



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

***MEETING SUMMARY***

**Thursday, June 22, 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  
Darrick Howard  
Marc Lamoreaux  
Loren Leman  
Brandy Pennington  
David Reamer  
Connor Scher

- 3. Approve Agenda – Chair and Commissioners**

*Commissioner Leman* moved to approve the agenda as presented. *Commissioner Howard* seconded the motion.

***The agenda was approved unanimously.***

- 4. Introductions – Visitors**

The following staff and guests were in attendance:

*Staff:* Kristine Bunnell, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning Department  
Daniel McKenna-Foster, Senior Planner, Planning Department

*Guests:* Joan Bayles Burgett, Cultural Resource Manager, TNSDS  
Casey Woster, Architectural Historian, TNSDS

- 5. Meeting Notes – Attached**

*Commissioner Howard* moved to approve the May 25, 2023, HPC meeting notes as presented. *Commissioner Leman* seconded the motion.

***The May 25, 2023, meeting notes were approved unanimously.***

## OLD BUSINESS:

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

*Kristine Bunnell* reported that the Municipality is in the process of hiring a contractor, True North Sustainable Development Solutions (TNSDS), to conduct the grant-funded Wireless Station assessment project through a municipal term contract with HDL. HDL will serve as the pass-through contract manager, and TNSDS will conduct the assessment of the Wireless Station as the professional services consultant. Staff expects to receive authorization to move forward with the contract and project soon.

*Commissioner Leman* asked if TNSDS has a structural engineer. *Ms. Bunnell* responded that TNSDS has a structural engineer as a subcontractor who they will be working with.

*Kristine Bunnell* further reported that the heating stack on the third building on the Wireless Station site is leaning over, and it is the municipal Real Estate Department and Facilities Maintenance Department that will be responsible for fixing that.

### 7. HPP Subcommittee Meeting – Chair.

*Chair Klug* reported that he and Commissioner Scher met with Kristine Bunnell and received a set of hardcopy staff comments on the working draft of the Historic Preservation Plan (HPP), and Commissioners Scher and Klug will digest those comments and look forward to working with a consultant to complete the Plan. *Chair Klug* asked staff for an update on the progress toward receiving the anticipated grant funding to hire a consultant for the HPP.

*Kristine Bunnell* responded that the Municipality is waiting for the grant agreement from the State of Alaska. There is some capacity in the Planning Department to input edits once Commissioners Scher and Klug complete their review of the draft HPP and comments so far.

## NEW BUSINESS:

### 8. Local Landmark Register Nomination Overview – Staff/TNSDS.

*Casey Woster*, TNSDS, at the request of Chair Klug, provided an overview of the proposal to nominate the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) to the Local Landmark Register. TNSDS prepared the proposal for the nomination and is presenting on behalf of ANHC. She explained that its significance is because this is a living heritage Center site as a significant landscape within the Municipality of Anchorage. The Alaska Native Heritage Center operates on several different levels. For one, it is a living heritage center, meaning that the cultures represented there are alive and well across Alaska. The ANHC operates with an advisory board made up of representatives of the cultures that are presented there. The significance of that is that this allows ANHC to present the cultures not through a lens of anthropology or history, which is the case with most museums, but rather presenting these as living cultures that people can interact with. It is arguably significant on a national level for that reason.

*Ms. Woster* continued, explaining there are a number of heritage centers associated with different cultures across the U.S. and have been for decades. However, most are much smaller in nature, representing just a single culture. Or they are operated not by the cultures they are representing, as is the case with the Polynesian Cultural Center, which is operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is attempting to present a Polynesian culture that it is actually a part of. And they hire almost exclusively from Brigham Young University, Honolulu.

ANHC was based on the Polynesian Cultural Center. The setup of the different cultural villages – five different village sites – does correspond with the idea that the Polynesian Center had of different village sites that each presented different types of Polynesian cultures across the Pacific. But many of those cultures no longer exist or exist in very truncated ways. It is being presented by a group that does not participate in that culture. So ANHC just took that idea and made it their own. Because of that it is very successful as a living heritage center. It also works very actively to foster connections with young Alaska Native people to help ground them and their identities in their cultures in the past and then using that as a lens to move forward into the future, which is essentially the embodiment of a very significant anthropological ideal of indigenous cosmopolitanism, a way of viewing and interacting the world through a lens of a tradition or culture.

*Ms. Woster* continued, explaining that ANHC works very hard to essentially help people further and deepen their own understandings of their own culture. It's not just a tourist center, which is what a lot of people assumed would happen when ANHC was first trying to get established, especially in the early 1990s. *Ms. Woster* concluded that she believes it is a very significant endeavor that has been successfully undertaken, and significant on a national level, not just a local level, and that she enjoyed the research of ANHC, and is available to go into greater depth.

