

RESOLUTION of KEY WEST ART & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Whereas, Key West Art & Historical Society (KWAHS) is a nonprofit organization designated by the State of Florida and Monroe County to serve as steward of certain significant publicly-owned structures in the City of Key West, including the historic Custom House that for generations occupied a prominent position in the former U.S. Naval Base at Truman Annex ; and

Whereas, KWAHS has substantial experience in preserving, restoring and operating historic masonry structures, including the Custom House and Fort East Martello; and

Whereas, the mission of KWAHS is to preserve the culture of the Florida Keys, including its history; and

Whereas, the masonry structures known as the historic Key West Generating Plant on Geraldine Street, long allowed to deteriorate due to neglect, are the subject of an engineering study that contemplates demolition of some or all of those structures, as “unsafe buildings”, notwithstanding that they are vacant and pose no danger to any occupants; and

Whereas, the Historic Architectural Review Commission (“HARC”) is assigned by the Charter and Ordinances of the City of Key West a role in determining whether an historic building shall be demolished; and

Whereas, HARC has been excluded from the demolition decision-making process despite the explicit direction in City Code Section 102-221, titled “Unsafe structures”, that upon determination that an historic structure is unsafe, HARC will be immediately notified of that finding and be given the opportunity to make comments and recommendations regarding demolition or repair of the building; and

Whereas, the Key West City Commission will, at a public meeting to be held on March 6, 2018, consider this matter and determine whether to adopt a Resolution concerning HARC’s role in the demolition process;

Now, therefore, it is hereby Resolved by the Board of Directors of KWAHS as follows:

1. KWAHS adopts and ratifies the statements and advocacy expressed by its Executive Director in his letter addressed to the City dated February 23, 2018, a copy of which is attached hereto;
2. KWAHS requests the City Commission to direct its staff to adhere to the procedures specified in Code Section 102-221, including without limitation:
 - a) Provide HARC a meaningful opportunity to exercise its role of commenting on and making recommendations regarding demolition or repair;
 - b) Stay demolition of any of the historic Generating Plant buildings “until the Building Official has fully evaluated and made findings regarding HARC’s comments and recommendations; and
 - c) Attempt in good faith to have “the owner [i.e., the City itself] or another appropriate party” repair the buildings rather than ordering their demolition.

Duly RESOLVED by KWAHS through vote of its duly-constituted Directors on February 28, 2018. To avoid any appearance of conflict with their duties as City employees, Board members Torregrossa and Castro abstained from voting on the Resolution.

Attest: _____

Michael Gieda

From: Michael Gieda
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2018 4:35 PM
To: 'ccates@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'clopez@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'mromero@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'rpayne@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'bwardlow@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'skaufman@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'jweekley@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'
Cc: 'jscholl@cityofkeywest-fl.gov'; 'Enid Torregrosa'; Kelly Perkins
Subject: Key West Diesel Generating Plant

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

I am writing in protest of the decision to demolish several of the buildings at the historic Key West Diesel Generating Plant on Geraldine Street.

The buildings are of great historical significance to Key West and it is my understanding that an August 2016 structural report recommended a comprehensive plan for rehabilitation, not demolition. It is unconscionable that the city, which prides itself on its cultural heritage, would move forward with partial demolition. It is even more troubling that it appears HARC was not involved in this decision making process.

As the stewards of three historic properties on the island, the Key West Art & Historical Society is committed to preserving the island's historic structures. This difficult task requires major fundraising efforts, time, and commitment. Considering the state of the Custom House at the time the Society acquired the lease, I am confident there were naysayers who believed the job was too expensive or that the building was too far-gone. Fortunately, the Society and the community were able to raise the necessary funds to convert the derelict building into the museum it is today, serving the local community and visiting public.

These buildings have significant potential and strong consideration should be given to converting them into mixed-use facilities that provide educational and creative learning opportunities for our community and visiting public. Moreover, it is this community's duty to preserve its past so that future generations can gain a better understand of how we got to where we are today. By demolishing historic structures you are robbing the community of its history. These buildings, once gone, cannot be rebuilt.

I strongly encourage the city to allow a HARC review process and move forward with preservation efforts. The Society is more than willing to assist in whatever capacity it can on these matters.

Kind regards,

Michael F. Gieda
Executive Director
281 Front Street
Key West, FL 33040
(305)295-6616, ext. 103

The mission of the Key West Art & Historical Society is to preserve the culture of the Florida Keys through exhibiting and displaying regional art, architecture and history for the purpose of educating the community and visiting public.

