

To: Historic Resources Advisory Committee members
From: Skip Gray
Date: October 16, 2023
Re: CBJ misleading information regarding Telephone Hill historic designation

On July 26, the City held an open house to give Juneauites a chance to express their views about what Telephone Hill should look like in the future. Participants were handed a survey that said, "None of the homes in the area are eligible for historic recognition because they have been modified..."

While that may be true, the handout left out one important fact: The neighborhood as a whole would qualify as a historic district according to the Telephone Hill Historic Site and Structures Survey produced by the State in 1984. As I understand it, and please correct me if I am wrong, that designation would give the properties benefits identical to the homes as if they, themselves, were designated as historic -- tax breaks and possible grants toward preservation and restoration.

I said the City's statement about the eligibility of the homes "may" be true because I believe they are referencing the 1984 study and the houses are 38 years more historic now, and, as I understand it, alterations more than 50 years old are also considered to be historic. So it is possible that some or all of the alterations would also qualify as historic. Since the planned 106 review has not yet been completed, I don't know if they have taken that into account.

Unfortunately and importantly, the incomplete, misleading information on the survey could have improperly biased people's responses. And, after the open house, two opinion pieces in the Juneau Empire repeated and amplified the City's misleading information. Now anyone who has completed the survey or read those opinions is under the wrong impression about the historic value of the neighborhood and the possibilities for preserving and restoring the homes.

HRAC is the one CBJ entity charged with and most qualified to advise the CBJ Assembly and staff on matters of historical significance. As such, if I

am correct about all of the above, I believe you have an obligation to set the record straight on this issue as soon as possible with a letter to the assembly and a press release to counter the misinformation being passed on by the media.

You might be tempted to delay doing this, if you do it at all, because the 106 review has not been completed yet. However, time is of the essence, I urge you to respond based on the information available today with the caveat that the realty could change when the 106 review is completed.

Thanks for your consideration.

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