

ISSAQUAH LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

*Thursday, July 27, 2017
Issaquah City Hall, Eagle Room
130 E. Sunset Way
Issaquah, Washington
(Approved 10/11/17)*

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Poppi Handy, Chair; Cristy Lake; Ella Moore; Rebecca Ossa; David Pilgrim; Todd Sargeant, Special Commissioner

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Lorelea Hudson, Caroline Lemay, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Christen Leeson and Wayne Tanaka, City of Issaquah; Jennifer Meisner and Todd Scott, King County

GUESTS: Doug Eglington, Susan Hass, Ethel & Garry Crosser, Chuck Maduell, Julie Koler, Mark & Bethlyn Miller, Eugenia Woo, Mary O. Fricke, Deborah McConnell, Eirlys Vanderhoff, Chris Moore, Steve Pereira, Troy Anderson, Lauren McCroskey, Mary Moore, Elizabeth Maupin, Cory Christensen, John Benjamin, Karen Lee.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Handy called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Introductions of commissioners and staff were made. Handy asked if there were any conflicts of interests from the commissioners. Moore explained that she would be recusing herself, due to her role as a former president of the Sammamish Heritage Society, the nominating organization for designation of Providence Heights College as an Issaquah landmark. She then left the room. Handy asked if any members of the audience had a challenge to any of the other commissioners. There were none.

PUBLIC HEARING: Providence Heights College Landmark Nomination

Handy opened the public hearing and asked for a presentation from the applicant, Sammamish Heritage Society. Eirlys Vanderhoff, President of the Society provided information about the organization and its purpose. While they are the Sammamish Heritage Society, they deal primarily with things within the City of Sammamish, but there is a relationship to everything on the Sammamish Plateau, and they felt Providence Heights College is part of the plateau. The organization initially worked with Julie Koler on researching the significance of the property, then was asked by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation to consider nominating it as a city landmark. She said a demolition permit for the campus was applied for in January, and by then the organization was ready to submit the nomination. Consultants Jennifer Mortensen and Lauren McCroskey did most of the research and prepared the nomination. She thanked the commission and staff, and the City of Issaquah for hearing the nomination.

McCroskey then presented information about the campus. She indicated she is a former National Register state coordinator and now works for the Army Corps of Engineers as the manager of their Center of Expertise in Preservation of Historic Structures and Buildings. She stated there is a larger legacy of work that was done by the Sisters of Providence, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, but there was limited higher education opportunities for most women religious. A new curriculum for their education was developed at a convening in Everett, Washington in 1954, and

the campus was a direct result of that new curriculum. The campus' primary significance is its history and its role in the education of women. It is not being nominated for its place in the Catholic Church or for association with any particular religion. It is clearly eligible under Criterion A1 for its association with the broad theme of women's education in the United States - an exceptional effort to elevate the formal instruction of women religious to a level equivalent to the higher learning long provided for male clergy.

McCroskey discussed a comparative analysis of the campus, stating there is nothing like it in the state, and virtually nothing like it in the rest of the country. Unlike most other colleges that women religious could attend around the country, this one was designed solely to educate women. Another college dedicated solely for women was Marillac College in St. Louis. It opened in 1959, but was built before the Everett Curriculum. Maria College in New York opened in 1958 for Sisters of Mercy, but operated as a junior college, and in 1974 opened to all students. Assumption College in Mendham, New Jersey, was also just a two year associate degree program.

McCroskey also indicated Providence Heights College is significant under Criterion A3, as a unique, intact example of a campus that contains educational, residential, and spiritual buildings designed in the mid-20th-century Modern style. The architect, John Maloney, was the designer of record, although there was another project architect involved. Open spaces of the campus were reminiscent of religious facilities historically. The materials used in the design are exceptional, with expensive hardwoods, terrazzo floors, and Modern furniture and fixtures. There are broad expansive windows and lots of natural light. The thin shell concrete structure used in the chapel roof is exceptional and innovative, a forerunner of today's "shotcrete" and there is nothing like it in the region from the period.

