



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 15-221, Version: 2

Subject:

Resolution designating the Ozona Village Hall as a historic landmark and landmark site.

Recommended Action

Public hearing to adopt the proposed resolution designating the Ozona Village Hall as a historic landmark and landmark site.

Strategic Plan:

Practice superior environmental stewardship.

3.2 Preserve and manage environmental lands, beaches, parks, and historical assets.

Summary:

In 2012, Pinellas County amended Chapter 146, the Historic Preservation provisions of the Land Development Code, to include establishment of a Historic Preservation Board (HPB). Among its duties, the HPB has the power and responsibility to review applications to designate historic landmarks, landmark sites or historic districts and make recommendations on the designation to the Board of County Commissioners (Board). In September 2014, the County was designated as a Certified Local Government by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, affirming the County's commitment to historic preservation.

In September 2015, Planning Department Staff received an application to designate the Ozona Village Hall (Hall) as a historic landmark and landmark site submitted by the Ozona Village Improvement Society (OVIS), a 501(c)(3) non-profit with a mission to "preserve, promote, and protect the unique qualities of Ozona." OVIS owns and maintains the Hall.

Staff found the Hall met the designation criteria contained in Chapter 146(e)(1) of the Pinellas County Land Development Regulations due to its significance in the County's history, architecture, and culture, as well as 146(e)(1) sub-provisions a., b., and e. with regard to being associated with distinctive elements of the County's cultural history, being associated with the life of a significant person in the County's past, and being determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, respectively, and recommended the HPB approve the designation. Supporting details for Staff's recommendation can be found below in the background information section and in Attachment 1.

On September 16, 2015 the HPB held a public hearing regarding the application and unanimously recommended the Board approve the designation. (The vote was 5-0 in favor.)

Background Information:

The Hall 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.

The Ozona Ladies Village Improvement Society and its founding president, Dr. Susan K. Whitford, raised funds and secured donated labor to construct the Hall in 1900. Dr. Whitford is noted for her work as an early community leader in Ozona and for her work in the field of natural medicine.

A 1991 archaeological and historical survey conducted on behalf of the County identified the Hall as a historic structure and led to it being recorded in the Florida Master Site File (FMSF), the State's official inventory of historical and cultural resources. The FMSF notes the structure is “architecturally important as an unaltered turn of the century town hall and important in local history as the site of many community events,” and contains a letter from the State of Florida’s Division of Historical Resources indicating that the Hall is eligible for listing for the National Register of Historic Places.

The HPB and Staff found this historical context of the Hall meets the designation criteria contained in Chapter 146(e)(1) sub-provisions a., b and e., with regard to being associated with distinctive elements of the County’s cultural history, associated with the life of a significant local resident, and being determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, respectively.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Gordon Beardslee, Director, Planning Department

Partners:

Ozona Village Improvement Society