

SPECIAL MEETING
Meeting Minutes of the
City and Borough of Juneau
Historic Resources Advisory Committee

Wednesday, December 19, 2012
City Hall Assembly Chambers
5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Members:

<u> X </u> Gary Gillette (Chair)	<u> X </u> Don Harris (Vice-Chair)	<u> X </u> Connie Munro
<u> ABS </u> Shauna McMahon (Recorder)	<u> X </u> Rico Worl	<u> ABS </u> Myra Gilliam
<u> X </u> Marie Darlin	<u> ABS </u> Liz Eskelin	<u> X </u> Gerald Gotschall

Staff:

 X Laura A. Boyce (CBJ, Community Development)

 X Jane Lindsey (CBJ, City Museum)

 X Jon Lange (CBJ, Community Development)

 X Greg Chaney (CBJ, Community Development)

I. Call to Order

Meeting began at 5 p.m. with a quorum.

II. Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved. Rico Worl notified the committee that he needed to recuse himself as he has a conflict of interest as he works for the Sealaska Heritage Institute.

III. Public Testimony on Non-agenda Items

No comments from the public on non-agenda items.

IV. New Business

1. Proposed Sealaska Heritage Institute Building

CBJ staff, Laura Boyce and Greg Chaney, provided an overview of the request before the committee. Laura and Greg explained that the Assembly directed staff to draft a non-code ordinance for the proposed Sealaska Building located in the Downtown Historic District. Mr. Chaney mentioned that a number of variances from the Downtown Historic District Design Standards and Guidelines would be needed for the current building's design if it remains in the Downtown Historic District. A non-code ordinance, Mr. Chaney explained, if approved could allow the building to not comply with current standards, however, there is the possibility it could be considered spot-zoning.

Because of this, a map amendment to change the boundary of the Downtown Historic District to remove the block on which the proposed Sealaska building sits is proposed as it is a more legally defensible approach. An ordinance proposing to remove the Sealaska block, that also includes the city's municipal building, is being considered for removal from the Downtown Historic District and is before the HRAC today for their consideration.

Gerald Gotschall asked what is required for the site if it is removed from the District. Staff answered that a Conditional Use permit would be required for the building as well as a possible variance to the Land Use Code for canopies and vegetative cover.

Rosita Worl then spoke on behalf of the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) as their current president. She introduced Lee Kadinger with SHI and acknowledged Ross Soboleff in the audience who is the son of Walter Soboleff, after whom the proposed building is named. She thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak. She supports the City's proposal to remove the block from the Downtown Historic District. She believes the building complements the District and the history of Juneau by including traditional architecture and heritage of the Tlingit. She mentioned a McDowell study that showed that 87% of Juneau citizen's support the proposed Cultural Center. She invited the HRAC members to visit Sealaska and have an orientation and tour of the historical and cultural center and programs. She stated she was available for questions.

Chair Gillette then asked the committee members if they had any questions. Don Harris stated that he would like to see drawings of the building. Marie Darlin asked for clarification regarding the removal of Seward Street from the District. CDD staff clarified that South Seward Street would be removed from the Downtown Historic District.

Ross Soboleff then spoke as a member of the public. He thanked the HRAC for considering this proposal. He stated he was speaking on his own behalf, not representing anyone. He reminded the HRAC that his father, Walter Soboleff, believed in an open public process and integrity. Walter Soboleff lived in this entire community and he was fully engaged in all aspects of this community; he loved this community. Mr. Ross Soboleff asked the HRAC to make its best decision.

Connie Munro moved that the committee support the request to remove the block from the Downtown Historic District boundary.

Gerald Gotschall commented on the motion. He stated that if the block is removed from the District, it frees up the height issue for the building. He hopes that future designs of the building will fit into the context of the Downtown District.

Marie Darlin reiterated that she would like to see designs of the building. Staff member Boyce handed out some of the proposed design plans of the building.

Don Harris stated that he was worried this removal would set a precedent. The Gastineau Apartments building recently burned. What if the owner requested for the site to be removed from the District so they wouldn't have to comply with the Downtown Historic District Design Standards?