McCroskey then discussed the work done by Gabriel Loire, the artist who designed the chapel windows. He only has two other works on the west coast, one in San Francisco and one in the Willamette Valley. She talked about the significance of the landscape, and that it was intended to be placed in a remote location. Some formal landscaping was developed right around the building, but the wooded areas were intended for use by the Sisters, with trails, stations of the cross, and an amphitheater. The forest was part of the broader educational curriculum, an opportunity for reflection and spiritual growth. She further discussed the seven aspects of integrity used by the commission to evaluate potential landmarks, and reminded the commission that it is not necessary to meet all of them, but the more that are met generally strengthens the significance of the property. She said it clearly meets them all:

1. location, as it is in its original location;
2. design, as it retains all the components that are representative of the mid-century Modern style;
3. setting, as it is remarkably intact, particularly around the buildings and the relationship to the surrounding forest;
4. materials, as they all remain, including the exterior cladding materials;
5. workmanship, particularly the thin shell concrete remains intact;
6. feeling and association are harder to distinguish, but they are intact, as it is a sleek set of buildings set into a natural setting, designed by the finest design minds of the time, which speaks to the mission of a first ever educational experience for the Sisters. It

would also be clearly recognizable to those who used the campus when it was first constructed.

She summarized by saying Providence Heights College has a high degree of integrity, and is distinguished at not only a local level, but also within a state and national context. It is an outstanding example of a campus built for the educational advancement of women. It has high architectural achievement, namely a mid-20th century Modern design in a monastic layout, with an integral landscape that captures the educational and spiritual values of the Sisters Formation movement. It is a significant work of a recognized architect, and contains advanced engineering in the chapel roof and rare and important works of an internationally distinguished glass artist. McCroskey added that it clearly passes the test of Criterion B2 by being a religious property deriving primary significance from its architectural importance as a nationally rare and intact example of a Modernist design, and from its historical importance in the role of women's education. It transcends any association with religion.

Handy then asked for a presentation by the owner, Plateau Campus LLC. Chuck Maduell spoke first, stating he represented Plateau Campus, and that it is a wholly owned arm of City Church. He opposes the nomination and urges the commission to reject it. City Church began holding services there in 2004, and bought the property in 2008. However, it didn't work well for their ministry and they decided to sell it in 2014. In 2016, the Issaquah School District commenced condemnation proceedings. A trial date was set in the spring as part of the condemnation to determine the value of the property, but that has been postponed due to the landmark nomination. City Church intends to use the proceeds from the sale to further its religious mission. They have spent \$1.45 million per year on the property, and the church loses \$100,000 each and every month it continues to own the property.

Maduell stated City Church has been in contact with the Sisters of Providence and they felt the chapel windows were the only thing worth preserving. He doesn't agree that the commission can't consider the 1st amendment rights of City Church. He urged the commission to hold an executive session to discuss the legal issues. He feels Providence Heights College still does not qualify as historic because the city has never recognized it as such. It has not made a significant contribution to broad patterns of history, because nuns founded at least 150 colleges across the country. He also feels it does not have any distinctive characteristics; the layout is common, the gambrel style roof is not unique or distinctive, Maloney has alleged notoriety and was not the project architect. Maduell agreed the stained glass windows are beautiful and the Sisters would like to display them at other locations they own so they can be preserved. He finished by saying the owner needs to sell the property without the encumbrance of a landmark designation, and asking the commission to reject the nomination.

Troy Anderson, manager of Plateau Campus LLC, stated they do not want the property landmarked. He feels so much of the nomination relies on religious affiliation that it should not be eligible for designation. Two other religious organizations have been housed here over the years, and both felt it should be torn down. The stained glass windows will be displayed elsewhere so people can see them. He feels a small group is asking the government to tell City Church what to do with its property. The heritage society is stopping the public good by stopping the construction of two new schools. There is no way a public school can adapt the chapel for appropriate use.

The choice to landmark the property is the choice to save an old building and prevent two new schools for the community. Providence Heights College is a church property, and the Washington Supreme Court has made it clear that church properties can't be landmarked. The commission must consider the constitutional issues.

