

## **Historic Preservation Review Board – March 01, 2008 @ 8:30 AM**

### **Board Retreat**

The meeting of the Historic Preservation Review Board was called to order by Chair, Mary Jane Anderson, at 8:36 AM at Town Hall.

Chair Anderson called the roll.

Members present: Mary Jane Anderson, Chair; Kevin Peterson, David Waldron and Michael Jean Carpentier

Also Present: Sandy Strehlou, HPRB Coordinator

Guest Speakers: Nancy Larsen, TFH Historic Preservation Founder; Boyd Pratt, Architectural Historian, Michael Houser, Architectural Historian, Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation.

HPRB Coordinator Sandy Strehlou welcomed the board and guests to the board retreat. She briefly outlined what the HPRB hoped to cover during the course of the morning and presented our guests with certain case studies requesting their perspectives and comments. Each guest then introduced themselves and their relationship to historic preservation.

### **Boyd Pratt, Architectural Historian:**

Mr. Pratt spoke about vernacular architecture saying that 1. Material culture itself represents history. 2. He encouraged the board to accept an object as it is.

Mr. Pratt used the example of Stonehenge to demonstrate how people's interpretation of historic sites can be influenced by their own point of view and desires. He encouraged the board to approach a building on its own terms and let it speak for itself. Therefore he suggested the definition: Vernacular Architecture is a means of approach not a style of building. He noted that Friday Harbor was originally a pedestrian town or slow moving horse and carriage. Cars brought a dramatic change to the way people built.

Mr. Pratt suggested asking simple visual questions regarding a building. 1. How does it meet the ground? 2. How does it meet the sky? 3. How does it turn the corner? He suggested going from the mass and scale of the building to asking, "How will I enter?" Details such as décor and molding frame the windows and doors.

Churchill House was removed from its prominent site completely changing its approach. It originally was a duplex with a primary and secondary porch entries. Moving Churchill House and turning it reordered the priority of its facades.

Setting a precedent becomes an issue when a new element is added. God or the Devil is in the details. Frieze work, molding around the windows, is integral to the historic character of the building.

Culture has changed. People no longer sit on front porches. Porches are no longer as important in contemporary building practice.

### **Nancy Larsen, Founder of Friday Harbor's HP Program**

Ms. Larsen acknowledged that the board had a hard job regarding Churchill House. This case involved so many issues making it complex. It is difficult; property owners may not be co-operative. The job of HP coordinator is getting more difficult and is under-funded. A limitation of the board is that it is voluntary.

Historically on Argyle houses faced each other side-by-side and face-to-face. The goal of HP is not just to maintain porches and trim but the streetscape. Argyle is important not because of one house or another but as a whole context.

The HP Manual is a legal document. HP needs to look at how it can get support from the Planning Department and the Building Department. How does the board strategize? How does the board operate? Where is the leverage to get applicants to cooperate? Policies and procedures are really important.

Where are a board's strengths? The board works most effectively as individuals with different skills working as a team within the larger context of the town.

With new buildings scale and mass, setbacks and landscaping become issues.

### **Michael Houser, Architectural Historian – US Dept of Interior**

Mr. Houser complimented the board's manual as being excellent recognizing that the challenge the board has is that we have an excellent manual with no teeth. He warned that we are losing history rapidly. The Churchill House and Alvia Carter house are no longer eligible for Landmark status.

Mr. Houser recommends the board "Do something serious before it is too late."

Mr. Houser gave the board a power point presentation outlining the Secretary of the Interior Standards for treatment of historic structures. The following is the text from his presentation.

# **Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties**

## **Guidelines for: Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings**

### **1. Secretary of the Interior Standards: Who Uses Them?**

- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Programs
- Federal Agencies Conduct & Review  
(i.e. Sec 106, Transportation 4F)
- State Historic Preservation Office Design Review
- Local Government HPO & Landmark Commission Review
- Historic District and Review Commission Guidelines

### **2. Treatment Approaches Preservation**

- Rehabilitation
- Restoration
- Reconstruction

### **3. Treatment Strategy is Based on:**

- Relative importance in History
- Physical Condition
- Proposed Use
- Mandated Code

### **4. Requirements Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation, emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work.

(Both Preservation and Rehabilitation Standards focus attention on the preservation of those materials, features, finishes, spaces, and spatial relationships that, together, give a property its historic character.)

A. Minimize Changes: A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

B. Retain Character: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

**C. Period of Significance:** Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other buildings, will not be undertaken.

