



Parks and Recreation Commission

Agenda Correspondence

DATE: October 12, 2022

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SUBJECT: Jack House Committee Request to Reconsider the Structure of the Jack House Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. Review, discuss, and provide direction on the proposed realignment of the Jack House Committee roles and responsibilities

DISCUSSION

Background

The Historic Jack House and Gardens (collectively referred to as “The Jack House”) were deeded to the City of San Luis Obispo on March 10, 1975. For close to five decades, the City has managed, maintained, and operated the Jack House consistent with the covenants of the Grant Deed. As is typical with historic homes and gardens, the Jack House had dedicated volunteers who have helped with many aspects of the public’s enjoyment of the Jack House. Volunteer efforts have included a City Advisory Body (the Jack House Committee) as well as docents who have educated visitors during countless tours.

Volunteer Groups – Jack House Advisory Committee (“the Committee”)

When the City was deeded the Jack House, it was done so with several stipulations requiring the City’s agreement and continued compliance. Of those included the appointment of a seven-member advisory body. From the Grant Deed: *“Said committee shall recommend basic rules and regulations for the use of the residence and grounds which may include, but are not limited to, permitted uses, conditions of use, hours and fees, if any. The committee shall serve without pay and consist of city residents including:*

- (a) One member from the San Luis Obispo County Historical Society*
- (b) One member from the faculty of the School of Architecture and Environmental Design, California Polytechnic State University, preferably an architectural historian.*
- (c) One member from the Ornamental Horticulture faculty of the California Polytechnic State University.*
- (d) One member from the Parks and Recreation Commission*
- (e) Two members selected at large.*
- (f) For a period of twenty (20) years from the date hereof, the seventh member of the committee shall be an heir of Robert Edgar Jack and Nellie Hollister Jack the city residency requirement may be waived for this member. Thereafter, this member may be selected at large.*
- (g) Committee appointments, tenure and rules of conduct shall be the same as for other advisory bodies to the City Council, e.g., the Planning Commission.”*

Volunteer Groups – Jack House Docents

In addition to the Committee, a Jack House Docent group has historically served as tour guides and educators, hosting tours to the public and specialized tours to classes, wedding parties and other community groups. The

Jack House committee does not have direct oversight of the Docent group; however, the Docent Coordinator traditionally provides updates to the Committee and oftentimes Committee members also serve as Docents. This arrangement has served the City well for decades, although over time the volunteer base has dwindled, whether due to changing volunteer dynamics, loss of interest in a program or lack of community awareness to the volunteer opportunity.

Current Role of City Departments

The Public Works Department provides overall maintenance and upkeep of the Jack House and Gardens. The Parks and Recreation Department engage the community through programming at the Jack House and Gardens along with support of the Docent program. Staff coordinate events at the Jack House Gardens, including the Spring Concert Series and Movies in the Garden, Yoga Classes, and community rentals such as birthdays and wedding events.

Jack House Committee

Committee Participation Trends and Challenges

The Committee roster over the past two decades is unique in the fact that most of the member make up remains the same. The City's Clerks office has record of only 11 different individuals who have filled six of the seven positions (not including the PRC representative position). Many of these 11 individuals served for over 10 years, some even since the early 2000's.

Of the seven necessary committee-members, there are currently only three (3) active members. The vacancy of four (4) seats is problematic because the Committee does not have a quorum (a majority of the committee), which is necessary for any business discussion or action to take place by the Committee. In addition to the current vacancies, the three committee members who remain have been dedicated volunteers to the Jack House for a decade. Finally, some of the specific Committee eligibility requirements imposed by Grant Deed are obsolete at this time. Specifically, the Committee positions that are required to be filled by specific Cal Poly faculty are no longer offered as academic program areas.

Committee Successes Over Time

While the Committee has provided great benefit to the Jack House and the City in its tenure, the time has come to consider the utility and practicality of this Committee moving forward. Over the past 47 years, the Committee has supported some of the following, all with City staff time:

- Coordination of the removal of the elevator shaft to return the House to the original condition;
- Coordinating new signs for the entry of the Jack House;
- Preservation of historical art;
- Recommendations regarding historical context related to the Jack House;
- Providing guidance on how and when to rent and program events at the house;
- Providing support to the Docent program, often serving as Docents themselves.

