Art museum replaces two ailing palms

BY PAT SHERMAN

Following rumors earlier this year that the tall, stately palm trees in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) may have been poisoned, the museum has replaced two of the trees at the northern end of the property, which it believed would not survive.

“We see small signs of life (tiny green offshoots) at the top of the other palms and will wait to replace those in hopes that they may eventually recover,” said MCASD Communications Associate Leah Masterson, via e-mail.

SEE PALM TREES, A20

Historic cottages spared demolition ... for now

BY PAT SHERMAN

Historic preservationists gained considerable ground last week in their efforts to save four early 20th century cottages in La Jolla that they believe are worth preserving for future generations.

The owners of both sets of cottages — one in WindanSea and the other in the heart of the Village — hope to raze them to make way for new development.

Tudor or too-da-loo?

On April 18, the city’s Development Services Department (DSD) approved a coastal development permit to demolish two Tudor Revival-style cottages in WindanSea, to make way for the construction of a 2,563-square foot duplex that property owners Jack and Karen Visin hope to occupy with their two sons.

Preservationists wanting to appeal DSD’s decision — which found that the project was not subject to California Environmental Quality Act Review — asked the San Diego

SEE COFFTTES, A4

La Jolla Shores Friends group sues contractor for crumbling park map

BY ASHLEY MACKIN

On June 20, Mary Coakley-Munk and Friends of La Jolla Shores filed a lawsuit against contractors T.B. Penick and Sons, and Lithocrete supplier Shaw and Sons, for damages resulting from the deteriorating Map at Kellogg Park.

The plaintiffs say the educational art installation depicting the ocean canyons off La Jolla Shores, and located at the corner of Camino Del Oro and Vallecitos, began crumbling in 2012.

Friends of La Jolla Shores allege T.B. Penick, the group hired to construct The Map, made claims about its durability and longevity, but The Map has come apart on two separate occasions during the past five years and T.B. Penick has refused to repair it.

SEE MAP LAWSUIT, A3

La Jolla Light
Holiday Delivery
Due to next Thursday’s July 4th holiday (with no mail delivery) the La Jolla Light will be in mailboxes on Friday, July 5 (and newsstands Wednesday, July 3).

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INSIDE

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SIO dedicates MESOM laboratory building in the Shores, A8

Church hosts reception for African refugees, A10

Scott Peters muses on first six months in Congress, A18

Inside

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Planning Commission to delay hearing the matter until Aug. 8, so the city’s Historical Resources Board (HRB) could have a chance to consider the historicity of the cottages, and potentially confer a historic designation.

Preservationists say a historical analysis of the properties conducted more than two years ago by attorney Scott Moomjian and architect and Planning Commission Vice-Chair Tim Golba — the basis for DSD’s decision to allow their demolition — is woefully inadequate.

During Planning Commission meetings on June 13 and 20, the commissioners grappled with the issue of whether to allow a continuance, which would give the HRB time to consider the cottages’ historic value.

Commissioner Golba, the architect hired to design the Visins’ duplex, recused himself from both discussions.

During the June 13 meeting, Mayor Bob Filner sent his chief of staff, Allen Jones, to voice his support for a continuance. Though Planning Commission Chair Eric Naslund said commissioners would give “a great deal of deference” to the mayor’s request, after more than a half hour of deliberations the commissioners decided they would honor the request of the property owners and discuss the issue that day.

Moomjian argued that land-use approvals for the Visins’ proposed duplex were processed through the city’s Sustainable Buildings Expedite Program, and should not be subject to further delays.

“Delaying the project two months is thoroughly inconsistent with the very nature and purpose of this program,” he said, adding that the “question of historicity was asked and answered more than two years ago.”

Diane Kane, a member of the La Jolla Community Planning Association’s Development Permit Review (DPR) subcommittee and a former HRB staff member, argued in favor of continuing the discussion, following another visit from Filner’s chief of staff, who voiced the mayor’s objection to the meeting on June 13, curtailing any further discussion.

“Who decided it? This did not happen due diligence. ‘We are not developers and have our life savings into this project,’ she said. ‘Wasn’t the question of historical significance asked and answered over two and a half years ago when we began this journey?’ We paid the City of San Diego for that answer, and now someone needs more time to revisit the answer again?”

However, property owner Karen Visin said she felt she and her husband had done their due diligence. “We are not developers and have our life savings into this project,” she said.

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Diane Kane, a member of the La Jolla Community Planning Association’s Development Permit Review (DPR) subcommittee and a former HRB staff member, argued in favor of continuing the discussion. She said her committee could not make the findings to recommend approval of the permit required to demolish the cottages and redevelop the property because the evidence they were presented — specifically Moomjian’s historic survey — was inconclusive.

“My committee was reviewing this project when we were summarily curtailed in our discussions) by staff’s approval of the (permit),” she said. “We were told at our first meeting, ‘You don’t need to ask (about its historicity). It’s been decided.’ Our question is, ‘Who decided it?’ This did not happen with any kind of open public process. All we’re asking is that the light of day be shed on this.”

However, property owner Karen Visin said she felt she and her husband had done their due diligence. “We are not developers and have our life savings into this project,” she said. “Wasn’t the question of historical significance asked and answered over two and a half years ago when we began this journey? We paid the City of San Diego for that answer, and now someone needs more time to revisit the answer again?”

Leslie Davis, chair of the La Jolla Historical Society’s (LJHS’s) preservation committee, said the society requested a formal HRB review in August 2010. Based on Golba and Moomjian’s historic survey (also referred to as a “forensic analysis”), four months later the city’s development services department decided not to request a HRB review, though the LJHS did not learn this until a notice was posted on the property in June 2012 that the cottages were to be demolished.

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When contacting the city for a copy of the forensic analysis, Davis said the LJHS was told the report was either in storage or destroyed. The current version, she said, refers to photos that are not included in the report.

“The report was written by the folks that want to develop the property,” she said. “We would like to take a look at that report and give the other findings regarding its historicity.”

Naslund opted to abruptly end the June 13 meeting, curtailing any further discussion, following another visit from Filner’s chief of staff, who voiced the mayor’s objection to the meeting on grounds that Filner’s two new Planning Commission appointments, Theresa Quiroz and Anthony Wagner (who Filner has deemed “neighborhood champions”), were not allowed to be a part of the discussions.

Though the new commissioners had 

FROM COTTAGES, A1

The La Jolla Historical Society and Save Our Heritage Organisation are working to uphold a local historic designation granted to this 1915 cottage at 7761 Eads Avenue. PHOTOS BY PAT SHERMAN

Preservationists convinced San Diego Planning Commission to allow the city’s Historical Resources Board to consider a historic designation for these two WindanSea cottages — a review supported by the mayor.