

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes for meeting of August 13, 2015 @ 2:00 pm
City Hall Council Conference Room, Bainbridge Island, WA

Members, Officials and Guests Present:

Committee Members: Francis Jacobson, Glenn Hartmann
David Williams and Marcia Montgomery
COBI Personnel: Sarah Blossom (City Council), Heather Beckman
Guests: Rick Chandler (Curator of BIHM), Jim McNett (Design
Review Committee), Elsie Wright (Harbor / Road Ends
Committee), Barbara Winther (Former HPC Member),
Ericksen Ave Property Owners: Jon Thornburgh, Debra
Fenwick,

CALL TO ORDER

- The meeting was called to order @ 2:00 pm and conducted jointly by Committee members David Williams and Glenn Hartmann
- Approval of Agenda for current meeting, approval of Minutes from meeting of July 2, 2015, and approval Both were motioned, seconded and approved
- Mr. Hartmann asked if there were any conflict of interest issues of which there were none.

CITIZEN PRESENTATIONS / DISCUSSIONS

- Non-compliant Historic Structures on Ericksen Ave and complications regarding renovations and additions as a result of restrictive guidelines – presented by Jon Thornburgh (owner of three historic buildings and accompanied by Debra Fenwick and William Ransom who are also own historic buildings on Ericksen)

Background for This Meeting:

Jim McNett of the Design Review Board and David Williams met with Mr. Thornburgh because Mr. Thornburgh has expressed concern that the rules and guidelines imposed on Ericksen Ave structures south of Wyatt Way are onerous and counter-productive toward any goal of preservations of these structures. The goal of this presentation is that the HPC will be able to offer recommendations to COBI in order to resolve these conflicts.

Mr. Thornburgh owns three buildings on the 200 block of Ericksen Ave. He has only had to do routine maintenance on his buildings and has never had to deal with COBI. However, one his buildings needs substantial work and requires a permit. However, when he looked into requirements specific for Ericksen Ave, he found that some of the rules would be very difficult to comply with and, if any expansion is needed, almost impossible. He stated that there was no flexibility and believed that historic buildings need to be looked at on a case by case basis. Perhaps, exceptions should be made for historic buildings if preservation of these structures overrides the recently implemented restrictions.

The primary objection he had was that there must be 30% of open space between the structure and the property boundaries in order to prevent wall to wall type overdevelopment. There are also setback rules pertaining to the structure and the sidewalk. Many of the older buildings are non-compliant with the setback rules. When expansions are made, the buildings have to be narrow. In addition, because the side areas cannot have parking, parking must be under the buildings. In addition, there is an expansion limit that allows for a minimum level of space between the structure and the watershed ravine.

Clarification of the Problem

Ms. Beckman looked at the referred to restrictions were meant to be guidelines and not hard and fast rules. Apparently, however, where it seems that “should” (suggestion) became “shall” (rule). Ms. Blossom stated that the wording was indeed changed. Mr. Hartmann questioned where the setback and the “30%” rules came from and speculated that it might have come from the Design Review Board although Mr. McNett stated that they did not. Ms. Blossom (or Ms. Beckman) indicated that the originators of the restrictive rules were Mr. John Green and former Council Member Debbi Lester.

The parking issue (the restriction on ground parking) is not a result of the 30% rule but from a parking reduction ordinance that mandated a 50% reduction in parking spaces within a ¼ mile radius of the Washington State Ferry (WSF) terminal and parking areas. This was implemented because parking spaces were often abused by allowing parking for ferry commuters and not for commerce on Bainbridge Island itself. As to the ravine setback, the COBI ordinance is based on state laws so it likely cannot be changed. The property owners all agreed that there needs to be a distinction between historic and non-historic buildings when it comes to these restrictions because there is little incentive, other than civic duty, to preserve and maintain them.

Mr. Thornburgh stated that he wanted to present his case to some group that would help advocate his case. Mr. McNett seemed to ask why he had not gone directly to the Design Review Committee (DRC) rather than to him and Mr. Williams personally with the intent of presenting his case to the HPC. Mr. Williams stated that often the DRC is often rather robotic in their decisions and not versed in historic preservation. Mr. Williams stated that the HPC should advocate for flexibility and when it comes to the restoration of historic structures. Ms. Montgomery stated that she was concerned that the potential of abuse in granting exceptions. Mr. Williams mentioned that if such exceptions were in the spirit of the law then it should not be open to abuse. Ms. Fenwick stated that the reason the guidelines were changed to rules (“should” to “shall”) was the potential for abuse. Ms. Blossom stated the “30% rule” that Mr. Thornburgh is most concerned with is not in the “spirit” of the law and should not be a determining factor. As to whether incentives and flexibilities existed she was not sure.

