





CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator 

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director 

Date: April 8, 2026

Subject: Adoption of the Historic Preservation Plan & Appendix G

Background

When the Assembly considered adoption of the Historic Preservation Plan at its March 24th meeting, further action was postponed until May 12th with direction given to staff to, in the meantime, work on replacing Appendix G of the plan which is a flowchart that describes the historic preservation review process for local projects. Staff's understanding of the Assembly's goals for replacement of Appendix G were to:

1. Have the current process described with more clarity and detail
2. Outline any exemptions that are currently granted/incorporated into the review process
3. Consider any additional exemptions to the review process when "like for like" replacements are proposed

This direction was presented to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) at their regular meeting on April 8th. Staff also presented an outline of the current review process including how projects are identified for review, exemptions currently made, some preliminary thoughts on additional exemptions, and the review procedures. The Commission was generally receptive to staff's outline and would like us to move forward with drafting it into a replacement for Appendix G. However, the Commission also voiced a strong preference to see the Plan adopted without delay; a motion to "Recommend Assembly approval of the Historic Preservation Plan as presented, sans Appendix G, and for city staff to draft an amended Appendix G for review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission and the Assembly at a later date" passed 5-0.

Analysis

Unfortunately, the Assembly's intended date of May 12th for re-review of the new

Appendix G and adoption of the Plan of May 12th is not achievable given that the Commission does not meet again until May 13th. At earliest, a replacement for Appendix G could come at the May 26th Assembly meeting.

Staff also needs additional clarification from the Assembly on the intended scope of public engagement for this effort; there was some discussion among Assembly members about providing mail notice to property owners in historic areas and providing a forum for public comment/discussion, but a conclusion was not reached or conveyed to staff. Should the Assembly wish to provide staff with such direction, there are two potential options:

- An expedited timeline that provides a ~30-day comment period and invite property owners to the May 13th HPC meeting via mail notice. This would put earliest adoption of the new Appendix G to the June 10th HPC meeting and June 23rd Assembly meeting.
- A moderately paced timeline that provides a ~60-day comment period, invite property owners to the June 10th HPC meeting via mail notice, with adoption of the new Appendix G to the July 8th HPC meeting and the July 28th Assembly meeting.

In both of these cases, there is the potential for delay if public comment drives substantive re-drafting of Appendix G. This being said, if the Assembly wishes to open a more extensive public notice and engagement process, it may be advisable to solidify the Assembly's goals for replacement of Appendix G so as to clarify the scope of change that will be considered (i.e., is this an opportunity to significantly change the existing process, or is this intended to clarify the existing process with only modest change).

Fiscal Note

Minimal expense for this effort is expected; the primary resource utilized is staff time. If the Assembly wishes to have mail notices sent to all property owners in historic areas subject to the local project review process, staff has estimated this will cost approximately \$700 which can be absorbed in the department's operating budget.

Recommendation

If the Assembly would still like to see a replacement of Appendix G prior to Plan adoption, staff needs direction on the following:

1. Affirm that the scope of changes to Appendix G that will be considered by the Assembly are as stated in Background (i.e. the 3 goals staff understood from the March 24th discussion), or whether any additional changes should be explored and considered
2. Whether mail notice to property owners and a public forum should be provided
3. If the answer to the above is yes, whether the Assembly wishes to see an expedited or moderately paced public process

This direction would then be followed by the Assembly voting down the amendment motion (see below), and passing a motion to postpone approval and adoption of the Sitka Historic Preservation Plan to April 28. Once the ordinance that will allow postponement of an item to a specific date beyond the next meeting is in effect, the Assembly can further postpone this item to the date corresponding with its desired extent and timeline for public process (May 26th, June 23rd, or July 28th).

If instead, the Assembly wishes to follow the recommendation of the Commission, the motion currently on the floor to, "Amend Appendix G to state that it shall sunset one year from adoption and must be replaced prior to sunset" could be passed, and the main motion to "Adopt the Sitka Historic Preservation Plan as recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission" could then also be passed.

Encl: Staff memo for March 24th meeting
Draft Historic Preservation Plan (body only)
Draft Historic Preservation Plan Appendix G
All other draft Historic Preservation Plan appendices