

## Members

Ken House, *Chair*  
Edward Echtle, *Vice Chair*  
Katie Chase  
JD Elquist  
Jonah Jensen  
Megan Luce  
Daniel Rahe  
James Steel  
Duke York

Ross Buffington, *Wedge Neighborhood Ex-Officio*  
Marshall McClintock, *North Slope Ex-Officio*

## Staff

Reuben McKnight, *Historic Preservation Officer*  
Lisa Spielmann, *PDS Office Assistant*



# MINUTES

## Landmarks Preservation Commission Planning and Development Services Department

Date: September 25, 2013

Location: 747 Market Street, Tacoma Municipal Building, Room 248

### Commission Members in Attendance:

Edward Echtle  
JD Elquist  
Daniel Rahe  
James Steel  
Duke York  
Ross Buffington  
Marshall McClintock

### Staff Present:

Reuben McKnight  
Lisa Spielmann  
Darius Thompson

### Commission Members Absent:

Megan Luce

### Commission Members Excused:

Katie Chase  
Ken House  
Jonah Jensen

Vice Chair Echtle called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

### 1. ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Echtle, Elquist, Rahe, Steele, York present as well as ex-officios Buffington and McClintock.

### 2. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Excusal of Absences: House, Chase and Jensen were excused.
- B. Minutes: there were no minutes.

Consent agenda approved.

### 3. DESIGN REVIEW

- A. Tacoma Totem Pole (Fireman's Park)

Mr. McKnight read the staff report into the record:

#### Background

The Tacoma Totem Pole was commissioned by Tacoma civic boosters and curio shop owners Chester Thorne and William Sheard in 1903, and installed at a location near its present location the day before President Theodore Roosevelt arrived in Tacoma. Reported to have been carved at a cost of \$3000, the pole was intended to rival Seattle's infamous Pioneer Square Totem Pole and is symbolic of a broader historical narrative surrounding the role of the Puget Sound in the Alaskan Gold Rush and the internationally significant Alaska Yukon Exposition that was being planned for 1909. The symbols and carvings on the pole are of unknown origin but are suggestive of Haida style of northwestern British Columbia. The pole is not of Coast Salish origin or design.

The pole has been undergoing a structural and condition analysis by the City this year. On April 12, 2013, during this analysis, structural engineers under contract with the City determined that there was a significant risk of structural failure due to rot and deterioration. The Public Works Director ordered the immediate temporary bracing of the pole, while city engineers began working on a strategy for long term external bracing.

This is an application to install a single bracing pole behind the Totem Pole, with brackets attached to two points of the pole, to stabilize in place. Three options for bracket design are being presented to the Commission.

#### PRIOR MEETINGS

April 24, 2013: Staff briefed the Commission on the status of the pole and tentative plans to stabilize the pole. During this briefing, several Commissioners questioned the cultural appropriateness of the plan, due several cultural factors, and requested that staff further research traditional practices related to declining totem poles, the history and meaning of the Tacoma Totem Pole (including the significance of the symbolism), and whether the pole was legitimately carved.

May 7: Staff convened a working group to discuss and further research these questions. The outcome of this discussion was that most appropriate course of action for cultural and safety reasons was that the pole should be removed and relocated to a place where it could decompose, and that every interpretive opportunity to educate the public about the history and context of the pole, and totem poles generally, be explored.

May 8: The Landmarks Preservation Commission directed staff to gather additional information regarding the safety issues and costs associated with stabilization, and additional analysis should be done regarding the history of the pole.

June 4: The Tacoma Arts Commission convened a De-Accession Review Panel to consider the removal of the Totem Pole from the Municipal Art Collection, per the Municipal Art Collection De-Accession Policy. The panel voted unanimously to retain the pole in the Municipal Art Collection. The panel did not arrive at a consensus regarding the best approach to deal with the pole, other than to conclude that it should be preserved either standing, or stored protected in an indoor location.

June 12: The Commission was briefed on options regarding the preservation of the pole. Staff provided a briefing on the structural bracing options and costs.

#### STANDARDS

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation apply to this project. Note that these standards are different than the Standards for Rehabilitation. The four Secretary of the Interior's Standard approaches are Rehabilitation, Preservation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.

## ANALYSIS

1. The Tacoma Totem Pole is a City Landmark, and any alterations to it that affect its appearance requires the approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission prior to those changes being made, per TMC 13.05.046.
2. The pole is primarily significant for its association with the early development of Tacoma, the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush and its effects on the development of commercial activity in the Puget Sound region.
3. The pole is not of Coastal Salish origin or design. Although the style of the pole has been described as being suggestive of Haida, the identities and cultural backgrounds of the carvers is unknown, and the carved elements themselves are atypical in dimension and design.
4. According to an engineer's report issued on April 12, 2013, examination of the pole indicated that there was a significant risk of sudden structural failure due to deterioration. The pole was temporarily braced as a result, and remains this way currently.
5. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has received status updates and requests for feedback at meetings on April 24, May 8, and June 12.
6. The proposed bracing design will support the pole in place, avoiding the risks associated with removal and reinstallation of the pole and costs associated with transport and storage, thus meeting Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Preservation #1.
7. The single support pole will be placed behind the Totem Pole and will be painted black, to both be distinguishable from the historic pole as well as be visually subservient, thus meeting Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Preservation #3.

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval as submitted.

Mr. McKnight introduced Darius Thompson from the Public Works Department, the project manager. He said that the updated cost estimates have been distributed to the Commission.

He said that staff does not recommend a specific bracing method from the options put forth, but that the commission can discuss and make a recommendation. Mr. Thompson said he is seeking direction on which way the Commission wants to go with the bracing so that staff can move forward with design, bracing and get rolling with this project.

