

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND
Arts & Historic Preservation Committee
April 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Members in attendance (remote):

Doreen Gay, Chairperson
Hannah Holmes, Vice Chairperson, Secretary for this meeting
Jessie Kessler
Jim Flahaven
Alessa Wylie, Greater Portland Landmarks
Jim Flahaven
Kathy DiPhilippo, South Portland Historical Society

Staff in attendance:

Milan Nevajda, Community Planner

Absent:

Mark Weisendanger

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 a.m.

Approval of minutes from March 3 & March 23 Alessa moved, Jim seconded: unanimous

1: Discussion of process for dividing committee into Arts and Historic Preservation.

Milan proposals:

AHPC creates ordinance framework for Arts Committee, while simultaneously recruiting new membership.

AHPC housekeeping is needed to align AHPC mission with current Council vision.

Art Committee Membership: Inclusion of members outside of South Portland? Perhaps invite visiting members to increase diversity?

Art Committee Future: Tangible results have been hampered by lack of budget and will be going forward.

Art Committee Mission: "Park" AHPC for a bit and focus on formalizing Arts Committee?

Jim and Jessie will work with Milan to develop an Arts ordinance and then bring it to the full committee. The ordinance will need to be brought to Sally Daggaett, the city's corporate attorney for review.

2: Review of the City Council Workshop on 3/23/2021

Doreen: Deep disappointment with Council conduct in response to proposed historic property designation of Sylvan Site.

Milan: Exposition of "workshop" format, and its informal nature

Report from meeting between Morelli and Clerk

1: Two councilors don't support moving forward with inventory, and four will support moving forward with the inventory. The balance support moving forward with expanded scope (architecture, potential tribal historical

claims, compromised history, prehistory, etc.). The resources necessary to fully research the history and prehistory of the City would be substantial.

Kathy: That's an impossible task. When it comes to tribal claims, you can, and perhaps we should, look at Purpooduck [South Portland] as a whole, but not individual lots. Much of early history is undocumented. Most Indigenous peoples did not make maps and "claim" land the way that the Europeans did - they didn't put up fences around a plot that they claimed. Also, you can research people, but you can't know every dark part of the past of every person who owned an individual home. We're charged with preserving South Portland historical resources. To research each resource back through its social and prehistoric elements isn't feasible.

Milan: It seems feasible to make an effort.

1: Recruit an architectural historian to give Council more perspective.

2: Tribal history in California model, via state statute: Mandatory consultation with tribal groups re. Designation. Are there particular features of this particular site that bear special designation? AHPC could adopt that model here to request input from Maine tribal interests on designated sites?

3: Research Hinckley as a person.

Doreen: It seems more efficient to address potential tribal claims for the entirety of South Portland, vs. one site at a time.

Jim: "In my year and a half on the committee, my understanding was that our task was the creation of built, preservation-worthy structures, not the mitigation of historical injustices; the Council's response was insulting."

(Hannah will add here that the Committee's intent since I have been a member has been to move on to deeper historical layers after the at-risk built resources have been surveyed.)

Jessie: Our focus on structures inherently focuses on post-Colonial history. Changing focus to Black and Indigenous history may meet Council's approval.

Kathy: South Portland's Black history is extremely limited. The Historical Society has searched Census records for racial data. South Portland simply doesn't have much Black history that the Committee or the Historical Society are intentionally avoiding. Kathy has specifically hunted for South Portland Black history, but the primary Black community in this vicinity [in the 1800s when much of our older house stock was built] seems to have settled on Munjoy Hill in Portland, not Cape Elizabeth [South Portland]. An Indigenous claim to Purpooduck (South Portland) is easier to document. The Historical Society has spent a lot of time researching Indigenous history as well.

Alessa: Alessa cannot support the tendency to want to erase some parts of history due to incomplete prehistoric and sociological context.

Milan: AHPC job is to propose things to preserve. Council's job is to approve or reject. Council needs to feel comfortable singling out specific sites. Councils change. This Council may not want to celebrate those particular sites. (Sylvan Site) Our original charge from Council does include both built and archeological resources.

Milan: Milan does support further architectural review and promotion of Sylvan Site, and other built resources. But with added review for BIPOC and prehistorical history. Please consider bringing Sylvan Site back to Council with added tribal consultation, and any additional information re. Hinkley himself.

Milan: a City-wide survey for tribal interests and concerns seems more appropriate than a site-by-site review. This may belong in the Comprehensive Plan (due 2024). AHPC could initiate this information-gathering.

Debate re. Fate of Sylvan Site work: To pursue expansion of historic context and resubmission; or abandon and wait for a complete tribal survey of City.

Milan will reach out to Seth Goldstein, member of the Board of Directors for the South Portland Historical Society, for input to Sylvan Site non-built history.

Doreen will reach out to First Light for input to Sylvan Site non-built history.

Adjournment 9:05