



## City and Borough of Juneau, Alaska Historic Resources Advisory Committee

Chair, Gary Gillette, Architect  
Vice Chair, Dorene Lorenz, At Large  
Recorder, Shannon Crossley, Architectural Historian  
Jerrick Hope-Lang, Knowledgeable of Tlingit and Haida Culture  
Steve Winker, At Large  
Cheryl Jebe, At Large  
Robin Brenner, At Large

January 28, 2024

CBJ Human Resources Committee

Ella Adkison, Chair; Wade Bryson; Maureen Hall; Neil Steininger

Subject: Historic Resources Advisory Committee

The Juneau Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) was shocked and devastated to hear the City Attorney recommending dissolving HRAC and claiming that city staff cited the committee has been “consistently adverse to the Assembly”; has “concerns regarding conflicts of interest”; concerns of “systematic racism”; and incidents regarding “marginalized community members.”

HRAC considers these allegations extremely egregious and disturbing. HRAC would appreciate the chance to identify and discuss specific incidents to understand why such claims were made. City staff has never advised HRAC of such concerns in the past. HRAC was not made aware of these allegations prior to their public release at the Juneau Human Resource Committee (HRC) meeting on January 6, 2025. HRAC is willing to work with HRC and the Assembly to resolve these issues. Eliminating HRAC is not in the best interests of community goals.

Given that HRC has directed city staff to draft an ordinance to dissolve HRAC and without being informed of any specific incidents it is impossible to fully respond to the allegations. The following discussion regards these allegations. The claim that HRAC is “consistently adverse to the Assembly” insinuates this issue has been persistent for a long time, yet HRAC has never been made aware of such concerns. One of the charges for HRAC is to review and make recommendations about projects that might affect historic properties. HRAC’s approach has always been to hold public meetings to listen to citizens’ concerns; with preservation goals in mind, evaluate the proposed project; and make recommendations to the Assembly for their consideration. Where preservation goals conflict with other community goals it is up to the Assembly to resolve the best path forward for the community at large.

The claim of “concerns regarding conflicts of interest” has always been addressed as does the Planning Commission, Assembly or any other committee. If a member has a conflict, that member steps down from the discussion and does not vote on the issue at hand.

The concerns of “systematic racism” are particularly troubling as HRAC has always treated its members and the public with respect and dignity.

The claim of incidents regarding “marginalized community members” is also troubling. In the mid 1990’s HRAC was expanded to include a member knowledgeable in the customs and language of the Tlingit and Haida people. For many years that seat was held by Tlingit Elder Dr. Kaayistaan Marie Olson. Dr. Chuck Smythe, Senior Ethnologist at Sealaska Heritage Institute held the seat for several years and currently Lduteen Jerrick Hope-Lang holds the seat. HRAC has always valued the input from these respected and knowledgeable committee members.

During the HRC meeting of January 6, 2025, city staff was asked what HRAC has done for the community. Not knowing if HRAC will be offered the opportunity to meet with HRC, the following information is presented.

In 1984 the Assembly adopted design standards to preserve the historic character of the Downtown Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. An empowered Design Review Board (DRB) was  
CBJ Human Resources Committee

established to approve development proposals in the greater CBJ including downtown historic district. In 1987 HRAC<sup>1</sup> was established to advise the DRB regarding development compliance with the downtown historic district standards along with reviewing and making recommendations to city staff and the Planning Commission. The Community Development Department (CDD) budget featured a line item for historic preservation activities and public education about the importance of preserving historic buildings to keep downtown a vital area.

Ultimately the DRB was eliminated but the historic district standards were retained, the required historic district development permit was eliminated, the CDD preservation budget was eliminated, enforcement was eliminated, and now application of the standards often falls through the cracks. Unfortunately, the loss of these important preservation tools has, in part, put the viability of the downtown historic district in peril.

Historic preservation is an important element of a community's character, identity, and viability. Historic preservation goals and objectives are identified in the CBJ Comprehensive Plan (2013), Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan (2020), and the recently adopted Blueprint Downtown Plan (2024) which states:

“Juneau’s unique history and heritage is an asset worthy of investment. These assets attract tourists, shoppers, businesses, and residents. Over the years, many historic buildings have been lost, making those that remain even more important if downtown is to keep a link to its past. Designated historic landmarks and the centrally located Downtown Historic District are invaluable cultural resources that can contribute substantially to downtown’s economic vitality and identity.”

For many years, Juneau has been a leader, throughout Alaska, in its historic preservation efforts. As the State Capital, it is appropriate to be a model for the rest of the state regarding responsible preservation of historic and cultural resources. Juneau was one of the first communities in Alaska to meet the requirements of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program established by the federal National Historic Preservation Act. This program offers resources and funding opportunities to assist communities with historic preservation activities. Juneau has received CLG grants amounting to \$509,628 for preservation projects and training (see list on page four of this letter). For the last three grant cycles Juneau has not applied for any grants due to no budget available for staff to support historic preservation.

HRAC understands the Assembly is looking at boards and commission for finding ways to address issues of staff time commitments, filling vacant seats, and meeting quorum yet still meet the needs of the community. With this in mind, HRAC forwards the following recommendations and suggestions. HRAC would be willing to meet with HRC for further discussion of these recommendations and suggestions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. **Retain HRAC’s role to review projects in the Downtown Historic District.** Currently a project requiring Planning Commission (PC) action includes design review as part of the process. For projects not requiring PC action, CDD staff approves projects under the building permit process. In both cases HRAC reviews and makes recommendations for compliance with historic district standards. The PC and CDD staff do not have the appropriate expertise to adequately evaluate projects with historic district standards. The PC and CDD staff benefit greatly with HRAC involvement.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Title 49.10.410) Historic Resources Advisory Committee:

- Reviewing and making recommendations about local projects that might affect properties identified in the local Historic Preservation Plan.
- Reviewing and developing nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for properties within CBJ.
- Cooperating and consulting with the Assembly, the Historic District Commission, the Community Development Department, and the State Historic Commission on matters concerning historical districts and historic, prehistoric, and archaeological preservation in the City and Borough.
- Reviewing and making recommendations about the collections, exhibitions, education programs, long-range plans, and other pertinent activities of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum.
- Performing other actions which are necessary and proper to carry out the above duties.

