

**Great Falls-Cascade County
Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Special Meeting
November 2, 2015**

Members Present: Sandra French, Päivi Hoikkala, Kenneth Robison, Kristi Scott, Ken Sievert

Members Absent: Carole Ann Clark, Del Darko, RuthAnn Knudson

Staff Present: Tom Micuda

Ex-Officio Member Present: Carol Bronson

Guests Present: Norman Anderson, Jim Meinert, Harry Mitchell, Don Peterson, Amy Berg Pickett, Craig Raymond

1. Call to order

Chair Sandra French called the meeting to order at 1:04. In the absence of the Secretary, Päivi Hoikkala was designated as the note taker. The meeting was also recorded. Introductions followed.

2. Discussion of Portage Solar Project

- Amy Berg Pickett, project developer of Cypress Creek Renewables (CRR), provided an overview of the project and its development:
 - 3MW solar farm, interconnected with Northwest Energy (NWE) substation; power will go to NWE clients to serve 600 local homes
 - Project will generate energy only during the day, with some sound audible; no light pollution at night; 7-foot security fence with no barbed wire; professional landscaping with native plants; only permanent markings on land (other than solar panels) will be some trenching and concrete pad; no chemicals; temporary disturbing of landscape will be seeded.
 - The development process for Cypress Creek Renewables includes engineering, local agency coordination, and cultural and historical research with the goal of eliminating any possible conflicts and problems; process started early
 - Harry Mitchell (landowner) informed of Portage issues; discussions with the State Historic Preservation Office did occur; Tetra Tech, a design consultant was employed to develop a cultural resource survey; SHPO will not make official comments but will give suggestions
 - After previous Board of Adjustment vote, project has been moved further north to avoid overlap with the Portage site; Amy distributed maps of location and renderings of new landscaping; there will be no construction on portage route; Cypress Creek will contribute to creation of interpretive site as part of landscaping
- Harry Mitchell offered his perspective:
 - After being approached by Cypress Creek to use property for solar farm proposal, he met with Lewis and Clark Chapter to consult

- Norman Anderson of Portage Route Chapter: revised plan addresses overlap with Portage; supports project, especially with the addition of the interpretive site
- Plan for interpretive site as of now: four panels, focusing on portage (1805), the preparation for the war effort (1942); the downing of an F-94 plane from East Base (1954); and informational panel on solar farms (2017)
- Discussion that followed these presentations focused on the issue of protecting the viewshed of the Portage Route Historic Landmark
 - Harry Mitchell: disagreement over the importance of viewshed versus the actual site
 - Sandra French: aspects of integrity as set by the National Register include setting, feeling, and location = all-encompassing determination when it comes to Landmarks; on federal land, this issue would be of great importance BUT there appears to be no federal 'jurisdiction' in this project (Cypress Creek has researched and found none)
 - Ken Sievert: the need to protect the viewshed of what we have left of the Portage Landmark should be the primary motivation of HPAC
 - Ken Robison: why is the solar project essential at this location? Harry Mitchell: the Portage site is largely unknown to people in the area. This project is an opportunity to educate people about the significance of the Landmark (through the interpretive site). Ken Robison: The solar project still impacts the viewshed of the Landmark, and that is issue members have with the proposal
 - Kristi Scott: Were other sites considered for the solar farm in this general area? Amy Berg Pickett: this is the only location in the area (criteria: type of land, land owner willing to work with Cypress Creek, must be located to connect with Northwestern Energy facility, local permitting must be obtainable)
 - Sandra French indicated that it would be good to get the Tetra Tech reports on cultural resources.
 - Harry Mitchell: family committed to preserving the Portage area
 - Ken Sievert: Asked about whether the solar farm was "reversible"? He also complimented Cypress Creek for their thorough work. Amy Berg Pickett indicated that the panels were removable from the property.
 - The County Commissioners will meet on November 17 at 6 p.m. at the Family Living Center at the Fairgrounds

3. Christmas Ornament Design Selection

- Ken Sievert moved to accept sketch #1 for annual Christmas ornament; seconded by Ken Robison; unanimous decision.

4. Action on Portage Solar Farm

- Section 106 does not appear to be an option

- Cypress Creek has now brought back a non-encroaching plan on Portage site; decision of the Board of Adjustment can be appealed within 30 days at the County Commissioner level
- Ken Robison: our purview is to do ALL we can to protect the Landmark
- Discussion of mitigation: how can one mitigate the ‘visual viewshed?’
- Ken Robison moved that HPAC write a letter (under leadership of Sandra French and Tom Micuda), with strong language about the viewshed, to be included in the packet to the County Commissioners; seconded by Päivi Hoikkala; approved unanimously.

5. Meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m Next regular meeting on Wednesday, November 9, 2016.