Handy asked for testimony from the audience.

Public Testimony:

Doug Eglington, Sammamish, stated that he went to school in California, and as a student they would often go on field trips to see the historic missions in the area. This property is as important to our area as missions are in California. He also stated he was a King County employee for 30 years, and was present when the King County Council had a planning retreat at Providence Heights College in 1980. Several historic decisions were made by the council at that time, and this contributes to the historic significance of the campus. He supports landmark designation.

Susan Hass, Sammamish, stated she had chronic fatigue syndrome for eight years and would often go to the YMCA when it was located on the campus. Experiencing the campus and its surrounding natural environment helped to diminish her chronic fatigue. She supports landmark designation of the entire site because it is spiritual, special, and great attention was paid to the detail of the buildings.

Ethel Crosser, Issaquah, has been going in and out of the campus for 40 years as an employee. She is grateful for the trails and landscape on the site and feels the property could become a tourist attraction if it were a conference center. Mother Joseph is one of two statues representing Washington in the US Capitol. She also feels the stained glass windows represent the work that is accomplished by all major religions, not just Catholics. She supports landmark designation.

Mark Miller, Issaquah, is a pastor and educator at Seattle Pacific University. He finds it odd that since the City of Issaquah hasn't recognized the campus as historic before, that the owner thinks it shouldn't be considered historic. If we don't preserve things like this for our kids, he wonders what they will have. He feels that we shouldn't repeat mistakes of the past by always tearing things down. He supports landmark designation.

Steve Pereira, Issaquah, thanked the commission for their consideration of this nomination because of its significance to women's rights. He also informed the commission that Issaquah was celebrating its 125th anniversary at a nearby event this evening. He supports landmark designation.

Mary Moore, Issaquah, said she is a member of the Sammamish Heritage Society (SHS), and supports landmark designation. She was born here and remembers the campus from when she was a child. She indicated SHS is trying to save as many historic sites as possible. She feels the City of Issaquah doesn't take preservation as seriously as they should. She feels it is a very significant historic resource.

Elizabeth Maupin, Issaquah, indicated she has been here since 1982. She feels one reason the city may not have considered it as historic is because that area was only recently annexed into Issaquah. She feels the campus could be used by a number of groups together or could serve as a good high school. She said it is important to connect to the strong women who made Washington what it is. The campus is a hidden gem, but needs a vision. She supports landmark designation.

Chris Moore stated he is the Executive Director of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. He reminded the commission that future sale of the property, use, or ownership isn't part of the commission's purview. They have been instructed to consider only the significance of the site. He indicated the state had determined it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, so it is clearly a historic resource. He supports designation and disagrees with the contention that the buildings are not worth saving. The property clearly meets seven of seven qualities of integrity, and is indisputably eligible for landmark designation.

Julie Koler thanked the City for hearing the nomination. She stated she agreed with the comments in favor of designation already provided so she wouldn't take time to repeat them. She has been in the historic preservation field for a long time, and lots of groups have come together to support this designation.

Eugenia Woo, with Historic Seattle and Docomomo WWA, thanked the Sammamish Heritage Society for submitting the nomination. She supports landmark designation. She feels the campus must have a lot of integrity if it meets all seven aspects of integrity, and that it is significant under Criteria A1 and A3. She also indicated that Docomomo WWA speaks with great authority on the issue of mid-century modern architecture and that the property should also be significant under Criterion A5 for its association with the architect John Maloney, the artist Gabriel Loire, and the engineer Jack Christiansen. She also suggested Docomomo WWA often hosts tours of sacred spaces and would be happy to offer a tour of this property.

John Benjamin, Melbourne, Australia, stated that he is working with a group to develop veterans housing and has been talking with the owner of Providence Heights College about the potential to develop a veterans village at the campus. He feels America tears down too much of its heritage. He also feels the property meets all the criteria for designation, and saving this is critical for protecting your heritage and culture.

