



**Municipality of Anchorage**  
**Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission**

***MEETING SUMMARY***  
**Thursday, August 24, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.**

***Regular Meeting***

Hybrid—in-person at 4700 Elmore Rd and virtually in Microsoft Teams

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chair Bryce Klug.

**1. Land Acknowledgement – Chair**

**2. Establish Quorum – Chair**

A quorum was present.

*Present:* Bryce Klug, Chair  
Loren Leman  
Brandy Pennington  
David Reimer  
Connor Scher

*Excused:* Darrick Howard

*Absent:* Marc Lamoreaux

*Staff:* Tom Davis, Senior Planner, Planning Department

*Guests:* Rob Meinhardt, President, True North Sustainable Development Solutions (TNSDS)  
Joan Bayles Burgett, Cultural Resource Manager, TNSDS  
Casey Woster, Architectural Historian, TNSDS  
Judy Bittner, State of Alaska Historic Preservation Officer  
Kristine Bunnell, former Municipal Historic Preservation Officer, recently retired  
(joined the meeting at 6:17 p.m.)

**3. Approve Agenda – Chair and Commissioners**

*Chair Bryce Klug* proposed because of the interest in the public hearing in the landmark registered nomination that we move that (item 9) to the top of the agenda. There were no objections to this proposed change in the agenda.

*Chair Klug* explained we will be striking item 5, meeting notes – attached, as there were no meeting minutes in the packet. *Tom Davis* responded he would find and send those minutes to the Commission before the next meeting.

*Commissioner Leman* suggested that the new staff and Commission get coordinated on the notes preparation. He is happy to do a final touch on them, but if somebody can do a draft with the recording and the transcript first, that's what was done before, and it worked well. *Mr. Davis* agreed and would find the working draft minutes of the previous meeting and get in contact.

*Commissioner Leman* moved to approve the agenda as amended. *Commissioner Scher* seconded the motion.

***The agenda was approved unanimously, as amended.***

**9. Public Hearing on Local Landmark Register Nomination for Alaska Native Heritage Center.** *(Note: This item was moved up to come first in the meeting agenda)*

*Chair Klug* introduced the public hearing item. As a precursor to the public hearing, Chair Klug made a disclosure for the record that he worked as a principal at RIM Architects, one of the parties mentioned in the nomination application. He explained that work took place before his time at RIM, and he did not see any financial conflict of interest. No other commissioner believed there was a conflict. *Commissioner Scher* said the nomination does not affect Mr. Klug's firm. There were no concerns with Chair Klug participating in this item.

*Chair Klug* requested a staff presentation. *Mr. Davis* reported that this is our first nomination to our local landmarks, and that staff considers it an important site. He referred the commissioners to the findings in the July 20 staff report memorandum provided in the packet and stated that staff supports approval of the nomination. He noted the application's extensive research and narrative tells the story of the founding and establishment of the Alaska Native Heritage Center. He noted that the selection, planning, and development of this site go back decades to the mid-1980s.

*Chair Klug* opened the public hearing and invited public testimony.

*Casey Woster*, TNSDS, testified as representative of the petitioner and as the author of this nomination. *Ms. Woster* gave a summary of the nomination. TNSDS worked with the Alaska Native Heritage Center to prepare the nomination. She explained that they are nominating the Heritage Center as a significant landscape within the Municipality of Anchorage. They have extended the period of significance to the donation of the land for the center, which occurred in 1993. The reasoning behind that is tied to the history of the development of the of the center, which was originally proposed in 1972 and originally intended for an 80-acre parcel located in what is now Far North Bicentennial Park. The groups working to establish this cultural center had developed design plans including landscaping plans for the Center for the site but public opposition forced a redesign from an 80-acre parcel to a 40-acre parcel; and then when the public eventually voided the lease of that land in the park in 1992 by public vote, Cook Inlet Regional, Inc., (CIRI) ended up donating the land that the center now sits on. However, this land is a 26-acre parcel in a triangular shape. This meant that in 1993 the Alaska Native Heritage Center, the group behind the design, had to go back to the drawing board to redesign the entire site layout to fit this smaller parcel of land. That that was the reasoning behind stretching the significance to 1993. The purpose of the center has not changed. While it does operate as a tourism site, it is primarily a living heritage center whereby Alaskan Native cultures are presented not through a lens of an anthropologist, archaeologist, or historian but by the people who live those cultures in the regions of Alaska where those cultures were prevalent.

