

Cordova Historic Preservation Commission

Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, May 20, 2020

The meeting was held via Zoom and teleconference.

Members present: Nancy Bird, Jim Casement, Heather Hall, Sylvia Lange, Wendy Ranney, Cathy Sherman and John Wachtel.

Others present: Robert Meinhardt and Amy Ramirez, from the firm True North Sustainable Development Solutions, LCC.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cathy Sherman about 5:10 pm.

Motion by Ranney, seconded by Hall, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed without objection.

Approval of minutes

Motion by Hall, seconded by Bird to approve the minutes of May 11, 2020, as presented. **Motion passed** without objection.

Motion by Wachtel, seconded by Ranney to approve the minutes of February 19, 2020, as presented.

Motion passed without objection.

Cordova Historic buildings survey project

Discuss with representatives of True North Sustainable Development Solutions (TNSDS) the scope for historic survey work in Cordova this summer

Wachtel updated the Commission on discussions with TNSDS regarding how to set up the project contract and work products to be in line with the total project budget. One way would be to scale back the project area included in the survey work; another way would be to focus primarily on a desktop survey and postpone field work until a later date. He also noted that the survey needs to align with the Alaska Historic Resource Survey (AHR).

He invited Meinhardt and Ramirez to share their ideas. Meinhardt said they initially had thought this project could be similar to one they completed recently in Fairbanks, but after understanding the limited budget available (\$10,000), he suggests the project focus on developing a detailed survey plan. This would include synthesizing information and work previously done, identify survey areas and then create a roster tool specific to Cordova. This tool and plan would allow the Commission to take on the project and continue work on using volunteers and/or professionals as other funding may become available. He suggested that his firm could develop an example, perhaps a street, and complete it for reference in future work.

Wachtel asked for comments on archaeological resources and whether they should be included in this survey. Hall said a lot of archaeological work has been done and advocated for its inclusion in the survey plan. It was noted that archaeological resources have different entry methodology and often require some confidentiality to protect the resources. Meinhardt described the survey approach used in Sitka and suggested it might be similar for Cordova to identify several historic districts based on chronological developments.

Discussion of current known resources: Commission members summarized a variety of published resources (Nielson, Buzzell, Arvidson) and the AHR cards. There was further discussion about using time periods to organize the survey.

Meinhardt asked “why now?” is the Commission choosing to work on a survey. Primary reasons are (1) that, as a Certified Local Government entity, the Commission is required to complete a survey on a regular basis, (2) in the past year, two significant historic resources have been lost, and (3) the Park Service had funds available now to work on this survey.

Ranney also shared that, as a Commission project, she has been developing a class for high school students on historic research with the idea of students helping to complete building surveys. She has heard recently of definite interest by a group of students. Meinhardt endorsed community involvement, by students and others, in the project. He expressed enthusiasm to help building a platform for the Commission to use. In discussion, it was noted that the current historic preservation plan is very dated and in need of updating.

It was noted, however, that the archaeological based surveys may require different treatment because of their sensitivity (and not be involved in the community or student projects). Meinhardt suggested referencing archeological resources in the building survey plan but focusing the plan on buildings. Commission members were in broad agreement on this approach. Meinhardt also briefly discussed surveys done in Fairbanks and Salcha.

Next steps Wachtel will develop a revised Scope of Work (SOW) that will include the following:

- Development of a building survey plan
- Identify areas to be surveyed
- Prioritize areas
- Provide a roadmap for how the Commission can move forward to complete a building survey using a combination of Commission members, High School students and others
- Develop a roster/template to complete the survey

Sherman volunteered to gather the materials of existing resources to send to TNSDS. Wachtel will send Commission members the revised SOW.

Commission comments

Ranney said she’s really hoping to have a good group of students to work with this fall and looks forward to having this project for them to work on.

Next meeting date will be determined as necessary to review products from this contract work.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 6 pm.

These minutes were approved July 16, 2020.