

SAMMAMISH 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; Caroline Lemay, Vice Chair; Cristy Lake; Ella Moore; Rebecca Ossa; David Pilgrim; Doug Eglington, Special Commissioner

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Lorelea Hudson

STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Meisner and Todd Scott, King County

GUESTS: Sara Croft, Roisin O'Farrell, Matthew Rubin, Pat Sayed, Kathleen Nelson, Susan Hass, Akhil Somanath, Dan Zimmeroff, Julie Koler, Eirlys Vanderhoff, Michelle Bunn, Bing Xiao, Priti Joshi, Manish Joshi, Astika Joshi, Shama Joshi, Chuck Sparks, Ujwala Khaire, Mary Moore, Elizabeth Maupin, Nicholas Lam, Gari Martin, Subhash Rangapure, Gani Konapala, Weifeng Yao, Melonie Anderson, Jing Jia, Dipika Raja, Nitya Raja, Yogesh Raja, Sriharsha Kadalbal, Seema Gogia, Tony Zhur, Ramya Hande, Sreedhar Kukunooru, Wendy Denny, Malarkkan Kunaran, Noor Shaikh, David Goodman, Vivek Jain.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Handy called the meeting to order at 7:40 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 the Baker House as a Sammamish landmark. She then left the room. Eglington explained that he would also be recusing himself, as he was involved in preparation of the nomination for the Baker House. Handy asked if any members of the audience had a challenge to any of the other commissioners. There were none.

PUBLIC HEARING: Minnie & Earl Baker House Landmark Nomination

Handy opened the public hearing and asked for a presentation from the applicant, Sammamish Heritage Society (SHS). Eirlys Vanderhoff, President of the Society provided information about the organization and its purpose. She then introduced the Society's vice president, Mary Moore. Moore described how the only designated landmark in Sammamish, the Reard House was in very poor condition when it was designated, and is currently being successfully rehabilitated. She stated the Society owns the contents of the house, and have attempted in the past to work with the owner to restore the house itself. She feels it would be relatively simple to restore the house, but it should be landmarked so the owner can access grant funding to make needed repairs. The Society was also aware that a permit application to demolish the house had been submitted, and that prompted the nomination submittal.

Julie Koler, a consultant for the Society, provided some background for the house. She wanted to provide some perspective on why the Society was nominating the house. She indicated that development pressures in the county were tremendous, and none more so than those on the

Sammamish Plateau. There has not been a comprehensive survey of what historic resources remain in the city, but the Society is working on one at the moment that will identify properties built prior to World War II. She said there might be upwards of 75 properties left that had sufficient integrity to even be considered for the city's historic resource inventory. Only 20 or so of these might meet the landmark designation criteria.

Koler indicated the Baker House is an exceptional example of a vernacular farmhouse from the period, and that there are no others like it registered in King County. She also said that only through landmarking can anyone access the funds necessary for rehabilitation. She then provided a comparative analysis of similar buildings from the plateau, stating there appear to be seven similar early residential buildings. They are:

- Bengston Cabin – log cabin built in the 1880s, but it is a completely different type & style
- 525 205th Ave NE – is a different form than the Baker House and has been heavily altered
- 1822 193rd Ave SE – is currently slated for demolition
- 3310 E Lake Sammamish Pkwy – has been heavily altered
- 3455 E Lake Sammamish Pkwy – has been heavily altered
- 3462 E Lake Sammamish Pkwy – has good integrity, but was built as a mill house
- 19702 SE 33rd St – was built much earlier (1880s) and has been significantly altered

Koler indicated everything else built after 1910 was influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement and didn't exhibit the vernacular characteristics like the Baker House. Koler also stated there is a need to recognize vernacular architecture in the region because there has historically been more emphasis on high-style architecture. She also thinks commissions should be looking more generously at the criteria and integrity issues because of current development pressures and the rapid loss of historic resources.

Koler summarized by saying the Baker House is a rare surviving example of an early 20th century vernacular farmhouse on the Sammamish Plateau. She indicated it still retains those features that are typical of the style and period: overall simple form with shiplap siding and minimal detailing; steeply pitched gable roof with a brick chimney; original two over two double hung windows (now boarded up). She said those features which are not intact or are deteriorated (the front and rear porches, some siding) can easily be restored. She also acknowledged that structures that have been moved from their original location are generally not eligible for designation. However, the Baker House meets the criterion for eligibility because it has only been moved a short distance from its original location, is oriented in the same direction, and is significant for its architectural value.

