designation of the Ozona Village Hall

HPB Recommendation: The HPB unanimously recommended approval of the application with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

HPB Report No. HPB 01-05-15

Public Hearing Date: September 16, 2015

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPB find the proposed landmark and landmark site designation to be consistent with the designation criteria contained in the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Code (Chapter 146 of the County Code) and consistent with the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, based on the findings of this Report.

Staff further recommends that the HPB recommend to the Board of County Commissioners designation of the site as a Local Landmark and Landmark Site.

Review of the Application to Designate the Ozona Town Hall as a Landmark and Landmark Site

BACKGROUND

In 2012, Pinellas County amended Chapter 146, the Historic Preservation provisions of the Land Development Code, to include establishment of a Historic Preservation Board with final decision-making authority over certain actions (e.g., review and approval of Certificates of Appropriateness), as well as to provide criteria and local designation procedures to enable protection of significant historic features, structures, sites, etc. Among its duties, the Pinellas County HPB has the power and duties to review and make recommendations on the designation of historic landmarks, landmark sites or historic districts to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). To designate a Landmark and Landmark Site, the HPB reviews an application against the designation criteria contained in Chapter 146 and makes a subsequent recommendation to the BCC. With regard to the designation of a Historic District, the HPB reviews the application against the criteria in Chapter 146 and makes a recommendation to the Pinellas County Local Planning Agency, who in turn makes a recommendation to the BCC.

According to Chapter 146, a Landmark is an archaeological or historical site or structure designated pursuant to the criteria in the Code, and may include the location of a significant archaeological feature or historical event. A Landmark Site is essentially the land area on which a landmark and its related structures, features or artifacts are located, providing the premises or setting for the landmark.

The purpose of this staff review and recommendation is to review the application by the Ozona Village Improvement Society (OVIS) for the designation of Ozona Village Hall, located at 341 Bay Street in Ozona, as a locally-designated Landmark and Landmark Site under the designation criteria adopted in 2012. Currently, Pinellas County has one historic district (the Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District established in 1994), and three other historic resources designated by the BCC. If approved, this will be the second Landmark and Landmark Site designation approved by the BCC using the Procedure adopted in 2012. (The Fort De Soto Batteries and Military Post was the first landmark designation in 2014.)

DESIGNATION REPORT

Pursuant to Sec.146-6(d), a designation report shall be prepared by County staff and contain the following information (Staff responses immediately follow the criteria):

(1) Landmark and landmark sites:

a. A physical description of the building, structure or site and its character-defining features, accompanied by photographs.

The County conducted historical and archaeological surveys of the unincorporated area in 1991 and 1993, which identified 62 historic structures in Ozona, including the Ozona Village Hall. OVIS, which owns the Hall, has completed the attached Local Landmark Designation Application. Attachment A depicts the general boundary of the area proposed for designation, as well as relevant land use and zoning information.

The Florida Master Site File (FMSF) Recorder, from Piper Archaeological Research, Inc., concluded the building was historically significant for its architecture and its historic civic use, noting it is an unaltered turn of the century town hall used for community events.

Built in 1900 on a centrally located nearly half acre lot in Ozona, the FSMF describes the Hall as having a frame vernacular style with a standing seam metal gable roof, drop siding, balloon wood frame, a brick pier foundation, double hung sash 4/4 windows and ornamental exterior wood shingles. The Applicant, the Ozona Village Improvement Society (OVIS) also notes that it was built with locally cut "diamond hard" heart of pine lumber, including its use for the interior wood flooring.

(Photos included in Attachment B.)

b. A statement of the historic, cultural, architectural, archaeological or other significance of the building, structure or site as defined by the criteria for designation established by this chapter.

Aesthetic qualities aside, the structure is also historically significant for its cultural impact in Ozona and the County. The Hall was built as a result of a citizen initiative and has been utilized as a community gathering place for its entirety, making it believed to be the oldest structure in continual community use, in its original location, in the County. Over the years it has been used as a polling place, library, meeting room, town hall, dance hall, and a church. Plays, recitals and other performances have been presented at the Hall, and it has been rented by many local civic clubs and organizations in need of a gathering space to conduct their business.

(An item-by-item review of the design criteria provided in Chapter 146 is provided on the is provided below in the Consistency with Design Criteria section below.)

- c. A description of the existing condition of the building, structure or site including any potential threats or other circumstances that may affect the integrity of the building, structure or site.**

In 2005, the County awarded \$120,000 in CDBG funds to OVIS to restore the Hall. Best preservation practices were utilized and the funds resulted in a new roof, selected siding replacement, refinishing the beautiful solid wood floors, general painting, restroom improvements, along with ramps to meet ADA requirements, reinforcement of the foundation pillars, and air conditioning. This project was completed and recognized with a special rededication ceremony on September 23, 2006. No threats or circumstances that may affect the integrity of the building have been identified at this time, and there are no planned renovation activities.