HRAC considers it imperative to retain its review role for projects in the downtown historic district to preserve the unique character of the downtown core district to maintain it as a viable economic area.

- B. **Retain HRAC to assure CLG status remains in good standing.** As a CLG, Juneau benefits from state offerings including assistance writing historic preservation ordinances and plans; conducting surveys and inventories; creating local historic property designation guidelines and procedures; identifying economic incentives; training preservation commissions and staff; and providing technical and grant assistance. Being a CLG also guarantees local involvement in nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and review of federally permitted or financed projects requiring Section 106 review.

HRAC considers it imperative to retain Juneau's CLG status to assure local involvement in federal projects that might impact historic buildings, structures, and sites. Also retaining CLG status is critical for state funding assistance for historic preservation projects.

- C. **Provide adequate city staff to support HRAC and grant related historic preservation projects.** In 2022 the city received a CLG grant to perform phase two of a historic property survey of the Juneau Townsite neighborhood with a goal of applying for another grant to develop a nomination of the neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. CDD did not apply for the grant stating they did not have staff time for the required match. A quick look at 2022 CDD expenses for HRAC meetings liaison and a grant project shows that a position to support HRAC was about 1/8 FTE (approximately \$16,700). This seems a small price to pay for preserving Juneau's history.

## SUGGESTIONS

HRAC understands the Assembly's desire to make boards and commissions more efficient and reduce required staff time to support their missions. HRAC suggests the following:

1. Reduce the number of HRAC seats from 9 to 7 (required to maintain CLG status).
2. Consult with Library Director to determine if HRAC's role is needed regarding the Juneau Douglas City Museum operations. This would reduce staff commitment to HRAC.
3. Consult with CDD staff to consider the reduction of regular meetings of HRAC from monthly to periodically as required for downtown historic project reviews; reviews of National Register nominations; Section 106 reviews of federal and federally funded projects; involvement with specific grant funded projects; and other historic preservation issues. This would reduce staff time to less than 1/8 FTE yet retain HRAC benefits to the community. HRAC has always been available for special meetings to coordinate with critical permit timelines.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our recommendations and suggestions. If the Assembly desires, HRAC would be pleased to discuss issues of concern.

Sincerely, for the Juneau Historic Resources Advisory Committee.



Gary Gillette, HRAC Chair

cc: Mayor and Assembly  
Forrest Courtney, CDD Planner

## **Juneau CLG Grant Awards Totaling \$509,628**

### **Historic Preservation Planning Grants**

*Historic Preservation Plan, Phase I. 2015; Phase II, 2017.*  
*Juneau Memorial Building Use and Preservation Plan. 2012.*  
*Juneau Downtown Historic District Design Standards Evaluation. 2005, 2006, 2007.*  
*Historic/Cultural Preservation Plan. 1995, 1996.*

### **Survey and Inventory Grants**

*Treadwell Mining Complex Historic Properties Study. 2009.*  
*Historic Preservation Database. 2008, 2010.*  
*Merchant's Wharf Historical Survey: Historic Property Evaluation of Alaska Coastal Airlines Hangar*  
*Perseverance Trail Survey, Last Chance Basin to Silver Bow Basin. 2003.*  
*Historic Building Survey of the Casey-Shattuck Neighborhood. 2000, 2003.*  
*Historic Cemeteries in Douglas, Alaska. 1994.*  
*Inventory and Survey of Historic Shipwrecks. (6) 1991.*  
*Chicken Ridge Neighborhood Historic Building Survey. 1991*  
*Report of the Treadwell Historic Resources Survey. 1990.*  
*Report of the Juneau Dairy Farming Historic Resources Survey. 1990.*  
*Historic Structures Report for Jualpa Mine Camp of the Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Company. 1989.*  
*Douglas Townsite Historic Building Survey. 1988.*  
*Juneau Townsite Historic Building Survey. 1987. Updated Survey. 2021, 2022*

### **National Register of Historic Places Grants**

*Juneau Memorial Library National Register Nomination. 2004*  
*Historic Cemeteries of Juneau and Douglas, Alaska National Register Nomination. 1996.*  
*Chicken Ridge Historic District National Register Nomination. 1992.*

### **Historic Preservation Development/Predevelopment Grants**

*Alaska-Juneau Gold Mine Power Towers. 2014.*  
*Treadwell Saltwater Pump House Stabilization. 2013.*  
*Stabilization of Historic Structures at Jualpa Mine Camp Historic District. 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006.*

### **Historic Preservation Education Grants**

*Treadwell Mine Interpretive Panels, 2017.*  
*Evergreen Cemetery Inventory and Interpretation. 2014.*  
*Treadwell Mine Signs and Interpretive Shelter. 2012.*  
*Treadwell and Jualpa Mines Interpretive Signs. 2010.*  
*Downtown Juneau Interpretive Signs. 2005.*  
*Interpretive Signs for Traditional Places. 2001.*  
*Historic Preservation Web Page. 1998, 2000.*

### **Commission Training Grants**

*National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Forum, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017.*  
*Local Historic Preservation Commission Training. 2009, 2012.*  
*CLG Workshop. 2000.*  
*Economic Perspectives: Making the Historic Preservation Connection Workshop. 1993, 1994.*