Ms. Woster continued, explaining the center works to connect young Alaskan natives with elders from their tribal communities to help further their knowledge and understanding of their own cultural traditions so that the young Alaska Native youth can ground themselves in a strong identity and understanding of where they came from. And then take that and move forward into the world. This is essentially this is the physical manifestation of the anthropological ideal of indigenous cosmopolitanism. It's a huge departure from every other Cultural Center dealing with North American indigenous cultures. This is the largest and the most comprehensive that exists in the United States. There are other a lot other Native American indigenous groups that are trying to establish the same source of systems, but they are on a much smaller scale, focusing on just one individual culture as opposed to all five major language groups across the state of like exist with the Alaska Native Heritage Center. So it's the largest and by far the most successful according to my research. It's unique in that it does present the Alaskan native cultures by the people who actually live those cultures. So it's a very significant, very significant cultural landscape.

*Rob Meinhardt*, the president and principal TNSDS spoke on behalf of the petitioner in support of this landmark designation. *Mr. Meinhardt* noted that Emily Edenshaw, the Executive Director of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, wanted to be present today but could not make it. He said that Ms. Woster summed up the importance that so much went into not only securing the property of which it currently exists, but also the structures that make up that landscape are representative of the five different cultures and they brought individuals from those five cultures to actually construct those structures utilizing traditional life ways and construction techniques, which adds a layer of significance to this landscape as well in case you.

*Casey Woster* said they are also utilizing as much material from the regions that these cultures are presented. For instance, there's an Athabascan ceremonial house on the site that is constructed of wood traditionally used from the region.

*Rob Meinhardt* said that Ms. Woster's research on what went into developing the center and the functionality of that center uncovered interesting history that added some significance that most people have not been aware of.

*Casey Woster* explained that the ANHC was first proposed in 1972, and in 1974 a presentation was given by the company that managed the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. The ANHC is and always was based on that design in Hawaii. However, the difference is that the Polynesian Cultural Center was established and is still owned and operated and staffed by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They try to staff primarily from Brigham Young University, Hawaii. So, it's not presented by the Polynesians. That difference sets ANHC apart.

*Rob Meinhardt* continued, saying it's indicative of their sovereignty to have the ability to tell their culture through their own people and through those cultures themselves and participating in a lot of youth programs to help raise the youth in connection with the elders to be able to better understand their own culture, which is significant. TNSDS, after the research, is fully supportive of the nomination. TNSDS believes the period of significance extends beyond 30 years because it goes back to the site development process Ms. Woster discussed. He hoped that the Commissioners take that into account when they vote on this and look at the importance of this as a landmark in the Municipality of Anchorage.

*Chair Klug* asked if any Commissioners had any questions for the petitioners' representatives.

*Commissioner Pennington* responded to a part of the petitioner's discussion about the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. She clarified that the Polynesian Cultural Center is run by university students on scholarship in exchange for their work at the Polynesian Cultural Center. She has been there multiple times and does not believe it is run by missionaries. It is not for proselyting so much as it is for bringing awareness and cultural sensitivity.

*Casey Woster* responded and clarified her testimony that she believes the gentleman who established the Polynesian Cultural Center was a missionary, but agreed with Commissioner Pennington's assessment of the current center's operation is not for a missionary purpose.

*Commissioner Scher* asked the petitioner to explain the Alaska Native Heritage Center's interest in being on the local landmark register.

*Rob Meinhardt* responded that when the ANHC learned of the local landmark ordinance, they felt that the ANHC warranted the landmark designation. ANHC is looking at it to enhance the awareness of the importance of this facility. That is what he understood from ANHC when TNSDS was brought into this project.

*Commissioner Scher* asked staff, because this is the first nomination that HPC has seen, what it means to have the representative present the nomination given the packet HPC has received does not document that ANHC has. Does HPC need documentation from the property owner directly approving the nomination?

*Casey Woster* responded that she believes there is a letter of support in the packet, and the owner did sign the last page in the version of the nomination packet that TNSDS has on file. *Ms. Woster* offered to email that signed version of the signature page to staff.