**D. Preserve Historic Alterations:** Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

**E. Craftsmanship:** Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

**F. Repair or Replace In-Kind:** Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

**G. Do No Harm:** Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

**H. Protect Archeology:** Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

**I. Compatibility:** New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

**J. Reversibility:** New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## 5. Guidelines & Approach

- Identify, Retain, and Preserve Historic Materials and Features
- Protect and Maintain Historic Materials and Features
- Repair Historic Materials and Features

- Replace Deteriorated Historic Materials and Features
- Design for the Replacement of Missing Historic Features
- Alterations/Additions for the New Use
- Energy Efficiency/Accessibility Considerations/Health and Safety Code Considerations

## 6. Websites

[www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/)  
[www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm)  
[www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/)

## DISCUSSION

The following comments were made during a period of open discussion.

- Mr. Houser recommended that if you have no historic data, “look at the building and then look at the proposal”.
- Ms. Larsen noted that the Inventory was begun in 1994. Working with the Historical Museum she got copies of historic photos from them. She recommended tactics of education and incentives. She noted the board needs proper funding to pursue education.
- Board Member David Waldron pointed out that the TFH would not take incentives unless they are financially neutral.
- Mr. Pratt cautioned that we lose moral authority when we compromise. The manual legally backs up the principal that preservation is a good thing.
- Coordinator Strehlou commented that the first obligation of the board is to uphold the guidelines in the manual.
- Mr. Houser recommended making decisions based on the manual and the 10 federal standards.
- Mr. Pratt said, go through the standards, negotiate and educate.
- Ms. Larson pointed out that sometimes you just have bad luck. Some property owners are not going to be educateable.

- Someone said, We have to be clear and consistent not to confuse applicants. We should not be afraid to say, “Does not comply”.
- Answering a question about reversibility, Mr. Houser said it is only reversible if historic materials are still there.
- Mr. Pratt encouraged the board to instill pride in applicants and respect for historic structures.
- Coordinator Strehlou pointed out one problem is that people come before the board having already decided what they want to do.
- Mr. Pratt suggested trade offs, perhaps with sidewalks and gutters. Sometime you [the Town] will just have to write off a loss.
- There was some discussion regarding porches and balconies.
- Ms. Larsen suggested keeping an eye on the Betty DeStaffany House, the oldest house in town.
- Board member Kevin Peterson brought up Haley’s as an example of interacting with an applicant to improve a design plan with a result better than the original plan but not as good as our recommendation.
- Ms. Larsen encouraged pursuing communications with property owners.
- Coordinator Strehlou reminded board members, when speaking on behalf of the board, each member needs to take the steps necessary to ensure that the board is being consistent, in agreement, and speaking with one voice.
- Mr. Houser suggested HP staff go over what the character defining features that make a house a house.
- Ms. Larsen mentioned the importance of houses and human relationships in a neighborhood, how houses are related to other houses through their occupants. There are unique family histories and stories of memorable individuals in these houses.
- Mr. Houser said to remember that in the bigger picture, historic properties are properties that have histories.
- With regard to local landmark registries Mr. Houser said, “no” to vinyl and aluminum window molding unless in a building many stories high.

- Ms. Larson said that many local historic structures are already compromised, but that if we were too “pure” there would be no historic preservation program. “All preservation is local” like the 80,000 bricks that came from Orcas to build the courthouse. Larsen leans toward some ranking for practicality.
- Mr. Houser commented on the Whale Museum status on the State Register. The building is altered and standards are getting tighter. He would not list the Carter house as it is, but if it were restored to its original look and detail, he would.
- Mr. Pratt explained that additions to the Whale Museum were very well done in terms of matching old shiplap and the molding around a window made into a door and that the added columns have their own historic past as part of the original Friday Harbor High School building. He did not think it would make the national registry.
- Meeting with the planning department, county government and maintaining a relationship with Town Council to get more support were discussed. Ms. Larson pointed out that one reason there is a lack of public interest or support is because there is such a quick turnover in the business community. Forty percent of the population has been here less than five years.
- It was pointed out that some of the best-preserved communities are that way because they had no money to change their buildings.
- Over a potluck lunch, discussion continued regarding historic houses in Sunshine Alley and possibilities for the Boede Cement building. Ms. Larson encouraged the board to be proactive while acknowledging the program has to be funded better. She added that the advantage of a voluntary program is that it is friendlier for a small community.
- Chair Anderson talked about applicants coming in having already bought materials.
- Larsen suggested the board get on it [talking to the property owner] right when property sells.
- Coordinator Strehlou noted the high volume of design reviews and time it takes to deal with surging new construction.
- Mr. Pratt noticed the irony of a historic preservation board looking at lots of new construction and wondered if we could restructure the organization.

At 12:45 the board thanked our guests and concluded the retreat.

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Mary Jane Anderson, Chair

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Peggy Sue McRae  
12:45 PM Meeting adjourned