
A Voice for Ketchum's Oldest Buildings

From Jakub Galczynski <JGalczynski@ketchumidaho.org>

Date Thu 3/12/2026 4:26 PM

To Participate <participate@ketchumidaho.org>

03.11.2026

Mayor Pete Prekeges and the Ketchum City Council,

My roots in Ketchum may not run as deep as yours or those of the current City Council, but I value community and character enough to volunteer my time for several years. Since 2021, I've contributed well-informed guidance to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Time is history's greatest threat, especially as Ketchum becomes an exponentially attractive target among U.S. mountain town developers. These landlocked mountain towns are slowly getting tapped out, and Ketchum still has much development potential within the Community Core. I'm not anti-development, but pro-responsible development. Because of that, this is not the moment to reduce the voice of the HPC. If anything, it's the time to make it work more effectively for the City Council and the community's future.

Merging the HPC with the Arts Commission feels like an uninformed move unless the City Council intends to shift focus away from historic 'buildings' over the long term. An Arts and History Commission (AHC) focuses on incorporating history into the arts, things like plaques, murals, sculptures, and other creative interpretations of local history. But that type of commission usually doesn't have the time or mandate to properly research, document, and evaluate the fate of actual historic buildings, whether existing or proposed. My understanding is that HPC's responsibilities are to be soon divided between an AHC, Planning and Zoning (P&Z), and the City Council. That division raises some practical and quality concerns. At recent P&Z and City Council meetings, HPC items ended up at the very end of already long agendas. Over the years, I've looked through many of those meeting packets, and I understand how much work both bodies already carry. I value your work and time. But are P&Z and City Council prepared to take on additional research, outside City Hall?

The HPC was created to help with this issue and to ensure that often tough property decisions are supported by proper research. I understand the concern about a non-elected commission making property decisions. One option could be to restructure the HPC more clearly as a resource and recommending body to P&Z. I'm happy to further discuss this. Regardless, I believe it's important for City Council to understand HPC's other tasks and potential in supporting a cultural shift in how we approach historic buildings. This is why I have become involved with the technical advisory group (TAG).

I don't believe Planning and Zoning Commissioners want to absorb the full research scope of HPC. It's a lot of work that I don't see happening. Aside from Commissioner Brenda Moczygemba, I'm not sure anyone currently on P&Z has a background in evaluating alterations to historic structures. P&Z Commissioners are thoughtful, but historic building preservation is a very different discipline with its own evaluation methods and ways of understanding buildings. The less subjective, the better an argument can be made to preserve a historic building.

One of HPC's strengths is that it builds local knowledge and local voices around historic properties. Even a third-party historian can only evaluate a building based on the documents provided or online archives. Being on the ground helps. It allows us to understand historic characteristics from different perspectives, in different parts of the season, and where these buildings fit within Ketchum's broader timeline of history. The HPC also considers the social and cultural significance of historic buildings, which is challenging to consider through outside research alone. Our community is an asset of information pertaining to these historic buildings. The more locally accessible HPC is, the more we learn, and the less likely we are to make care-less decisions.

City staff have the challenging job of bringing together commissioner perspectives and community input, and history often plays a role in those conversations. Better communication and cross-pollination of ideas could strengthen efforts across initiatives. Not everything can be solved during formal meetings, and I'd encourage more one-on-one dialogue to keep commissions updated on general happenings.

I want to conclude with my expressed support for prioritizing full-time community housing in Ketchum. That effort is essential and I believe it's in good hands today, regarding the Mayor and City Council. The HPC could run in parallel, even if it's not making great strides. No news from HPC, is good news. If the HPC is an obstacle, then I trust your judgment. Otherwise, I feel that both housing and historic buildings are important to maintaining the balance that defines Ketchum's character, its people and its place. If Ketchum's historic buildings deserve a strong voice, then the Historic Preservation Commission provides this platform. I appreciate your time to read my thoughts.

Jakub Galczynski
Historic Preservation Commissioner
Resident of Ketchum