*Commissioner Reamer* noted that the testimony established that the land was donated in 1993, and the petitioner's email of July 20<sup>th</sup> clarifying some points stated the land was and remains CIRI-owned land. *Ms. Woster* responded affirmatively, but clarified that CIRI offered the land up during the AFN Conference in October 1993. It then had to go through MOA approvals to start construction. The MOA approved the permit for construction in July 1994. *Commissioner Reamer* responded that the land was not donated in 1993. *Ms. Woster* responded that the land was offered in 1993, and ANHC did start site planning almost immediately.

*Commissioner Reamer* asked a question about some information on the first page of the nomination form that the applicant submitted. There is a spot that asks for the date of construction and states it must be at least 30 years old. Why was that part left blank and what would the date of construction be? *Ms. Woster* responded that the construction began in 1997 and it ran until 1999, when the ANHC opened. As for why the date did not end up on the first page in the nomination form, she said that may have been an oversight, and expressed her regrets for that oversight.

*Chair Klug* asked if any others who wished to testify. No other members of the public came forward to provide public testimony. *Chair Klug* closed the public hearing, and asked the Commission for a motion to approve the nomination so that there can be a discussion.

*Commissioner Leman* moved to approve the nomination, so that there could be discussion. *Commissioner Scher* seconded the motion. Commissioners agreed moving forward to discuss.

*Chair Klug* asked Commissioners for discussion, and findings for the Historic Preservation Commission that will be incorporated into the resolution.

*Commissioner Leman* began the discussion by saying that from his perspective having been out to this incredible facility a few times, but not enough. Having read through the nomination packet, he did not think there's anything inappropriate in the packet. The only thing that he saw was in conflict is when the time clock starts for the 30-year age criteria. But he mulled that over and is reasonably satisfied the petitioner believes the ANHC meets this criterion. He asked Ms. Woster to confirm his understanding from her July 20 email that TNSDS has a strong belief that food the 30-year clock started even before 1993 because of its being a cultural landscape, a different category from a building. If that's correct, then that answers the question for him. But if anybody on the Commission thinks otherwise, he would like to hear that. If Commissioners do not agree that the time clock starts back then, then that's really the only issue. He questioned if that is an important enough issue to derail this nomination. If so, then the option would be take it up next year if we're at year 29 and then the HPC would be visiting this next year instead of this year.

*Commissioner Reamer* stated that his belief that no matter what happens with this nomination, the Local Landmark Ordinance needs to be revised. It's not the nomination itself. The Director's Guidance makes no declaration whether to date to ideation or construction. The nomination form says construction, but that's not the ordinance. That is something for the HPC to consider going forward. He said he is agnostic either way, but as things currently lay, he sees no support for dating to ideation and some support that the intent was for construction as seen in the nomination form.

*Commissioner Scher* said that he has been thinking about this nomination for long time and reviewing his notes from when the Commission and staff were developing the Local Landmark Ordinance. He said the Ordinance was going to be put to a test at some point and commended the petitioners for taking on the challenge. When the HPC and staff took the draft ordinance to the Planning and Zoning Commission, there was a lot of discussion about the rationale for the 30-year age and why it did not match the National Register's 50-year threshold. The HPC and staff provided two examples of locally significant historic resources that were not yet 50 years old, and PZC approved the ordinance. While drafting the landmark ordinance, there was discussion about how to treat the age threshold—whether it's 50 or 30, what does that really mean? He recalled making suggestions to give the same “out” that exists in the National Register where the property is either at least 50 years old or has achieved significance within the last 50 years. That flexibility doesn't exist in our local ordinance. He believed that, having gone through this process now with this applicant, it's something that the Commission should revisit as a potential modification to the Local Landmark Ordinance. He recalled that the working group had originally proposed 50 years with this same caveat. They eventually settled on 30 because many other local nominations used that age threshold. At the end of the day, it is an arbitrary fence to cross over, and he said he thinks the intent was recognizing Anchorage is a young city and does not have historic resources that may be as old as 50 years or under from construction. *Commissioner Scher* continued that, in rereading the ordinance, and setting aside his personal feelings, he does have to find that the property does not currently meet the eligibility requirements for the Local Landmark Register. He agreed with the first finding of the staff report, that it is a very complete application. The story is important and well researched and documented. It meets the intent of the register to recognize properties such as this. However, he cannot support the nomination without it having meet the letter of the ordinance.