Handy then asked for a presentation by the owner, The Laurels Homeowners Association (HOA). Dan Zimmeroff, representing the HOA thanked the commission for their work. He stated that not every historic house is worthy of landmark designation. He said that even though there was a condition on the original development of the subdivision that said the house should be preserved, there was nothing on what was to be done with it or how to preserve it. The developer moved the house to the current location, but there is no deed for the house and no budget for its maintenance. The house sits in the only usable open space in the subdivision, and has become a hazard for the neighborhood. The local building official outlined eleven areas of significant safety concerns when he inspected the house in 2007.

The HOA finds it difficult to maintain the house due to increased costs and additional maintenance from vandalism. Zimmeroff said the Sammamish Heritage Society talks about what could be done, but not about the current condition and how expensive it would be to repair. Since the building has been relocated, its historic significance must be due to its architectural value. That is the single criteria that should be considered and it doesn't meet that criteria. There is no porch; there are no other farm outbuildings; the context is significantly changed. He appreciates what was done with the Reard House, but that isn't relevant to the Baker House. The commission must consider what it is today. Even the most important architecture loses value when the materials deteriorate.

Zimmeroff also said the buffer (boundaries) proposed in the staff recommendation is inappropriate, because it far exceeds what is needed to maintain the house and extends into the existing playground. He feels there is no reason to include that much area in the boundary description. He asked that for the sake of time that three representatives of the HOA be allowed to present at this time.

Chuck Sparks is a homeowner in The Laurels and has been on the landscape committee since 2004. He stated that at least three HOA presidents have had to deal with multiple vandalism attacks on the building. It is an attractive nuisance. Most of the windows have been broken from the inside. The chimney has fallen and the roof sags. There is moisture inside. All the materials will need to be replaced if it were rehabilitated. He estimates it would take \$250,000 to do this. The building also has no water, electricity, or sewer. The 25' buffer doesn't make sense because of the playground equipment and benches in the park. There are also no plans from the heritage society to maintain the building. He is sorry the house has turned into what it is, but feels it's not the responsibility of the HOA to maintain it.

Sara Croft is an HOA member and opposes designation. She feels the building is just really a deteriorated structure. It has been altered with the addition of the rear bathroom. There is no glass in the windows, and the roof materials are nearly gone. There is moisture in the building, and maintaining it would be expensive and of no benefit to The Laurels neighborhood. One way to mitigate its removal would be to install a historic marker, or the HOA would be happy to give it to the heritage society if they would move it to a different location.

Astika Joshi has been a resident of The Laurels for eleven years, and is 16 years old. She said the house is not aesthetically pleasing and is a deterrent to potential buyers. The kids in the neighborhood don't respect the house, and there is asbestos in the flooring, which is hazardous to the kids who get into the building.

Handy asked for testimony from the audience.

Scott submitted for the record several letters received at the hearing, all requesting the commission deny landmark status for the house. They were received from:

- Matthew Rubin
- Scott Martin
- Akhil Somanath
- Shubha Iyengar

- Smita Das and Asheesh Rastogi

Public Testimony:

Roisin O'Farrell stated that funding may be available from 4Culture to do rehab work, but that may require a public access requirement and the house is on private property. The HOA does not want it to be a public facility.

Matthew Rubin said that he has been an owner for two years. He met with the heritage society so that the HOA could gain entry to the building, as the society had the only key. He feels the society has been using the building for storage for the last 15 years, and should have kept the building up. He said the HOA has recently put new locks on the building and secured it.

Susan Hass stated that she lives in Sammamish and often goes to nearby Beaver Lake and Pine Lake parks, and thinks that good things can come from awful situations such as this one. Perhaps there is an opportunity at one of the parks. She stated she is a member of SHS, and that Sammamish is losing too much of its history.

Akhil Somanath is a homeowner in The Laurels and in its current state, the building has no architectural integrity, or conform to the criteria. He asked why SHS hasn't removed their items from the building.

Nicholas Lam is a homeowner and says the building is not visible from the public right-of-way. It's only accessible from private property.