*Chair Klug* summarized the upcoming HPC public hearing and nomination approval process. The purpose of this evening is for TNSDS to present an overview. There will be a public hearing at the next HPC meeting, and then the commissioners will ask any questions of the petitioner and discuss whether we feel it is an acceptable nomination in a meeting open to the public. He remarked that the proposal includes extensive information for the commissioners to read.

*Kristine Bunnell* asked *Ms. Woster* to give the Commission an overview of the process of how ANHC got the land for its site. *Ms. Woster* explained that the idea for the center was proposed by Cook Inlet Region, Inc., (CIRI) in 1972, a year after the passage of the Alaska Land Claims Settlement Act. CIRI wanted the site to be located on a tract within what is now Far North Bicentennial Park adjacent to where the Alaska Botanical Gardens is located today. The AFN voted full support for it in 1975. Feasibility studies were conducted in 1976 and 1979. Then it disappeared from public knowledge or at least from public records until 1987, when the AFN again voted to support it, and proposed it to be located within the same tract of land in Bicentennial Park. The placement of the center within the park faced a lot of public opposition. But the location was approved by the Municipality. The details are in the nomination proposal. By contrast, there was no public outcry against establishing the Botanical Gardens, a high school, and a restaurant within the same tract of land that same year. There was a lot of very negative press that went around calling it the Disneyland of the North and a crass commercial endeavor. It ended up going to a public vote in 1992. The public voted to void the lease that the Municipality had agreed to provide on that land. A year later, in 1993, CIRI donated the land on the site where the ANHC is today. Within just a few years, the center construction on the center began. ANHC has continued to operate successfully to this day.

*Kristine Bunnell* asked if CIRI donated the property for the adjacent Bartlett High School, too. *Ms. Woster* said she did not know for certain but did not believe so. The land ANHC was built on was originally leased to the MOA for snow storage. *Ms. Bunnell* noted she has been to cultural training at ANHC and found what she learned there about Alaska Native cultures to be very interesting and valuable. *Ms. Woster* responded that the center has programs, training, and classes that she is looking forward to visiting there again this summer when they have active tours and talks. She said it is admirable about how they address questions from tourists who

might be not be aware of things. For example, there is a whale bone on display, and one can imagine tourists wondering why they still hunt whales. The center encourages its employees to talk frankly and openly about their own living experience within their own cultures. That is not something one sees in places that are strictly tourist destinations.

*Commissioner Reamer* commented that he found it interesting to learn about the political battles in the early 1990s. He noted the timeline overlaps with the attempts to name something after Martin Luther King, Jr and the pushback against that. Secondly, he noted that there actually was a cultural center in Anchorage in the 1960s, out at the airport, called Igloo Puck. It was part of the Centennial and it lasted for a couple of years and then got moved around.

*Commissioner Reamer* raised his main question. He observed that the Local Landmark Ordinance and the Director's Guidance on the nomination process say that to be eligible it must be 30 years old. The nomination form has a spot on the first page that reads, "date of construction" and in parentheses reads, "Must be at least 30 years old." On page 2J of the nomination application proposal's Statement of Significance, TNSDS states that construction began in 1997, but on the first page of the proposal they left the spot for the date of construction blank where it says must be at least 30 years old. He asked how this proposal got this far with so much effort spent, given he did not see how the ANHC could be eligible.

*Ms. Woster* responded that TNSDS did have conversations with staff. The proposal is dating it to when the land was donated. It was when they were actually able to start planning for the different village sites because the tract that they are on is so much smaller than they had originally hoped for in Bicentennial Park. They actually had to reduce the size of it by about 50%. So instead of being able to move forward immediately with plans in 1993, they had to go back to the drawing board and essentially redo their plans for it. So that was our argument.

*Commissioner Reamer* responded that he thought that argument was philosophical. The center did not exist in 1993, and the nomination says it wasn't approved by the MOA until 1994.

*Casey Woster* agreed with these dates. TNSDS made the discovery of this information about the actual age of the ANHC during its research. TNSDS was in conversations with the Municipality about it and went ahead and moved forward with the nomination. *Ms. Woster* noted that there is a provision in the National Register of Historic Places that does allow for properties under the 50-year age requirement to be listed. It is criterion exception G of the National Historic Register. She firmly believes that ANHC would pass that exception to the age rule at the national level. So, she thinks that this should be an exception as well for the Anchorage local landmarks.

*Commissioner Reamer* acknowledged the National Register has that exception, but he did not believe the local ordinance has such an exception.

*Kristine Bunnell* explained that ANHC is nominated as a landscape type of landmark, so the landscape idea would be 30 years. The date-of-construction language is for buildings. The landscape type of landmark designation includes the land.