Handy then gave the applicant a chance to respond to the testimony. McCroskey again thanked the commission for the opportunity to present the nomination. She stated that in her expert opinion, this is a textbook case for eligibility, and there was no credible challenge in finding that Providence Heights College is historically significant.

Handy then provided the owner an opportunity to respond. Maduell reminded the commission of his opinion that a church property cannot be designated as a landmark. He said the City of Seattle won't even accept nominations for religious properties. He indicated the historic significance of the campus is overstated, and that the testimony presented shows that people just want a public space, not necessarily this one. Designating the property as a landmark would impose a severe financial burden to the owner. He urged the commission to reject the nomination.

Handy then asked the commissioners if they had any questions for the applicant or owner. Hearing none, Handy closed the public hearing. She then asked the commission if they felt like they needed to meet with legal counsel in executive session. There was unanimous consent to adjourn to executive session. The commission returned to the room about 15 minutes later.

Handy asked Scott to present the staff recommendation. He indicated staff recommended designation of the campus as an Issaquah landmark, as they felt it is eligible under Criterion A1 for its association with women's education in the US, and under Criterion A3 as a unique intact example of a mid-20th century college campus. Staff felt the property met the requirements of Criterion B2, that it is a religious property deriving its primary significance from its architectural importance. Staff recommended the boundaries of significance encompass the entirety of the three parcels under consideration, and that the features of significance include all exterior portions of the campus buildings, exterior courtyards, covered walkways, driveways and parking areas, grounds and forested areas, and all of the land area within the boundaries of the property (for new construction only).

Handy opened the floor to commissioner deliberation. She polled the commission on their opinion as to whether the property met the requirements of Criterion B2, that it is a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural importance. There was unanimous support that it met that threshold criterion. Handy asked for commission feedback on whether it was eligible under Criterion A1, for its association with women's education in the US. There was unanimous support that it meets that criterion as a women's college. Ossa added that she felt it was a well written nomination and there was more than adequate evidence of its eligibility under Criterion A1.

Handy then asked for feedback on whether it was eligible under Criterion A3, as an intact example of mid-20th century campus. There was unanimous support it met that criterion. Sargeant stated the campus has great integrity; virtually none of the features of significance have changed since it was constructed. Ossa stated in her opinion it clearly meets all seven aspects of integrity, something that does not often occur with landmark designation.

Handy asked whether the commission felt the campus also met Criterion A5, as an outstanding work of a designer or builder who has made a substantial contribution to the art. She suggested perhaps the stained glass, as an outstanding work by the artist Gabriel Loire, was sufficient to consider A5. Pilgrim said he felt the stained glass in the chapel was the most significant individual component of the campus. Lake and Ossa agreed. Sargeant said John Maloney is such an important Northwest architect, and this is certainly one of his outstanding works, so it may also qualify under A5 for him as well.

Pilgrim asked why staff had recommended the boundaries include all three legal parcels. He is unclear how the forested areas fit in with the campus buildings and the exterior courtyards. Ossa said it is part of the overall design of the property, as a backdrop, but also contemplative space, a connection of the buildings to the out-of-doors and is part of the Criterion A3 eligibility. In this case the forest also played a role to slightly isolate the campus, and buffer it from the rest of the world, though that has been diminished over the years by selling off parts of the original property. Pilgrim feels the real significance of the property is the built environment, and less so the forest.

Scott responded that if the boundaries of significance are changed and only the single parcel with the buildings were included it would significantly change the feeling of the property, as those parcels could be developed separately and the forested areas lost to new development.

The commission agreed to add a finding of fact to those recommended by staff that stated Providence Heights is also significant under Criterion A5 as an outstanding work of John W. Maloney and his firm John W. Maloney, Architect, and the chapel windows are an outstanding work of Gabriel Loire's "dalle de verre" stained glass technique.

Commissioner Sargeant moved to designate Providence Heights College as a City of Issaquah landmark based on the staff recommendation, and including the features of significance and findings contained in that recommendation, and stating that the property meets the requirements of Criteria B2, A1, A3, and A5, and authorizing the chair to sign the subsequent findings of fact and decision. Ossa seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURN: The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.