Gari Martin is also a homeowner and she said that nothing has prevented SHS from doing something with the house. She feels the HOA would be happy to see it moved.

Gani Konapala, Weifeng Yao, and Jing Jia said they are homeowners and concur with all that has been said by other homeowners.

Wendy Denny said she is an owner as well and that the house is an eyesore and a safety hazard. This is the only open space for the neighborhood and the house should be removed.

Priti Joshi said he lives in the neighborhood. Even though there are some grand houses in Sammamish, this neighborhood is effectively the slums of Sammamish. The houses are tiny and have no yards, and this is the only open space for the neighborhood.

Handy then gave the applicant a chance to respond to the testimony. Vanderhoff said she understands there is a great deal of frustration with the situation, and the fact that the HOA owns the building. SHS would like to work with them to preserve and restore the house. There is nothing of equivalent significance on the plateau.

Handy then provided the owner an opportunity to respond. Zimmeroff told the commission that a vote against landmark designation does not mean the house will be demolished. He then told the commission that they can't make a decision on what could be, they have to evaluate it as is. He

also suggested that if SHS felt it was so significant, they would have proposed landmark designation many years ago.

Handy closed the public hearing. She reviewed the criteria being used to evaluate the nomination. She then asked the commission for a discussion. Pilgrim stated he feels the original developer did the HOA an injustice. He feels this constitutes demolition by neglect, and that it's not serving any good for a lot of people. Lake feels this is a rare example for Sammamish. There may be others in King County, but she feels it qualifies as a landmark under the criterion used. She said that roof materials are effectively a consumable product and meant to be replaced periodically. Glass is similar, having to occasionally be replaced. Ossa stated that you can clearly still see the architectural form and massing of the building, and the materials are clearly evident.

Lemay said it is a very rare example of vernacular architecture and still has a lot of integrity even with the glass and some trim pieces missing. She feels bad it's in this situation, but it is a simple wood structure that is reparable, and our job is not to fix the problem. Handy spoke to the relocation of the building, saying it is very close to where it was, and it has the same orientation as it did historically. Pilgrim asked if it wouldn't be more demolition by neglect if they choose to designate it? He understands SHS is willing to help, but when? He feels it is a good example of a vernacular farmhouse but will it ever be rehabbed or just left to continue deteriorating.

Handy asked Scott to present the staff recommendation. He indicated staff recommended designation of the house as a Sammamish landmark, as they felt it is eligible under Criterion 1c as a rare intact example of vernacular architecture. Additionally, staff felt the property met the requirements of Criterion 3c, that it is a relocated structure significant primarily for its architectural value. Staff had recommended the boundaries of significance encompass a 25' buffer around the house, and while that was somewhat arbitrary, it was intended to maintain an adequate clearance around the house in case there was any proposed new construction at the park. Features of significance are recommended as the entire exterior. Scott indicated that he would slightly modify staff's opinion on the integrity of the materials, as it is unclear whether the 2/2 wood windows remain underneath the plywood coverings, and the condition of the siding is unclear due to the heavy vegetation around the house. Scott also reminded the commission there is an alternative to designation if they're unclear about integrity. They could make a preliminary determination of significance to allow for further investigation.

Handy polled the commission to see if they felt the house met the requirements of Criterion 3c. There was unanimous consensus that it was significant primarily for its architecture, therefore meeting that criterion. Pilgrim asked why the 25' buffer was chosen. Scott indicated it was just arbitrary, that the commission had used that size buffer for other landmarks when only a small portion of the parcel was to be designated. Pilgrim felt perhaps it should just be the footprint, or the interior edge of the sidewalk surrounding the building. Handy asked the commission whether the interior of the house should be considered a feature of significance, based on the photos presented at the hearing. There was unanimous consent that it should. Handy also polled the commission on whether they had sufficient information to designate the Baker House as a Sammamish landmark. There was unanimous consent they did not have sufficient information and instructed staff to arrange to evaluate the house, inside and out, and present the results to the commission.

Commissioner Pilgrim moved to make a preliminary determination of significance for the Minnie & Earl Baker House based on the staff recommendation, and findings contained in that recommendation. The boundaries of significance will correspond with the inside edge of the existing concrete sidewalk that surrounds the building, and features of significance include the entire exterior and interior of the building. Lake seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURN: The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.