*Commissioner Scher* explained that he had some misgivings about the nomination when he looked at the form and reviewed the Local Landmark Ordinance. He appreciated Commissioner Reamer bringing up the age question and believes it is a valid discussion for the Commission to weigh. He recognized the amount of work and time and resources that went into this application. It is very complete in the content and provided a lot of history that he did not know

before. Having grown up here, he had been tacitly aware of the development of the center, so he appreciated learning that history from the proposal.

*Commissioner Scher* raised a couple of questions about the nomination. First, he continued with the discussion about the notion of the ANHC's eligibility, having reached significance within 30 years. If comparing it to the National Register, given all the information here, he believed that there could be an argument for the site being eligible for the National Register and as much as he would like to have agreed to bring that national provision over to the local ordinance, the HPC is held to what the local ordinance says today. He thinks in the future the Commission can revisit that provision of the National Register. He remembered the discussion about it when writing the local ordinance. This is also a good test of this approval process because this is the first nomination that HPC has received. He applauded the petitioner and TNSDS for that. However, he has misgivings about the construction timeline.

*Commissioner Scher* then turned to the proposed landmark type and asked two questions of the applicant. First, what is the reason the applicant nominated ANHC as a landscape, when reading through the definitions in the ordinance, it appears that ANHC would be eligible under a traditional cultural property landmark designation instead of a landscape? And second, what would be the period of significance if the applicant were asked to provide that information?

*Casey Woster* responded that TNSDS nominated ANHC as a landscape as opposed to a traditional cultural property, simply because this is not a site such as the archaeological district out in Point Hope, where there is a village site that's been settled for thousands of years by one specific culture. The landscape idea actually comes more from landscape preservation, so especially for things like farms, large farms out on the East Coast, which they tend to nominate those as a landscape as opposed to a single property or district. Regarding the cultural property aspect, ANHC is not a traditional cultural site for any specific one culture. This was land that originally belonged to the Dena'ina but there was not a traditional cultural settlement at that specific site, so this is why the applicant felt that it deserved to be a landscape as opposed to a traditional cultural property.

*Kristine Bunnell* added that, in looking at the date when the property was donated, that was 30 years ago. The idea for the actual center started in the 1970s. *Commissioner Reamer* responded that this is not a local idea ordinance, this is a local landmark ordinance. *Ms. Woster* responded that it is an idea that became manifested physically. This is a physical manifestation of something that was necessary. It is a very old idea that in her opinion if not for racist concerns, probably would have been established much earlier.

*Commissioner Scher* asked if *Ms. Woster* had a notion of when, if she were to nominate this to the National Register, the period of significance would be. *Ms. Woster* responded that, in her professional opinion, the period of significance stretches from the very beginning of 1972 when they first started working toward making ANHC into a reality. Physically, the period of significance would go from 1993 and continue up through the current day.

*Kristine Bunnell* asked *Ms. Woster* to elaborate on her experience and credentials. How many nominations to the National Register has she done? *Ms. Woster* responded that she had done quite a few and that she could not count them all. She has been writing these nominations since 2012, about 11 years. Her first was a Civilian Conservation Corps cabin in Denali National Park. The largest was a reevaluation of the LADD Field National Historic Landmark on Fort Wainwright. *Ms. Bunnell* asked if all those sites were listed on the National Register? *Ms. Woster*

responded that not all were. The reason being that the process to get things onto the National Register can take several years, usually involves several rounds of edits among the property owner, the person doing the nomination, the National Park Service, and the Alaska SHPO office. That can take several years and there's not always funding to push things all the way through. For the most recent one, we did submit the National Historical Landmark reevaluation, but they submitted it prior to President Biden's election, and the National Historic Landmark Committee in Washington, DC, meets at most twice a year and they didn't meet at all during President Trump's tenure. There was insufficient funding available for them to do so, so she did not believe it has been on their docket to review that. But she has not heard if they have reviewed it yet, but that was one. *Kristine Bunnell* stated that Ms. Woster has written quite a few nominations, including for Block 13 in Anchorage, and has been successful, so she knows what she is doing with nominations. *Casey Woster* added that she does have an Ivy League master's degree, and that she has been preparing nominations for a long time in Alaska.

*Commissioner Scher* expressed his appreciation to Ms. Woster for telling about her background and explained that his concerns with the nomination did not intend to question her capabilities and experience in this matter. His concerns are that as a municipal advisory commission, the HPC is tied to the adopted local code and has the responsibility to identify and agree that the nomination meets the definition of the landmark type that it's being nominated for, as well as meets the requirements of the ordinance. While he has misgivings about the age of the construction, he thinks that there is an argument within the notion and efforts of getting a center like this that TNSDS identified. He wondered if it could be better represented as a different landmark type that would be able to move away from a notion of having been a real physical thing, because it seems this is more of an intangible resource. There must be directives on how to best preserve intangible resources and especially indigenous cultures. It is really significant that this is a living embodiment of so many cultures in Alaska. Hopefully the public can weigh in on this topic and the other commissioners are able to read through the application thoroughly. He thanked Ms. Woster for her work on the nomination.

