

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Butte Silver Bow Council Chambers
5:30 P.M.**

June 6, 2023

Members Present: Steve Hinick, Mitzi Rossillon, Bobbi Stauffer, John Weitzel, John Riordan, Jennifer Petersen, and Tracy Miller

Excused Absence: None

Staff: Kate McCourt, HPO

- i. **Call to Order:** The Historic Preservation Commission Meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM
- ii. **Roll Call:** All members present, quorum established.
- iii. **Reading/Approval of Minutes:** Minutes were approved unanimously. Mr. Hinick moved to accept them with no changes, John Riordan seconded.
- iv. **Public Comment – Items on Agenda:** None
- v. **Basin Creek Caretakers House Project Update**

Ms. McCourt reminded the Commission about the two windows that had been broken the previous month, showing a photograph of the south side of the house, where one window was broken out of the upper story of the house. Contractor John Snider said that the perpetrators had to climb under the fence and break into the house, and work very hard to get the small window out from the inside, and the only the glass was broken on the south side, the frame remained intact, in the window. On the west side, a full-sized window was broken in the same manner; but in this case, the frame was broken when it was pushed out, and the glass survived, as it landed in very soft dirt. Butte-Silver Bow (BSB) will have them fixed as best as possible and pay for them out of the Community Development budget; they will not be part of Mr. Snider's project. He will complete the project after touching up the paint, caulking, and finishing the concrete work. He will also install French drains on the west and south sides of the house where he has seen pooling water. The plywood removed at the beginning of the project is once again being used to board up the windows to ensure that vagrants will not be able to access them again. BSB has also purchased and installed motion sensor lights to scare off any bad actors.

Mr. Hinick commented that it is a shame that the building is an attractive nuisance to people looking to be destructive. Ms. Rossillon commented that she was out at the house the previous weekend and met a historic preservationist from Columbia Falls who thought that the job was

exemplary and complimented BSB on the effort. Mr. Weitzel asked if the plan is to have someone living in the house once it is completed. The HPO said that the interior is still down to the studs, and BSB will need to find the funds to complete it, but eventually that is the plan.

vi. Staff/Member Report

- Two National Park Service (NPS) representatives visited Butte two weeks ago, with Kate Hampton from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). They spent the morning chatting in the Archives, then had lunch in the vault at Metals. Ms. McCourt drove them all around the National Historic Landmark District, showing them the good, great, bad, and ugly. She explained to them that the Historic District exceeds the size of the Urban Revitalization Agency (URA) district, and therefore there is no money available to incentivize building owners to fix their buildings in the outskirts of the URA district. The group toured the Diamond Mine, with Abby from the Dept. of Reclamation as a guide. Two takeaways from the day for the HPO included revisiting the “Local Register” idea and finding a way to encourage people to want to list their homes on it, as simply contributing to the NPS district does not afford any protections to the buildings alone. Neighborhoods have already been designated in the 2014 Preservation Plan, and the HPO would like to start one neighborhood at a time, to give these buildings more protection per the Ordinance, than they have when they are making changes without public incentive funds. Another takeaway is the possibility of BSB receiving a Paul Bruhn grant through the NPS- the very grant that the Basin Creek Caretaker’s House received as pass-through funding when the SHPO received a large award. If BSB received an award, we would act as the pass-through agency to award smaller grants to local homeowners that would otherwise not be eligible to apply for grants- especially outside of the URA district. It is also possible to write a grant manager into the grant itself to administer it.
- Triple S Building Suppliers will no longer carry LP Smart siding in smooth texture. The HPO was alerted by a woman getting ready to present new design in place of a house that was torn down on Colorado Street. She asked what she was supposed to do if she could not get the smooth siding locally. The HPO called Triple S herself and heard the same thing: they will not be stocking it.
- Courthouse Bathroom Project phase 1 is moving forward with Langlas & Associates, Inc. as the GC/CM.
- Praxis Center is moving forward and the designs for the new building are being created by Cushing Terrell (CTA) as the architecture firm. The HPO was only just brought into the project and met with them yesterday. She told them that the sooner that they bring the HPC in to comment on the design, the better. She asked the Commission if they would like to schedule a special meeting with CTA and the Praxis people, or if they should give guidance on the design at the next regular HPC meeting. Ms. Rossillon said that they are at 30% with the design, and that is a good time to discuss the way that they are headed (not binding with a vote). She would not mind a special meeting. Mr. Hinick asked if they are getting public funds, to which Ms. McCourt responded that they are looking for URA funds, but also federal funds, and so the design will have to go through SHPO as well. Commissioner Riordan said that he sees no reason for a special meeting, and that we should just get the vote in on July 11th (the next regular meeting). Ms. Miller asked if the HPO had seen the design, and she had, and gave them her thoughts- that the building as they had it drawn was not compatible with the Uptown District, as it is a very modern