Gary Gillette commented that he appreciated the concerns expressed. He said that this would be a great cultural center and a wonderful addition to the Downtown, but he was most concerned with the Front Street façade of the building. Front Street is where the majority of the City's oldest buildings are located and is more historic than South Seward Street; this building could be more sensitive to the buildings along Front Street. Mr. Gillette is concerned about the height of the building exceeding the 35 foot height limit on Front Street, as well as the vertical elements of the building as the vertical elements draw your eye upward, accentuating the height. Also, historically, elements were horizontal; the vertical elements are not historical. He stated that along the Seward Street façade, that the proposed building won't face any well-preserved historic buildings so he is fine with the removal of Seward Street. Along Shattuck Way, Mr. Gillette stated concerns with the pedestrian level of the building; it's a long blank façade proposed with tile, which isn't historic nor Native in design, and there are no windows at the ground level. Mr. Gillette mentioned the 1981 Downtown Historic District Development Plan that envisioned Shattuck Way as a pedestrian thoroughfare along this area. He stated that he hopes the final design of the building will address this issue. Mr. Gillette also brought up alternatives to the complete removal of the block from the District. He said that if the entire block were removed from the District, there would be no consideration of historic integrity along the Front Street side as it wouldn't have to comply with the Downtown Historic District standards. It could benefit if the first ten feet of the building along Front Street were to remain the District and the building could be stepped back to further complement the historic integrity of Front Street.

Gerald Gotschall brought up that other newer buildings in the Downtown Historic District reflect the historic proportions, lines, elevations, and patterns of the District; the Historic District Standards don't require the details. He also mentioned the Shattuck Way design of the building, that it is a blanked off wall with no rhythm and no pedestrian scale on Shattuck Way. Along Front Street, the stair element is articulated more than it needs to be; the stair jumps out as an element and it doesn't need to be architecturally. Mr. Gotschall would like to see those architectural items addressed. Regarding keeping a portion of the Front Street façade in the District, while removing the rest of the block, he asked how much of the Front Street façade should be left in: 2 feet, five feet? He asked how do we state that we want the context to flow across the edge of this site? He said the Seward Street side is newer, more 80s in design, but the proposed architecture is not responding to the Front Street side.

Mr. Gillette mentioned that there could be a friendly amendment to the current motion made by Connie Munro. He suggested a ten or fifteen foot portion of the Front Street façade be included in the District.

Mr. Gotschall then asked for a friendly amendment to the current motion to include 5 feet of the property along Front Street to take into account the 35 height requirement. He clarified that he would like to retain five feet measured from the property line along Front Street.

Ms. Connie Munro stated that she thought this should be a separate motion.

Mr. Gillette clarified that the friendly amendment proposed would still remove the property from the District, but retain five feet from the property line along Front Street

within the District. He said that this amendment does two things, the Front Street façade will still be in the District so that height would be taken into account and only five feet – nothing further back – would have to comply with the District standards.

Mr. Gotschall stated that this would affect the stair feature along Front Street and have to be redesigned.

Ms. Munro stated that she did not accept the friendly amendment.

Mr. Gillette then restated the original motion to remove the entire block from the Downtown Historic District and called for a vote. Ms. Munro voted for the motion and the remaining four HRAC members voted against the motion. The motion failed.

Mr. Gotschall then made the motion:

Remove the block from the Downtown Historic District boundary except for five feet along Front Street which would be governed by Historic District standards.

Ms. Munro asked if this meant that the building could only be five feet in height along Front Street. Mr. Gillette explained that this meant five feet in depth of the building would have to comply with the Standards. The building height would be limited to 35 feet in height for the first five feet of the building along the Front Street side, but could then be stepped back and the height could be increased beyond five feet from Front Street. Ms. Munro stated that she didn't think this would be possible due to required fire and building code requirements that required the height. She was informed that this was not the case.

Mr. Gillette called for the vote on the current motion. All five members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Gillette stated that the HRAC's recommendation would go to the Assembly for consideration.

V. Committee Member Comments

No committee member comments.

VI. Next Regular Meeting – January 9, 2012, 5:00 p.m., City Hall Room 224

Mr. Gillette reminded members of the next meeting.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.