*Casey Woster* concluded that she greatly appreciated working on this type of project. She was able to do deep dive archival research into newspapers and spend time documenting essentially what Commissioner Scher was talking about, that this is an intangible resource. She is available to respond to further questions and comments.

*Commissioner Leman* commented that he found the conversation interesting. It is the first conversation of its kind since he has been on the Commission, and he has been around Alaska for a while. He said that he is part Alaska Native, and that is an important part of his heritage, but that he also knows that the Commission needs to follow the law, whatever that is, and how that is interpreted.

*Commissioner Lamoreaux* commented that the nomination proposal is a beautiful application, and that he had been to the ANHC but he has learned a lot from the proposal.

*Chair Klug* stated that he anticipated the Commission will have more discussion and time for dialogue at the next meeting.

*Kristine Bunnell* explained, that, since the next meeting will be a public hearing on this nomination, the commissioners will receive a staff report before the meeting. There will be some findings in the staff report that will summarize how the Commission can support the nomination. She recommended that commissioners read through it, understand what's being said there. Staff

will also provide the ordinance as it was adopted, so that commissioners have that to compare with. She explained that, at the meeting, the Commission will open the public hearing and take the public comment, then close the public hearing and then deliberate and make its recommendation. She reminded the participants that HPC is an advisory commission to the Assembly. The HPC may choose to say it does not think the ANHC is ready and that's your recommendation. If the Assembly chooses to accept that, fine; If not, they may determine it meets the 30-year requirement or it meets the intent and designate it a local landmark. The Assembly will take action as they see fit.

*Chair Klug* appreciated this clarification and asked if it will go to the Assembly only if the HPC agrees with the nomination. *Ms. Bunnell* responded that it will still go to the Assembly because the purpose of the public hearing is to make a recommendation to the Assembly. She encouraged the commissioners and applicants to invite members of the public and friends of the ANHC to come testify at the public hearing. The nomination packet was sent to the Northeast Community Council because the ANHC is in its area, so it may respond with comments too.

*Chair Klug* said that, at the next meeting, the Commission may have to discuss whether a potential conflict of interest exists for him as he works for RIM Architects, who designed the ANHC facility. He will disclose that and have the Commission determine if there is a conflict at the beginning of the meeting. *Kristine Bunnell* responded that she did not see a conflict. ANHC is being nominated as a landscape. The HPC will be looking at it more as the land and what they did with the land, why the land is important to the heritage site, and what they were able to do with the land on that location. *Casey Woster* also did not believe there would be a conflict of interest because this is not being nominated based on the architecture of one building within a larger landscape. This is being nominated based on the collective whole. *Commissioner Leman* suggested that Chair Klug bring his disclosure to the Commission's attention at the beginning of the public hearing meeting and ask to be excused. The Commission might deny the Chair that right to be excused. He explained that is often what was done when he was in the State Legislature. The member must declare a conflict and every time the other members of the Legislature say that they must vote anyway. But that's a way to get the disclosure on the record.

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

There were no public comments.

#### **10. Commissioner/Staff Comments on Non-Agenda Items and Announcements**

*Chair Klug* expressed that the Commission thanks Kristine Bunnell, who is retiring, for all her efforts through the years. He personally has been on the Commission over 6-7 years, and she has been very helpful providing a lot of knowledge and history on the Commission. *Commissioner Leman* echoed those comments and that, although he has not been on the Commission for that long, during his tenure she has impressed him with her work. *Commissioner Howard* thanked Ms. Bunnell for her tenure with the HPC, her extensive knowledge, and expressed that she will be deeply missed. *Kristine Bunnell* announced that Tom Davis, a senior planner with the Planning Department, will be taking on the staff role at HPC.

*Commissioner Leman* commented that on a recent visit Downtown he had walked around to look at construction near the Oscar Anderson House and observed that the grounds around it are not in good shape. They don't show very well. For example, it would help a lot just to get somebody to mow the grass and dandelions. Also, the house needs painting, there is moss on the roof, and a few things need a little TLC. He did not know if there are funds for doing this, or

if nobody considers it important, but it's one of those buildings that the community is proud of, and it sits right by the Coastal Trail, so there is a good opportunity to show it off.

#### **ADJOURN**

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

***The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.***

Draft notes prepared from MS Teams transcript by Tom Davis, Staff, and edited by Loren Leman, Secretary on September 19, 2023, with further technical edits by Planning Department administrative staff.