building being proposed. The HPO said that they claimed inspiration from surrounding buildings, which she did not see, and thinks they should explain to this body how they are inspired by the Uptown. Mr. Weitzel said that he could go either way with having a special meeting but voiced his dismay over the loss of Wyoming Street to this project, as Praxis would close off the street and make it a public park. He believes the streets of Butte should be left alone. The decision was made to have a special meeting the week after next (week of June 19th).

vii. New/Old Business:

- **Determination of Eligibility: 215 Centennial Avenue (Pioneer Technical Services Inc.)**

Ms. McCourt introduced the project, a building recently purchased by Pioneer Technical Services. Their main office building is adjacent to this building, on Montana Street behind it. They purchased it for overflow offices and a new laboratory. However, they don't believe that the existing building will serve their purpose and have opted to explore demolition and rebuild instead. The current log structure was built in 1947. Being outside the NHDL, the HPO researched the building for a determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Ms. McCourt said that she found it very interesting that they would build a warehouse out of logs, but she could not find any indication as to why they would do that. The building was occupied previously by Pioneer Equipment, and a small family-owned hardware facility. It has bars over the windows, that coincide with a newspaper story about frequent vandalism occurring. It has gone through many business but has always been a warehouse. It was built as Garrett Freighters, a trucking company, and went through a series of auction house-type businesses, and an appliance warehouse before Pioneer Equipment Company moved into the building in 1986. They closed their doors in 2021. The Pioneer Equipment people started their business right before the Berkeley Pit closed, and they should be recognized for their ability to keep a small local business afloat despite competition for all those years before retirement. The HPO does not believe that the building is eligible for the NRHP despite the unusual building materials. Perhaps if there was a story behind why it was built with logs, she would feel differently. Mr. Hinick said that he might posit that the reason for the logs is that at that time, two-by-fours were the standard building material, leaving a surplus of logs that were not being used as widely, and so they might have the available and costly choice for the Garrett Freighters building. He said that the building is non-descript, and he agreed that the building does not meet the criteria. He proposed that the HPC agrees with the HPOs finding. Ms. Stauffer seconded the motion and stated that she was sad she never went into the building when it was a business. Motion carried.

- **Review of NRHP Eligibility: 739 South Main Street**

The Commission has visited this property, and the HPO shared photos showing the loss of integrity on the interior of the building. The action taken for 739 S. Main Street will be to vote to remove the building from the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark District due to integrity loss. The HPO shared a photograph of the footprint on the building, with the original structure outlined separately. The building has two rear additions, and the porch has been enclosed. The footprint has been altered. The HPO showed a photograph from the tax assessment card in the late 1950s,

showing a beautiful brick building with a turned-post porch with spandrels along the top. While it is unknown how much of the brick veneer is intact beneath the lap siding, the corbeling along the roofline is still visible on the façade of the house where the siding has fallen off. At one point the exterior was covered in asphalt siding made to look like a brick pattern. They framed the porch in, but when entering the enclosure, the curved rowlock is still visible that would have been above the original front door. Ms. McCourt continued to show images of the building and the original structure on the Sanborn map. The HPO concluded that, with the incredible loss of interior integrity and additions and changes made to the exterior, she does not see how this building can still be considered contributing; and in the 1980s, when it was inventoried, it was considered a “neutral” element to the Landmark District due to its reinvention. BSB speaks weekly about this building in our Mothball/Vacant/Dangerous Buildings meetings and was not under the impression that it was a building that had to be razed despite the problems that it is causing the neighborhood due to sheltering vagrants- it just needed better mothballing. When the HPO (and BSB) gained access to the inside the building, it was determined that there was not much that could be done to save it.

