



November 2, 2016

Historic Preservation Commission
C/O Mark Gorman, City Administrator
100 Lincoln Street
Sitka, AK 99835

RE: Sitka Tribe of Alaska Comments regarding the Draft Historic Preservation Plan

Dear Sitka Historic Preservation Commission,

I write on behalf of Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA), tribal government for over 4,800 tribal citizens located in Sitka, Alaska. As a tribal government, STA is responsible for health, welfare, safety and culture of its citizens. STA respectfully submits the following comments for inclusion in the Draft Sitka Historic Preservation Plan (SHPP).

At a recent STA Cultural, Customary and Traditional Committee meeting the Committee expressed interest in having Clan houses and grave sites (documented and undocumented) identified in the Sitka Comprehensive Plan. Committee members met with Michael Scarcelli of the City's Planning Department and he recommended that these items be included in the Historic Preservation Commission's SHPP rather than the Sitka Comprehensive Plan. He mentioned that the SHPP would be used as a guide when developing and/or implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

Attached is a map indicating which City zoned lots contain Clan houses. These houses are an integral part of the Native culture and are monuments to the rich history of Native inhabitation of the Sheet'ka Kwaan. STA request that this map be incorporated into the SHPP as an appendix.

The request to have grave sites incorporated into the Historic Preservation Plan was met with mixed emotions. Supporters felt that identifying grave sites in the SHPP would be a step towards protecting these sites, while others felt that identifying these sites in a public document could have a negative impact on them.

To understand the two sides of the reasoning's listed above, one needs to look back in history at the impacts of western culture on Native burial sites. STA has utilized the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to repatriate numerous sets of Native remains that were removed from the Sheet'ka Kwaan prior to statehood. Most of these

ancestral remains were robbed from grave sites by private collectors and ultimately ended up in museum collections.

On a more contemporary timeframe even known marked graves have been damaged or destroyed. During the City's site development of its incinerator plant, marked graves associated with the Sheldon Jackson campus were destroyed. It's believed a portion of the remains unearthed during excavation were discarded in the City's landfill.

Natives have inhabited the Sheet'ka Kwaan since time immemorial. Their long term use of the area (prehistoric through present day) leads to a high probability of inadvertent discoveries anywhere excavation occurs in the Sitka. As an example, STA's Historic Preservation Plan documents tribal citizen testimony about human remains that were unearthed during a Baranof Island Housing Authority's construction project within the Native village.

To address the issue of known (marked) and unknown graves within the Sheet'ka Kwaan STA requests that the SHPP include maps that identify the local cemeteries and known marked graves. It's also requested that the SHPP include a recommendation that the City of Sitka develop an MOU to address inadvertent discoveries for all City owned properties and projects.

If you have any question regarding these comments contact STA's Resource Protection Director Jeff Feldpausch at (907)747-7469 or email jeff.felpdausch@sitkatribe-nsn.gov.

Sincerely,



Michael Baines

Council Chairman

Cc: Mark Gorman, City Administrator
Mark Scarelli, Senior Planner