Conclusion and Potential for Resolution

Mr. Williams asked Mr. Thornburgh what incentives regarding historic building preservation he would like to see and what rule he found the most onerous. The 30% rule was the most onerous. As to what could be done, proposals involving the HPC and the DRC in dealing with historic preservation exceptions. Perhaps amendments should be drafted to allow for overrides of the “30% rule.” Mr. McNett suggested contacting previous HPC members as well as former COBI Council members in order to understand the background of the rules more precisely which would aid in resolving the type of issues brought before the HPC today.

OLD BUSINESS (FOLLOW UP AND RESOLUTION)

- Fletcher Bay Landing Historic Marker was approved
- South Beach Historic Marker:
 - o Ms. Mary Dombrowski and other South Beach community members will be paying to install the marker. All of these historic sign markers are being paid for by neighborhood associations as COBI has no budget for them.
 - o The South Beach sign will be titled “The Navy Takes Over” and will read as follows:

In 1890, the Army established Fort Ward as one of several Coast Artillery forts built during a period of military modernization. The Army abandoned the fort on March 12, 1928 but retained ownership. Ten years later the Navy acquired the property with grand designs on its use.

By 1941 the Navy expanded the base by hundreds of acres, forcing property owners in the small Scandinavian community to sell their land and relocate. The most notable was William Peterson and his 160 acre Sunny Hill Dairy. The Navy gave the Petersons and other residents 30 days to sell their livestock and personal property before vacating the land.

These land acquisitions related to the Navy’s critical mission as a Naval Receiving station, intercepting enemy coded messages. It quickly installed a tall wire mesh perimeter fence around the newly expanded area. This spot marks its SE corner. This historical barrier protected the fort’s facilities, most important of which was top-secret listening post, Station S, where the Navy intercepted imperial Japanese coded messages. The Navy forwarded the messages by teletype to Washington D.C. where the code was eventually broken, marking a significant step towards victory in the Pacific.
- Road Ends (Potential for Public Funding of Signage?)
 - o Ms. Elsie Wright spoke at the meeting and apparently there is some sort of a Road End / Harbor Commission whose mission is preserve road end accessibility.
 - o Funds from a settlement with the Washington State Ferries is being used for this project.
 - o Mr. Chandler speculates that the Fletcher Bay Landing site could be a road end which might make it eligible for public funding.
 - o Mr. Williams asked Ms. Beckman to research how much it might cost the city to install the marker.

- Updating the Process for Determining Register Eligible Properties
 - o The goal is to update the screening mechanism and have an updated preliminary list so that we will be able to have more clout in major land use changes that could negatively affect historic properties.
 - o The first step would be to work with the first preliminary list that the HPC created shortly after its inception.
 - o Ms. Montgomery thought the Washington State's Registry would be the best place to start because they have greater access to field inspectors who would have more information about the structures
 - o Ms. Blossom asked what are the criteria are for listing a structure as eligible for the Registry to which Mr. Williams gave the parameters.
 - o As for the using the Washington State Registry, Mr. Hartmann stated that their information is not very detailed. It mostly provides little more than addresses. The property inventory that is available at BIHM would be the most helpful starting point.

NEW BUSINESS

- Preservation Seminar – Cancelled for 2015?
 - o Former HPC member Jim Forsher created and hosted annual preservation seminars which were held in September. However, Mr. Forsher resigned and is now residing in Austria. Consequently, we either need someone to organize one or we will need to discontinue this outreach program.
- Grant Available to save the Suyamatsu Barn
 - o There is a grant available (the underwriter was not named) for the preservation of historic agricultural structures such as the barn on the Suyamatsu Farm and, as Ms. Montgomery clarified, any structures related to the barn such as the bunkhouses.
 - o The deadline is in October 2015 and the City Council would have to approve applying for the grant. The HPC endorsed applying for the grant and it will be brought before the City Council (no date was provided)
 - o Having the barn officially on the Registry might improve our chances at being awarded grant funding.
 - o Friends of the Farm have already raised \$35,000 toward restoration of which \$10,000 likely came from the Rotary Club.
- Hidden Cove Boathouse Restoration
 - o The concern was that the boathouse was a non-conforming structure which would prevent the restoration. However, as long as the land is not impacted there should be no problem in the project going forward.

SUYAMATSU FARM MEETING HELD AUGUST 6, 2015

- The meeting discussed primarily what can and cannot be done
- There needs to be some sort of Master Plan
 - o Per the Minutes from this meeting:
Ms. Tynner and Ms. Hanson stated that their organization was in the process of preparing a long term master plan for Suyematsu Farm and they need some direction on what may or may not be allowed at that location. The Commissioners agreed that this needs to be detailed much further.
- The most vocal and active in developing uses for the Suyamatsu farm was Becca Hansen (herself an architect)
- One of the primary concerns was setting a level of accessibility. Too much access could change the character and contradict the goal of preserving it as a living symbol of the island's agricultural past.
- Mr. Williams wants to schedule a meeting toward the end of the month with Friends of Farm and discuss future plans.
 - o The primary goal of the August 6, 2015 meeting was to receive the final assessment report by Mimi Sheridan, a historic preservation consultant hired by COBI.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 pm