*Commissioner Scher* continued, regarding Commissioner Reimer's comment about the language on the nomination application form versus language in the ordinance, he believed that that is

also potentially confusing to applicants. Professionals who work on historic resources regularly and are familiar with this sort of language interchangeably use words “period of significance” with the age, but I think that the Local Landmark Ordinance doesn't make that same kind of separation. Where the ordinance talks about dates of construction and not periods of significance, this indicates that that the period of significance must start at the construction. As Ms. Woster provided in her email, there are many precedents for that not being required on at the national level. But again, although he agrees that the period of significance for this property does extend to 1993 and likely even earlier to 1972 when the ideas around creating the ANHC originated, the Local Landmark Ordinance doesn't make any mention of periods of significance when it talks about dates of construction. He said he believes that is a sticking point. In three or four years when 30 years past the construction day comes, the HPC will be able to approve this nomination. Or if the MOA is able to edit the Local Landmark Ordinance and have the applicant reapply, he would like to see the property added to the local register. However, he concluded that he did not believe that he can support adding it now.

*Chair Klug* said he has been also struggling. He certainly feels the ANHC is a good representation, particularly a strong program conveying, celebrating, and honoring Alaska Native history and culture that's present in the community. He said he has been going over the letter of the ordinance to determine what seems appropriate. He asked for any other discussion from commissioners.

*Commissioner Leman* asked for a clarification on the process. Does the HPC recommend to the Assembly and the Assembly votes and decides? Meeting participants responded affirmatively.

*Commissioner Leman* suggested the HPC forward this nomination to the Assembly and suggest they fix the ordinance. Specifically, if the Assembly wants to approve the nomination, then fine; otherwise fix the ordinance. The Assembly is the body that would be fixing the ordinance anyway. He stated that he is ready to recommend and send it on to the Assembly.

*Chair Klug* responded that the actual language of the HPC resolution could read something to the effect that: the Commission feels that this nomination meets the general criteria of the importance of the historical aspects of community. However, there is a conflict about it not meeting the 30-year construction date, but that criterion is potentially open to be modified within the ordinance. Maybe this can open the door for Assembly to approve the nomination with the intent to revisit the ordinance.

*Commissioner Scher* supported that idea and suggested that in the recommendations the HPC can remind the Assembly that it is their decision to approve this or not, and then invite them to have a work session with the HPC if they want to look at amending the ordinance. Then the HPC can provide alternatives for having and modify the ordinance language that they're seeking advice on that.

*Chair Klug* suggested one approach is to use the findings in the staff report and had a fourth finding that says, “However the date of construction of the facility is less than the 30 years minimum, and this is the potential aspect of the Local Landmark Ordinance that should be amended in a collaboration between the Commission and the Assembly.” That would present to the Assembly a way that they could still move ahead and put this on the register in the context of intending to look at amending the ordinance. That would be one way to prepare a HPC resolution.

*Commissioner Leman* reminded the participants that the motion before the Commission is to approve this nomination. If that passes, then the HPC should just send it up to the Assembly. If it doesn't pass, then another motion would be an order in which the HPC would need to do this alternative approach to consider amending the Local Landmark Ordinance. He is willing to vote yes, although he also recognizes that there's a problem here that that needs to be clarified. But it's a problem that is in the Assembly's purview to fix. The HPC will have to bring it to the Assembly's attention.

The Commissioners and staff then discussed the potential length of time the process would take for the Assembly to receive and consider the HPC's recommendations, possibly taking six weeks to get through to the Assembly or potentially the rest of this year. The Commissioners discussed their individual positions to get a straw vote on the motion.

*Commissioner Leman* suggested sending this vote with a note that says that there is conflict with the ordinance. Perhaps not the intent of the landmark ordinance directions. But to take it up to the Assembly and see if they want to deal with it.