Chairman Hinick stated that, after the HPO’s report, and after visiting the exterior of the property, he would make a motion to concur that it is no longer an eligible property within the Landmark District. Mr. Riordan said that this is a big moment for the neighborhood, and that he hopes this will shine a light on buildings such as this, as to what can happen if they are not mothballed properly. He continued that this house has been a nuisance in a neighborhood that is trying to improve, and that there will be three or four houses redone in the neighborhood this summer. He believes that this building being gone will help to revitalize the neighborhood and improve the integrity of the buildings that remain. Ms. Rossillon acknowledged that the building is in terrible condition but said that that is not the basis for the HPCs recommendations. They are to determine whether it has significance, which she believes it does, and whether it still has integrity, which has nothing to do with condition. She listed the seven aspects of integrity. The building is in its original location and setting. She said that in 1982 when the inventory was created, the integrity is the same as it is today. It is a frame building with brick veneer and Masonite siding and listed all the features that existing 41 years ago that are still there now. Therefore, she feels that it still has integrity. She asked the SHPO how it was listed in 2006, and it is listed as “contributing” despite being considered “neutral” on the inventory form. She passed around a photograph of a house that is in much better shape than 739 S. Main, but its integrity has been impacted in very much the same way. She cautions the Commission that utilizing these applied rules to determine lack of integrity is going down a slippery slope that will impact the number of contributing buildings in the Landmark District. Mr. Riordan replied that he is not looking to de-list any other buildings, he is looking at this particular building that has been in shambles for years that is not fit for habitation. He asked what the Commission would do if the neighboring homes caught fire because the vagrants inhabiting this house started a fire again, and they could have done something about it by acknowledging that it is blighted and allowing its removal. He believes it is a commonsense situation, where the building is missing a roof, the rafters are sagging, the structural elements are damaged, and someone is going to get hurt. Ms. Miller asked for clarification: is the vote for de-listing, or a demolition permit? The HPO thought it was one or the other, but Ms. Rossillon corrected her, because the Ordinance, according to the County Attorney, allows only the owner to

apply for demolition, so therefore the COA is null and void. The vote is for de-listing from the Landmark District.

Ms. Stauffer said that these decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis. She believes that, with all that has happened to the building, it is no longer contributing to the Landmark District. She made a motion to concur with the HPO that the building is no longer eligible to be part of the Landmark District. Mr. Weitzel wished for clarification that this building is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Hinick said that yes, as part of the larger district, it is on the National Register of Historic Places. He asked about a tax assignment on the property. Ms. McCourt explained that BSB tried to reach the owner in vain, going as far as handing him the Demolition Grant application. Another Butte citizen has paid his taxes on the house.

Ms. Stauffer re-stated her motion, that the building is no longer a contributing element to the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark District. Mr. Riordan seconded the motion. Five Commission members said “ay.” One Commissioner voted “nay.” The motion carried.

Ms. Rossillon commented that this is the second time that the HPC has changed the status of a contributing building. She says that this must be made an official record somehow, both on BSB’s listing, and in the SHPO as well. She would think that an updated site form should be created for each de-listed property for consistency’ sake. These properties must be removed from the master Landmark District list. Ms. Stauffer added that this was not an easy decision for anyone, and she hopes that they will not have to make many more of them, but she acknowledged that this was a problem house. She hopes that it will encourage people to take better care of their properties.

viii. Announcements

Mr. McGrath was going to come in to present his plan for 137 East Park Street, and the HPO added slides at the end of her presentation for him to speak about. He did not show up.

VII. Public Comment not on the agenda

None.

Adjournment: Mr. Hinick adjourned the meeting. 7:00 PM

Respectfully submitted, Kate McCourt HPO