

REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2025, AT 6:00 PM, IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Knight called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Knight, Olgin, Reid, West, Cathemer, and Butterworth

Absent: None

Council Liaisons Neal and Bedford were present

Staff Present: Maricella Benitez, Paul King, and Jarod Thiele

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO THE PUBLIC/COMMISSION RESPONSE

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Historic District Advisory Commission. Individual Commission members may respond to criticisms made, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Commission shall not discuss or take action on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

No comments from the Public

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL of the meeting minutes for the regular meeting conducted on May 28, 2025.

Commissioner West requested a change in the minutes to note that he asked about Founder's Day and not the Home Tour. There were no other comments.

On motion by Commissioner West, seconded by Vice-Chair Olgin, and carried 6-0, to approve as amended the regular meeting minutes of May 28, 2025.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. DISCUSSION** to provide information on the North Main Street Breezeway Improvement Project.

Mr. Jared Thiele, the new Administrative Project Manager, introduced himself. He discussed that he is working with Community Services on a current capital improvement project for the pedestrian breezeway that connects North Main Street back to the east of the high-profile parking lot. He noted that the area is currently not the friendliest for ADA pedestrian access. The area has clay brick planters and a pedestal towards the front, which used to be a water fountain. The walkway is partially cobblestone, which is not strictly forbidden or prohibited by ADA guidelines. However, the walkway is not easy to maneuver with a walker or wheelchair. In addition, one of the ADA ramps is not compliant.

The priorities for the improvement project are the walkway, the pedestrian ramp, and lighting. The first proposal was to cover the current cobblestone walkway with a four-inch skin coat, and then, where the cobblestone ends to the west, transition that section to meet ADA requirements. In addition, the planters would be repaired, and bollard lighting would be added to the area. The major concerns are that the space between the planters and the fencing would still be tight, and running electrical through the area would be difficult. The alternative proposal is to remove the planters and the trees to open up the area.

Community Services Department Director, Paul King, described how an arborist on staff evaluated the health of the trees. The outcome was that the trees were not planted correctly, and they suffered from sun-scalding and a canker fungus. The trees would slowly die due to stress and health issues. The arborist recommended removing the trees and opening the area up. Mr. King stated the primary purpose of this project was for security and to increase visibility. The current proposal is to remove these trees and the planters. The bricks would be saved, and the pavement would be redone.

The Commissioners asked what kind of trees were present. They were olive trees.

Vice-Chair Knight stated she remembered when the water fountain worked and asked about the historical significance of the planter walls and the pedestal. Mr. Thiele stated that the planter wall was made up of historic brick, but there was no significant historic purpose.

The Commission asked why they could not demo the walkway past a certain point. Mr. Thiele said that staff had reservations about using a jackhammer next to the foundation of the wall of that building. The building was not the Town's. Mr. Thiele said an alternative, if they removed the planters, was to saw-cut out from the edge of that building and remove the interior portions of that walkway. It would keep the cobblestone aesthetic.

The Commission did have concerns about layering concrete over the cobblestone and then having to come back and redo the work again. Mr. Thiele clarified that a paving mat would be utilized as a subgrade to prevent this. This technique is used for roads.

Vice-Chair Olgin asked if there was any solution for seating or shade. Mr. Thiele explained that the main concerns were the security lighting and the ADA compliance. Staff could look at putting a couple of benches along the fence or by the wall.

The Commissioners agreed that residents like to sit there in the summer for shade, and vegetation helps cool the area down.

Vice-Chair Olgin asked what was triggering ADA compliance requirements. Mr. Thiele explained that the area is in compliance, but the project is to better accommodate ADA users.

Vice-Chair Olgin stated it was hard to give up a shaded gathering space in an established place in the historic downtown. Mr. Thiele clarified that staff saw the area as more of a transition space from parking to Main Street. However, staff could look at shade and seating areas to create that gathering space while creating a safer environment for people to pass through.

Commissioner Reid suggested planting new trees or adding a new shade structure. She understood the problems but did not like the current concepts.

Commissioner Butterworth asked if there was a way to get some kind of visuals that show examples of these improvements. She understands the walkway is not ADA-friendly based on her family's experience, but she would like to know how it would look. She was also in agreement with some form of shade.

The Commissioners considered alternatives to trees for shade, such as a structure or umbrellas. They questioned whether new trees would survive as long as the current ones.

Mr. King said he could go back to his team and work on alternate shade options, natural and structural. Commissioner Reid requested that the lighting also have more of a historic look or coloring because the bollards were a little modern and did not match the current light. Staff stated that they wanted the lighting to be lower to brighten the path for foot traffic. In addition, light poles that were too high may be covered by the trees. There was discussion about utilizing solar, but the concern was also about how much sun the panel would get if the pathway was shaded.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. King and Mr. Thiele for bringing forward the current information.

B. DISCUSSION to provide information on the 441 N. Main Street American Legion mural and wall sign.

Senior Planner, Maricella Benitez, provided a presentation on the proposed signage and wall mural for the American Legion at 441 N. Main Street. Both items will be painted on the building. The painted wall sign would be located on the side elevation facing Ruggles.

The mural would be on the side elevation facing 6th Street. Commissioner Reid asked that the courthouse include the clock because it would better represent the Town's County Courthouse. Ms. Benitez said she could notify the artist listed in the application and ask if this is something they could add. The Commission asked if adding "Florence, AZ" at the bottom would be possible. It would make for a good tourist attraction. Ms. Benitez stated that this might take away from the original goal because the mural is meant to represent the Legion.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. Historic Home Tour

The Town of Florence Historic Home Tour will be on February 14th, Valentine's Day, and Arizona's birthday. The event will be from 10 AM to 4 PM. The tour currently has at least four homes. Staff was working on including a couple more. The theme is "From the Frontier, with Love," and a lot of the activities and themes will tie into Valentine's Day. Staff asked the churches to possibly, if they have photos from weddings, to have those out to show the people. Staff are hoping for a good outcome.

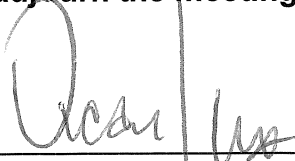
b. Update on other projects on Main Street

CALL TO THE COMMISSION-CURRENT EVENTS ONLY

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Chair Knight, seconded by Commissioner West, and carried 6-0, to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 pm.



Victoria Knight, Chair

1/28/2024

Date