*Chair Klug* agreed the Commission needs to accompany its recommendation regarding the nomination with a statement that there was not unanimous approval of the nomination because of this conflict with the letter of the ordinance, and that the HPC would like to address this. The main motion could be to approve this nomination and recommend the Assembly place this property on the register, but the actual message to the Assembly is in the form of a resolution and the resolution can include findings why the Commission feels this is appropriate and can say the Commission barely passed this nomination and based upon this issue about technically meeting the ordinance requirements for 30 years and then there's another resolution could be that the Commission would like to request to visit revisit this time requirement in the Local Landmark Ordinance with the Assembly.

*Chair Klug* requested a roll call vote on the motion to approve the Alaska Native Heritage Center to be placed on the local landmark register. The Commissioners voted on the motion, as follows:

- Yes – Leman, Pennington, and Klug.
- No – Reamer, Scher.

***The motion failed, with 3 votes in favor and 2 opposed.*** (Note: Although it seemed to pass because there were more "Yes" than "No" votes among the Commissioners present, it failed because any action by the HPC requires a favorable vote of the majority of all authorized seats of the board.)

With the "Yes" votes outnumbering the "No" votes, *Chair Klug* requested a second motion, to recommend the Assembly approve it based upon the findings.

*Commissioner Scher* moved to have the Chair and staff draft a resolution to the Assembly including the suggested findings of the staff report dated July 20, 2023, as well as a note on the split vote of the Commission and an invitation to the Assembly to revisit the 30-year age limit for nominated properties with the Commission. *Commissioner Leman* seconded. The Commissioners then voted on this motion, as follows:

- Yes – Leman, Pennington, Scher, and Klug.
- No – Reamer.

*The motion failed, with 4 votes in favor and 1 opposed. (Note: Although it seemed to pass because there were more "Yes" than "No" votes among the Commissioners present, it failed because any action by the HPC requires a favorable vote of the majority of all authorized seats of the board.)*

Upon suggestion by staff, Commissioners asked former staff Kristine Bunnell, who joined the meeting as a guest during the deliberations, to provide any further thoughts or information based on her familiarity with this case. *Kristine Bunnell* reminded the Commission to include HPC's role as adopted in code and that it is an advisory commission to the Assembly and explain the vote that HPC has taken and the reason why HPC has taken that vote. That will allow the Assembly the opportunity to have a discussion or just go ahead and put the item on their consent agenda and then they approve it through a consent agenda. Commissioners may want to reach out to the Assembly person that represents the area where the nominated property is.

*Chair Klug* requested staff work with him to prepare a draft resolution, so that it could be considered at next month's HPC meeting.

#### **6. Government Hill Wireless Station – Staff Update.**

*Tom Davis* reported that the consultant team from TNSDS (including the guests present at this meeting) conducting the structural architectural assessment were able to access the third building on the Wireless Station site with the help of municipal Facilities Maintenance last week. This enabled the consultant to move forward with preparing the assessment report. Commissioners Scher and Klug offered to help prepare some of the sections of that report. Staff has committed to be available to help the Commissioners as much as possible. The general plan is that the contractor and Municipality (Commissioners/staff) will write their respective sections and edit-review one another's work. It is at the beginning of the writing stage and there are no findings yet.

*Chair Klug* reminded those present that the grant requires a certain amount of in-kind contribution that needs to be accounted from the Municipality including the Commissioners and staff helping to prepare the report, and that those helping should keep track of their time used on this project to share that information with the State Historic Preservation Office.

*Commissioner Scher* indicated he had sent an email question to staff because regarding the outline of the sections of the report from TNSDS. There are number of sections on the report outline that Commissioner Scher didn't think the writers needed to address or have more than a sentence or two devoted. Specifically, the life safety and building systems sections. Is that something within the agreement, or if we were intending to do documentation of those general shortcomings of the buildings. *Chair Klug* responded he has not yet read the outline and the building is in a heavy state of disrepair. He believes the intent of the report analysis was to identify what is critical to keep the structure of the building reinforced so that it is averted from collapsing. Addressing the code requirements would need to be tied to what's the planned occupancy and use of the building. But that is one aspect has not been identified at all. The Government Hill Community Council has identified numerous divergent possible uses which all have their own building code criteria. So it would be onerous to cover specific code requirements. *Commissioner Scher* agreed: there would be so many ways of potentially approaching life safety and building systems from the lens of the International Building Code, but that depends on what the type of intended use is, which we do not have yet. One of his



goals for this conditions assessment is to identify what can be structurally done with the buildings so that they are safe for human occupation, or what kind of remediation to do that.