As the decades have changed, so has the City's adoption of regular maintenance and programming of this property. As such, City staff continue to maintain the regular and structural integrity of the property, maintain the gardens as a community park space, manage event rentals of the gardens (including weddings), and provide community events in the gardens. Because expectations have been established, in part due to the Committee, these work projects continue to be accomplished by City staff without necessary guidance from the committee.

Committee, Family and Community Input

Jack House Committee Member Recommendations

On September 15, 2022, the remaining committee members met informally with City staff as there was no quorum for a formal meeting, to share concerns regarding lack of volunteers and the future of the Committee and to provide recommendations to realign oversight of the Jack House. The individual Committee members that were consulted communicated that what was necessary in 1975 is no longer relevant or feasible, as recruitment efforts have shown, and in fact recommend alternative solutions to ensuring the intent of the Grant Deed continues to be met while utilizing other staff and Advisory Body resources that are in place. The individual Committee members each agreed to request a new structure of support for the Jack House, with alternatives outlined in the Memo submitted to PRC on October 11, 2022.

On September 15, 2022, the individual Committee members outlined hopes and dreams for the future of the Jack House. City Staff and Committee representatives discussed alternative oversight opportunities of current and potential support.

Committee Recommendations for Future Support of the Jack House	Staff or Committee Assignments
Continue to maintain Jack House and Gardens for public enjoyment	Ongoing by Public Works Staff
Promotions for events and tours of the house	Ongoing City staff Communications and Marketing team
Convert Wash House into a museum	Potential project for Docent volunteers or local volunteer group
Open Carriage House for events and education	Based on structural integrity, could be a project for Docent volunteers. May require a CIP to ensure ADA compliance and structural integrity
Repair and refurnish front fence	Current volunteer Rotary SLO Project with Parks and Recreation staff oversight
Roof replacement	Upcoming CIP project assigned to Public Works
Provide a storage unit on site	Public Works Staff
Continue to host weddings and special events	Ongoing by City Parks and Recreation staff
Utilize gardens for community building opportunities	Ongoing by City Parks and Recreation staff
Provide historical guidance regarding renovations to the inside and exterior of the House	Cultural Heritage Committee
Regular oversight of the House	Parks and Recreation Commissioners with one Commissioner assigned to serve as the Jack House liaison and report out each meeting
Support of the Docent Program	Assign to the new Volunteer Coordinator who will report to Parks and Recreation Department.

Jack Family Input

When the Committee members proposed recommended changes, City staff reached out to Jack Family heir, Katchy Andrews, who was in favor of reassigning oversight of the Jack House and felt confident that in doing so the intent of the Grant Deed would continue to be honored and could foresee no challenges.

Community Input

During the community input sessions for defining City goals for the *Parks and Recreation Blueprint for the Future: 2021-2024*, consensus was to continue using the House as currently used. There was mention of turning the house over to a non-profit to manage, while continuing to program at the gardens and exploring additional opportunities to rent out the facility space.

Manage the Jack House in a way that preserves the historic resource, makes the site more visible and welcoming, and more fully realizes its revenue-producing potential. This may mean extending open hours, signage, safe crosswalks and evaluating facility rental offerings and fees. Explore private management opportunities for the house.

In addition, three former Jack House Committee members and chairs were contacted by current Committee President to provide feedback or concerns regarding these recommendations. There were none and they concurred with the recommendation memo by the Jack House Committee to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

CONCURRENCE

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the relevant property and legal documents associated with Jack House and has concluded that there are no legal barriers to the recommendations stated herein.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact from this approval.

Transferring Oversight Of The Jack House Committee To Parks And Recreation Commission And Bylaw Amendments

The below items are designed to provide the Parks and Recreation Commission advisory recommendations to City Council:

1. As recommended by the Jack House Committee members, recommend an alternative to the current Jack House Committee structure which could include alternatives provided in Memo from Jack House Committee members, including but not limited to the transfer oversight of the subject matter within the purview of the Jack House Committee to the Parks and Recreation Commission.
2. Amend the Parks and Recreation Commission bylaws to reflect the recommended transfer of oversight.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Memo from Jack House Committee to PRC
2. Copy of the Original Grant Deed for Jack Family Residence
3. Copy of Jack House Bylaws
4. Copy of Parks and Recreation Bylaws