Please refer to the location map in Attachment A, which includes the relevant land use and zoning information, as well as Attachment B, the Landmark and Landmark Site Application, which includes the completed historic narrative, the Florida Master Site File forms and current photos of the Hall. Attachment B further details the use of the structure over time.

- d. A statement of rehabilitative or adaptive use proposals.**

Per c. above, the site was rehabilitated in 2005 using CDBG funds. There are no additional plans to renovate or remodel the structure at this time.

- e. A location map, showing relevant zoning and land use information.**

Please see Attachment A.

- f. Recommendations concerning the eligibility of the building, structure or site for designation pursuant to this chapter and a listing of those features of the building, structure or site which require specific historic preservation treatments.**

Please see Staff's analysis below with regard to the Hall meeting the criteria for designation as a landmark and landmark site:

Consistency with Designation Criteria

Per Sec. 146-6(e)1 of the Pinellas County Code, in order to be eligible for designation as a Landmark or Landmark Site, the area proposed for designation must be significant to the County's history, architecture, archaeology **or** culture **and/or** for their integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or association, and because they meet **at least one** of the following criteria (a.-e.) below. Staff finds the Hall meets the criteria of **Sec. 146-6(e)1** for the following reasons:

- a. Associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, or architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, the county, southwestern Florida, the state or nation:**

In 1895 Dr. Susan K. Whitford, working with other local women, founded the Ozona Ladies Village Improvement Society, which marshaled the physical and financial resources required to build the Hall. Articles of Incorporation for the Society were filed in January of 1900, giving it the

authority to own and manage land, including the Hall once it was completed, also in 1900. This began an unbroken, direct lineage of communal use of the Hall, as the Ozona Civic Association, Ozona Recreation Club, and now the Ozona Village Improvement Society have each since cared for the Hall

The Ozona Ladies Village Improvement Society was also focused on other community-based initiatives around the time the Hall was constructed, such as constructing wooden sidewalks, improving the navigation of the sand and straw-packed streets in Ozona.

Society members organized fundraisers including bake sales, ice cream socials and seafood dinners to gather the financial resources needed to build the Hall, while also securing commitments for donated materials and organizing the labor to perform the construction.

The Hall has continuously served the community as a gathering space for civic and social functions such as a polling place, library, meeting room, town hall, dance hall, church. Plays, recitals and other performances have been presented here, and clubs and organizations for every age have depended on the Hall to facilitate their community initiatives.

b. Are associated with the lives of persons significant in the County's past:

Dr. Susan K., Whitford helped found the Ozona Ladies Village Improvement Society and served as its first President. Prior to moving to the area that would eventually become Ozona, Dr. Whitford grew up in Kane County, Illinois, where she showed her potential early by passing the Teachers Registration Exam on a whim at the age of 14. After finishing her schooling she taught at various schools in the area. Later she became the first female physician in Elgin, Illinois after graduating from the Bennett Eclectic Medical School of Chicago with a diploma as a physician and surgeon.

Dr. Whitford later moved to Ozona and stayed active in the Eclectic Medicine movement, including advancing its practice in the state of Florida by serving as the Vice Chairman for the Obstetrics Section of the National Eclectic Medical Association. (Eclectic medicine was a branch of American medicine which made use of botanical remedies along with other substances and physical therapy practices, popular in the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.)

A National Eclectic Medical Association annual report contains a letter from Dr. Whitford that demonstrates her work advancing the field in Florida, as well as her fondness for Florida when she writes:

“I wonder more are not attracted to Florida; the climate is so fine – the temperature in summer never exceeds 98 degrees. The cost of fuel, food and clothing is slight; fish, game, fruits and flowers are abundant in Summer and Winter; vegetables are planted every month of the year. With a small practice physicians can prosper, free from the cold and exposure of the Northern climate.”

While in Florida she met the requirement of the State Board of Health and practiced medicine to a limited extent until her death in 1910. Dr. Whitford was also regarded for her commitment to her family (she raised three children while in medical school), her work in the temperance movement and for her charitable endeavors.

Dr. Whitford was important to the local history and instrumental in the founding of the Ozona Village Ladies Improvement Society and to the construction of the Hall. Additionally, she was significant as a woman doctor in the community and nationally.

- c. **Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or are the work of a master; or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction:**

The Florida Master Site File (FMSF) Recorder, from Piper Archaeological Research, Inc., concluded the building was historically significant for its architecture and its historic civic use, noting it is an unaltered turn of the century town hall used for community events.