*Commissioner Scher* reported that what he has heard from the Community Council in previous discussions is generally falling within the treatments of rehabilitation or restoration, and generally all of it umbrella preservation. His own goal was to rule out reconstruction of the site. Through previous work on the site with the Commission, as well as in his own research during his master's degree program, there was a great deal of emphasis on getting the entire site, all three parcels and buildings, listed on the National Register. The entire site should be considered eligible and significant.

*Casey Woster*, TNSDS, responded that she has the nomination and has downloaded Commissioner Scher's work. *Ms. Woster* pointed out that the outline of assessment report sections uses the guidance for historic structure reports published by the Office of History and Archaeology. *Chair Klug* asked Ms. Casey if it make sense to her that the MOA is filtrating this guidance, and that certain parts of that outline can be abbreviated because of the unknown aspects. *Ms. Casey* responded in the affirmative.

*Rob Meinhardt*, TNSDS, explained that the assignment of what sections were divvied up to which company was part of the scope of the contract. The scope of services for the contract establishes that municipal staff and HPC members will provide support. Substantial portions of the background information, including history building features such as fire life and safety, ADA public health, heating systems, plumbing, electrical, etcetera. TNSDS is operating under this outline per the scope of services of the contract.

#### **7. HPP Subcommittee Meeting – Chair.**

*Chair Klug* reported the subcommittee has not held any meetings. In response to another Commissioner's question, he confirmed the subcommittee has the annotated draft of the plan.

#### **8. HPP Grant Funding – Staff.**

Tom Davis reported that, based on an update on Monday from the Municipality's overall manager of the CDBG-Disaster Recover grant that is funding the HPP and other projects, Municipality is close to receiving the grant funding. The Municipality and state are just completing paperwork and signatory pages. It seems positive, and Planning Department is still waiting and hopeful that September might be the month when we receive the funding.

#### **10. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items.**

*Judy Bittner*, the State Historic Preservation Officer, reported that a letter just came out from the Office of History and Archaeology, letting the certified local governments know that the certified local government grant for the historic preservation 2023 grants is now open and will be soliciting grants from CLG's until October 13. She encouraged the Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission to consider applying for a grant with the CLG funding that is now available. For example, if there is a next phase on the Wireless Station. Something totally different is also ok. Those grants will be considered at the November meeting of the Alaska Historical Commission.

*Commissioner Leman* asked what the amount of these grants is and if a match is required. *Ms. Bittner* responded that it is up to \$50,000, and she believes it is up to \$54,000 on the federal side. It requires 40% match (a 60-40 grant).

*Judy Bittner* reported that the historic preservation maritime grants are also available. This is a brand-new grant from the SHPO, which got funding from the Park Service, and SHPO has historic preservation maritime grants. They will be education maritime grants. She did not know if Anchorage has anything in particular it might apply for. The maritime grant is available for state and local governments, nonprofits, and tribes. Individuals are not eligible for maritime grants. The local government historic preservation grants can go to individuals, but not the maritime grants. If an individual has a project they must partner with a state or local government, tribe, or a nonprofit. Commissioners and staff could let folks know through its meetings and outreach that those maritime grants are available. She believed the deadline on those are October 31. All that information and the CLG information is available on the SHPO website.

#### **11. Commissioner/Staff Comments on Non-Agenda Items.**

*Chair Klug* offered a personal and historic preservation comment regarding the recent wildfire in Lahaina, Hawaii. His family has vacationed in that area since the 1970s for many years, and the photographs are devastating. One takeaway is there is a lot of discussion in the news media about the value of the buildings on the sites and how they represent culture and heritage. At least it's bringing attention to the that historic preservation is important to communities. That is only one aspect but is a very tragic loss, too.

*Commissioner Leman* responded that the potential loss of life is stunning. It is awful to think of the lost history also. That history is less important than the human life, but it is still important.

*Chair Klug* concluded that perhaps everyone's communities will reinforce that historic preservation is important.

#### **ADJOURN**

*Commissioner Leman* moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Scher seconded.

*The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.*