There was discussion.

- Option 1 shows a ring around the back side, a pole up the back with two through-bolts showing in front
- Option 2 shows a ring all around the pole, 9" tall, but no through-bolts
- Option 3 same as option 1 with continuous through-bolts, but rather than a pipe brace, there is a flat steel plate up the back

The Commission discussed which method would cause the least additional damage to the pole and also wood treatments to stop additional rotting.

Mr. McKnight noted that, as was discussed in June, the City has the ability and the need to stabilize the pole right now if it stays where it is, just for safety reasons alone. Any steps after that would be part of a discussion with the Arts Commission on the plan for dealing with ongoing maintenance. The City will need to have that discussion if a plan to stabilize the pole is approved by the Commission.

Discussion then turned to the cost estimate along with continued discussion of which option would be best centering around the issue of ring brace vs. through-bolts. Also discussion about the pole being treated as an art object vs. archaeological object.

Mr. Thompson said that the timeline to build the bracing would be something like 2.5 to 3 months to get someone in to advertise, bid the job, award the job, and then get the contractor going. Design would take about 2 weeks once we know which option the Commission approves.

Commissioner Steel asked summarized concerns and observations related to Option 1:

- If through-bolts can be plugged with wood on the face of the pole
- Resolving any moisture infiltration concerns resulting from the through-bolts going through the totem pole
- Would expansion and contraction cause issues?
- Use a noncorrosive material

There was a motion:

*"I move that we approve the Fireman's Park Totem Pole design at 801 A Street as submitted with Option 1 as the brace type that is preferred by the Landmarks Commission with an additional request that the applicant consider the through-bolts being plugged on the face side of the totem pole with wood plugs, the through-bolts be sealed in a way that does not allow moisture infiltration into the pole, and that the expansion and contraction of the totem pole be considered in the bracing design, and that noncorrosive material be used where penetrating the totem pole."*

Motion: Steele

Second: York

Motion approved

Mr. McKnight said that the outcome is that the Commission has voted to approve the bracing with attachment Option 1. He said that the issues named in the motion can be clarified by staff. If these conditions are met, the Commission doesn't need to see the design again.

#### **4. BOARD BRIEFING**

- A. Old City Hall (625 Commerce – Old City Hall Historic District)

Mr. McKnight briefed the Commission.

He said that on September 11 staff reported to the Commission that we would have a tentative design briefing on the roof repair project for Old City Hall. He said that since then the City has reached a stipulated agreement with the building owner for them to prepare their own plan to repair the roof. Mr. McKnight said that the plan is due to his office next week.

The agreement is that the owners will address the roof repairs themselves. They will present a proposal, a plan for documentation and salvage materials, and so forth, and bring that to the Commission. Mr. McKnight said that will be scheduled for the October 9 agenda. As a result, at this time the City is not presenting a repair plan to the Commission because the owners have signed an agreement to take care of the roof, in addition to some other outstanding issues with the building. Staff will be working with them over the next couple of weeks to get the design package ready for Commission review on October 9.

#### **5. BOARD BUSINESS/PRESERVATION PLANNING**

##### Term Expirations

Mr. McKnight noted that several Commissioners have their Commission terms coming up soon. The Commission will be seeing a general recruitment notice. There will be four potential appointments, one vacancy. He said the

Mr. McKnight said that he planned to schedule an Architectural Review Committee for October 2. There are two agenda items. The first is at 715 N Grant St. there is a project in the planning stages right now. It's a single-family residential house. The lot is a tight flatiron-shape lot. They are going through setback review now. They will need some variances and they have some critical early stage questions about garages, attached or not attached, regarding the design guidelines in the historic district and we want to give them some early feedback. They are in the variance process now, which comes before the LPC process, but what they do now will be critical to their design. Secondly is the Bostwick Building. You may have noticed some paint on the storefronts. They will be in next week to talk about that. These are the mahogany storefronts.

Mr. McKnight said that he also wanted guidance from the Commission on 811 N M Street. This a residential remodel that included an addition to the back of the house, window replacement on the sides and back and hopefully restoration on the front. The Commission at a meeting in April directed that the front windows be retained and restored if possible. Mr. McKnight said that he had just recently conducted a site visit and needed some guidance from the Commission. There are double-hung windows in the front bay on either side of the bay, flanking a Victorian fixed-pane window with a multi-colored light window above it. In the process of working on the house, they discovered a couple of things. When they removed the sashes to start working on the restoration, they discovered that the window frames and sashes are actually falling apart, the joinery is rotted. And what were thought to be double hung windows are not actually double hung. The top sash was fixed at a very early period. There are no weight pockets and there are no pullies in these windows. The owner would like to go with the Andersen Woodright 400 series windows that they are using all throughout the house, which have already been approved, with the exception of the center window in the bay which has the ornamentation—they are having that milled in kind. The issue is that the sill, the frame, the guides, and the sashes, especially in the corners, are all in fairly bad shape. They were never weighted windows. Mr. McKnight said he looked at the frames inside, and there is nothing there at all. Windows are held up by camlocks that put pressure on the sides which is all that is holding the window up. For operability, for sheer practicality, these are 1 over 1 single light windows (picture example shown). Right now they are sawing and putting in a primed board for the sills and they've done the outside trim casing work. Mr. McKnight asked if the Commission wanted the owner to come back to amend the approval, or if the Commission wanted to do a site visit, or if the change to the project could be reviewed administratively for the Woodright wood-clad window in the double-hung configuration.

Commissioner consensus was that this can be left to staff discretion.

Reuben will schedule ARC meeting for October 2.

## 6. CHAIR COMMENTS

None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:28 pm.

Submitted as True and Correct:



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Reuben McKnight  
Historic Preservation Officer