

KING COUNTY LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES*

*Thursday, April 27, 2017
Tipping Floor Conference Room (#7255)
King Street Center, 201 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, Washington
Approved (5/25/17)*

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Poppi Handy, Chair; Caroline Lemay, Vice Chair; Lorelea Hudson; Kji Kelly; Cristy Lake; Ella Moore; Rebecca Ossa

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: David Pilgrim

STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Meisner, Todd Scott

GUESTS: Stephanie Adams, Brett Kaufmann, Barbara Loomis, Rod Scott

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Handy called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Handy asked for any corrections to the minutes. There were none.

Hudson/Lake moved to approve the February 23 and March 23, 2017 minutes of the King County Landmarks Commission. The motion passed 6-0-1 for February 23, with Ossa abstaining as she was not present at that meeting. The motion passed 4-0-3 for March 23, with Kelly, Lemay, and Ossa abstaining as they were not present at that meeting.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Flood Hazard Mitigation for Historic Buildings

Rod Scott, a certified flood plain manager and former landmarks commissioner in Iowa, made a presentation regarding the impact of new flood maps on historic resources nationwide. He is in King County working with various agencies and contractors to elevate historic buildings that are in flood plains. New national flood insurance maps will have a significant effect on insurance rates, and are resulting in the need to significantly elevate buildings that were once thought to be relatively safe from floods. Scott is based in Mandeville, Louisiana and has been working with that community to do appropriate elevations on historic buildings. Design guidelines are needed to help maintain the integrity of many historic resources that will be elevated. He spent yesterday in Snoqualmie looking at various elevation projects involving historic buildings which clearly did not have any guidelines. He will be back in October to assist the county in providing some educational sessions related to the issue.

BRIEFING: Loomis House, Kirkland, request to remove this property from the Kirkland Landmarks Register. Barbara Loomis provided information to the commission about the economic hardship she has in trying to maintain her landmarked home. She has received two grants from 4Culture to repair the porch and to put on a new roof, but she has a meager income and has applied for a reverse mortgage in order to gain some equity to do additional work on the house. Her application was denied because of the landmark designation. She has no intention of tearing down the house, or doing anything inappropriate with it, but feels she needs to have it removed from the landmarks register in order to qualify for a loan. She said the incentives for

*May include minutes for cities who have interlocal historic preservation agreements with King County.

designated landmarks are drying up. Moore said she was glad this has been brought up, because she has been concerned about the cost of maintaining historic landmarks and the reduced ability to get grants from 4Culture. Hudson asked whether the house could be designated after the mortgage was obtained. Loomis said it could, but she plans to sell it to her daughter and she'll have to get a mortgage to buy it, so the designation would likely impact that sale. She also said it is impossible to get comps for a landmark property and that the reason her application was denied was due to FHA regulations. She's contacted several organizations trying to get comps but hasn't been successful. Ossa asked why it wasn't going through a Section 106 review if FHA or HUD is involved. She also wondered what mortgage companies consider historic. Handy asked if it was denied because there were no comps, and is it the lender or HUD/FHA. Loomis said it's the lender, citing HUD/FHA regulations.

Kelly asked how much she has received in grant funds over the years. She said about \$34,000. Meisner asked if there were other lenders who might be better suited to lend to landmark properties. Loomis said the entire process has been very tiring and stressful, and she hasn't reviewed it with other banks because she has to pay for applications and appraisals. Scott asked if the lender would be willing to give her a letter stating she'd be approved for a reverse mortgage if it was not designated. Meisner asked what else the commission might need in order to consider economic hardship as a potential reason for removing the property from the landmarks register. Moore said she would like to see the regulations that the lender is citing in order to deny the loan. Lemay said staff should talk with DAHP to see if there are other options. Handy said additional information showing that owning the house was a financial hardship. Kelly said he would have a hard time accepting that owning it is a financial hardship, particularly if it could be sold for a significant profit.

Scott indicated that since there is no specified process for de-listing a landmark, he had gone ahead and sent out a public hearing notice for the next meeting. Loomis was reminded she would need to gather the additional requested information.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meisner gave a quick overview of the Preservation Action Fund, a new program that has been initiated in cooperation with Historic Seattle, 4Culture, and HPP. Funding is to be used to acquire and rehabilitate historic properties around the county, with the intention of then selling them to an appropriate buyer and using the proceeds to replenish the fund. The partners are actively looking for a first project and the commission is encouraged to offer suggestions, or send them any leads on potential projects.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT: Meisner reported that she, Scott, and Ivy Freitag, HPP's planner had attended RevitalizeWA, in Ellensburg, earlier in the week and that it was very well attended. It is the annual statewide conference for historic preservation and downtown revitalization. She and Scott had both presented, and a couple of representatives from our regional program had attended; one was even awarded the Excellence on Main award for his work in downtown Kent.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.