The photos in Attachment B evidence the wood frame vernacular style of construction with a standing seam metal roof characteristic of the time. The structure has drop siding, a balloon wood frame and double hung 4/4 windows. Local heart of pine lumber was used in much of the construction.

- d. **Have yielded, or are likely to yield, information on history or prehistory:**

While many of the prized artifacts have been donated to the Palm Harbor Historic Museum, the Hall still contains many items that detail its history such as the original meeting minutes from the Ozona Village Ladies Improvement Society, the original kerosene lamps that lit the structure prior to the availability of electricity in Ozona, a vintage Bailey piano that has remained in the Hall since 1909 (and rumored to have been purchased to celebrate the marriage of Dr. Whitford's son to Dr. Grace Ruarc, another prominent figure in Ozona's history) and several historic community photos, including one of Dr. Whitford.

- e. **Are listed or have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:**

The Hall has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register, however there has been no application made to date. Please see Attachment B for the Florida Master Site File documentation, including a letter from the State's Division of Historical Resources stating the Hall is eligible for listing on the register.

146-6(e) goes on to provide criteria with regard to historic resources being deemed to have significant historic or cultural significance (146-6(e)2), and architectural or aesthetic significance (146-6(e)3). While Staff believes the Hall meets the criteria to be designated as a landmark and landmark site based

on the responses above to 146-6(e)1, Staff also concludes the Hall meets the criteria for 146-6(e)2 and 146-6(e)3 due to the requirement of meeting **at least one** of the criteria in each section.

With regard to 146-6(e)2, Staff concludes the Hall meets the following criteria:

- a. Is associated with the life or activities of a person of importance in local, state, or national history;
- d. Is exemplary of the historical, political, cultural, economic, or social trends of the community in history; or
- e. Is associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution which has contributed substantially to the life of the community.

With regard to 146-6(e)3, Staff concludes the Hall meets the following criteria:

- b. It embodies the characteristics of an architectural style, period or method of construction.

IN SUMMARY, staff finds that the Ozona Village Hall represents a significant part of Pinellas County's history, and upon review finds that they meet the criteria for designation as a Pinellas County Landmark and Landmark Site, as outlined in Chapter 146 of the County Code. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the Hall as a Pinellas County Landmark and Landmark Site.

SUMMARY OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A is a map of the Ozona Village Hall, its land use and zoning as well as the boundary of the proposed site.

Attachment B is the application to Pinellas County for the designation of a landmark and landmark site, which includes the Florida Master Site File, a narrative of the Hall's history and a selection of photographs of the Hall.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PINELLAS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Staff finds that the proposed designation of the Ozona Village Hall as a Landmark and Landmark Site is consistent with the following goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan:

Recreation, Open Space & Culture Element:

GOAL FIVE: TO PROMOTE THE ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES WITHIN PINELLAS COUNTY, AND THEIR PRESERVATION, THROUGH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND BY RAISING AWARENESS OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS.

- 5.1. OBJECTIVE: Pinellas County recognizes that cultural resources enhance the County's quality of life and shall increase awareness, appreciation, and opportunities for engagement with the County's cultural resources among both residents and visitors.

- 5.1.2. Policy: Pinellas County will recognize and consider the visions, goals and recommendations within the Pinellas County Community Cultural Plan, Public Art and Design Master Plan, the Heritage Village Strategic Master Plan, and the Historic Preservation Program as referred to in Policy 5.3.3.
- 5.1.3. Policy: Pinellas County shall identify and pursue specific opportunities to inform residents and visitors of the cultural facilities and activities accessible to the public with the intent of increasing participation in, and support for, these cultural resources.
- 5.1.7. Policy: Pinellas County will continue to support non-profit cultural providers in the County through grants, advocacy, and other appropriate means.
- 5.3. OBJECTIVE: The County shall continue to identify, protect and preserve historic and archaeological resources in Pinellas County, including coastal areas. Particular emphasis will be given to increasing the interpretation and appreciation of such resources.
- 5.3.5. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to provide for the protection, preservation, and appropriate use of historically significant housing, structures, and archaeological resources through implementation of the historic preservation and comprehensive zoning chapters of the Pinellas County Land Development Code.
- 5.3.7. Policy: When appropriate, and as resources allow, Pinellas County shall continue to support citizen-initiated efforts to preserve and protect historic and archaeological resources.
- 5.3.9. Policy: Pinellas County shall recognize historic and archaeological resources that could potentially be affected by land use and zoning changes.
- 5.3.10. Policy: Pinellas County shall promote the protection, preservation, or sensitive adaptive reuse of historic and archaeological resources located in coastal areas and provide public access where appropriate and possible.