



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

SITKA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Monthly Meeting

Harrigan Centennial Hall

February 10, 2021 6 p.m.

FINAL MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Littlefield called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Present: Roby Littlefield (chair), James Poulson, Ana Dittmar, Scott Saline, Chuck Miller, Crystal Duncan (assembly liaison)

Absent: Bob Sam

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Ben Mejia

Public: Rebecca Poulson, Kelli Cropper, Maryellen Tuttell, Ken Nichols, Katie Kennedy, Jake Anders

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M-Poulson/S-Dittmar moved to approve the agenda. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 9, 2020 minutes

M-Dittmar/S-Miller moved to approve the December 9, 2020 minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

IV. GUESTS &/OR PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Ainslie informed the Commission of virtual Commissioner training hosted by the Clerk and Legal Departments on Friday, February 12th at noon. Ainslie explained that the training would cover Roberts Rules of Order, Open Meetings Act, conflict of interest, and ex-parte communications.

Ainslie informed the Commission that the new state historian with the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA), Katie Ringsmuth, was now the point of contact for Certified Local Government grants. Littlefield read Ringsmuth's email correspondence which announced that the OHA was now accepting Historic Preservation Fund grant applications.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

B. Historic Preservation Plan

Ainslie reported that staff had not yet received comment from Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA). Miller replied that he would put the item on the next STA cultural resources committee meeting on March 4th.

C. Commissioner Recruitment

Ainslie reported that staff continued to advertise for the vacant at-large seat. The Commission voiced concern over difficulty in filling the vacant seat while previous appointments had been denied by the assembly. Duncan asked the Commission to encourage previous Commission applicants to reapply. Ainslie reviewed expiration dates of current Commissioners.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

D. Review of Sitka Seaplane Base Environmental Assessment

Ainslie introduced the DOWL project team. Maryellen Tuttell provided a site description and project overview for the placement of a seaplane base along Seward Avenue on Japonski Island. Tuttell and Kelli Cropper explained that after site selection studies were conducted, the proposed site was identified as the optimal location and layout to meet seaplane base needs. Tuttell explained the environmental review processes.

Tuttell informed the Commission that review of potential impacts was necessary under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The project identified a World War II era observation post located in the center of the site. Tuttell explained that a field survey had been conducted to document the resource and a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) report had been written and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and National Park Service (NPS) for review. Tuttell explained that they had been consulting with the NPS due to the proximity of the resource to a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and to plan appropriate mitigation of potential adverse effects.

Jake Anders provided an overview of identified historic resources in the area, associated with the Sitka Naval Operating Base and US Coastal Defenses NHL consisting of WWII era structures. Anders explained that the project included considerations of potential visual impacts as well as vibrations during construction and use. Anders provided additional detail about the observation post, stating that it was characteristic of WWII era military construction, was located near the modern-day coastline, and was well preserved though weathered. Anders explained that the DOE recommendation found that the resource should be considered eligible as a contributing resource of the NHL. Anders stated that if the SHPO and NPS agreed with their findings, DOWL would continue consultation with both parties as well as the city of Sitka to determine mitigation measures.

The Commission discussed potential mitigation strategies. Potential mitigation strategies were

discussed. The first suggestion was to revise the site development plan to avoid the observation post. Cropper and Tuttell explained that due to the grading of the site, avoidance of the historic resource was unfeasible. Saline suggested designing a museum exhibit of the WWII site for the Sitka Museum. The Commission noted that there was a desire to create an interpretive center for the NHL close to the Navy structures near the bridge. Rebecca Poulson asked if archaeological monitoring would take place during excavation. Ken Nichols replied that the Federal Aviation Administration provided guidelines on appropriate procedure if artifacts are found. Tuttell continued that consultations with SHPO and NPS would provide additional guidance on cultural resource monitoring during site preparation. The Commission discussed the proximity of the project location to areas of tribal significance. Rebecca Poulson asked for estimated project costs. Cropper responded that the rough order of magnitude was approximately \$20 million.

VIII. SET NEXT MEETING DATE(S):

(2nd Wednesday of the Month, 6 pm **Harrigan Centennial Hall**)

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 – Regular Monthly Meeting

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objections, Chair Littlefield adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm.