



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
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ISRD 159/23

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, August 8, 2023

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Ryan Gilbert
Heather Hargesheimer
Nella Kwan
Michael Le
Ming Zhang

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

Absent

Adrian Lam, Chair
Andy Yip, Vice Chair

Nella Kwan, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

080823.1 APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES
June 27, 2023
MM/SC/HH/RG 5:0:0 Motion carried.

080823.2 PUBLIC COMMENT There was no public comment.

080823.3 CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

080823.31 611 12th Ave S. – Leschi Center
Applicant: Jen Creighton, Be Partners NW, on behalf of the Seattle Indian Health Board

Mr. Gilbert recused himself as he works for Seattle Indian Health Board.

Site alteration: Ms. Frestedt explained the proposed removal of an historic brick archway, from the original Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, from the eastern entry of the property.

The area of the arch footings is proposed to be replaced with ground-level, culturally relevant plantings. Exhibits included plans, historical summary, and photographs. She provided the Statement of Reason for Demolition within the online application:

“The Seattle Indian Health Board is requesting the approval to remove the existing historic arch representing the old Bailey Gatzert Elementary School at the entrance to the main medical facility. The arch contains ornamentation depicting owls. In many Native American cultures, owls are a representation of death and are culturally inappropriate at the entrance of a medical clinic. SIHB is proposing to replace the arch with a commemorative plaque.”

She said the site is located east of I-5 in Little Saigon, outside of the Asian Design Character District and Retail Core. The Leschi Center was constructed in 1988. The masonry archway, which was part of the original Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, was constructed between 1920-1929. The school building was demolished in 1987, prior to construction of the school’s current location further north. In 1986, as part of the demolition approval there was an agreement that included a caveat to *“reuse bricks and architecturally significant elements in the new development”*. The arch was retained in response.

Ms. Frestedt said prior to coming before the ISRD Board, staff recommended that the SIHB conduct outreach within in the community regarding the proposal to remove the arch, given the historical connections of the original Bailey Gatzert location to the surrounding neighborhood. Staff also recommended that the SIHB reach out to cultural and historical organizations to inquire if there was interest in retaining any portion of the arch if removal is approved.

Ms. Frestedt said it is the staff opinion that, despite the fact that the arch is an historic artifact, the symbolism and forms contained within the arch have a deep cultural meaning within the Native community and current property owners that is significant. Given that the CID community stakeholders that the SIHB has reached out to have not expressed opposition to the proposal, and that the history of the archway has been well-documented, and the form of the original building has been irreversibly altered, it is the staff perspective that removal of the archway would be appropriate in this instance.

Esther Lucero, Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) Director said the proposed demolition is the result of longtime conversations.

Abigail Echo-Hawk, Executive Vice President, SIHB, explained the high level of care provided that is grounded in Native traditions at the agency. She spoke of her personal experience coming to the SIHB as a patient, while pregnant, and seeing the artifact and the discomfort it brought her. She said the SIHB has been in operation since the 1970s. She said 65% of relatives served there are Native and 80% are BIPOC.

Ms. Lucero said it is a healing space where people can gather and speak their language and share cultural values. She spoke about the agency’s work in public health for the Native community.

Jen Creighton said owls represent death in many native American cultures and explained the cultural damage caused. She said this is the only remaining original brick on site and spoke about the deteriorating condition at the base of the arch. She proposed removal of the arch and replacing it with traditional medicinal plantings including Nicotiana (flowering tobacco). She said a permanent marker providing history of the site and commemorating the experience of Japanese American history / incarceration during WWII. She said letters of support were received from community organizations, including the Wing Luke Museums. She said the 1921 school closed in 1984 and the arch was the only thing remaining when school was demolished and rebuilt. She said the Seattle Indian Health Board purchased the building in 2014. She noted the connection between the Japanese incarceration experience and the Urban Relocation Policy both policies of which were designed by Dillon S. Myer. She said the history will be shared in a new way.

Ms. Echo-Hawk said for many Native communities the owl represents a harbinger of death. She relayed the experience of a Native American family with a child in Seattle Children's Hospital. Elevators had animal names and the one that accessed the cafeteria was the Owl. The family avoided the elevator and took the long route. She said after months of advocacy, the elevator was renamed. She shared her own experience of shielding her eyes when she came as a patient and said she doesn't want any suffering. She said that while that was never, the intention the result is the same. She said the building and land is a place of safety and for people to receive the services they deserve in a place of cultural safety.

Ms. Lucero said as we learn, we evolve and grow. She said she stands in solidarity.

Mr. Frestedt said we learn from history and repair harm. She said historic preservation, as a discipline, has not historically served communities of color and this application provides an opportunity to look closer at the impacts. She asked board members to take a more holistic view in their decision-making.

Ms. Hargesheimer said she supports the proposal and is excited to see the joint remembrance. She said it is important to recognize past harm.

Ms. Kwan asked where the plaque would be located.

Ms. Creighton said the location has not yet been determined.

Ms. Lucero said meaningful engagement with the community is important. She said it may be a plaque, it may be something else, based on conversations with the community.

Mr. Le said he appreciated learning about history about something so important said, "we don't know what we don't know". He appreciated the education on something so important.

Mr. Zhang supported the change. He said while there is historic value to the arch he understood the point and noted there was community support.

Ms. Frestedt said strong efforts were made to contact organizations that might be interested in sections of the arch, owls such as Wing Luke, MOHAI, Japanese Cultural Center.

Ms. Lucero said that while only two letters of support were received, there is lots of verbal support from the community. She said there has been no resistance.

Ms. Frestedt noted the interest in removing the arch and the owls for several years and thanked the applicants for their patience and for educating the Board about the cultural significance..

Action: I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend approval of a Certificate of Approval for site alterations at 611 12th Ave S.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval, based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the August 8, 2023 public meeting, and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

This action is based on the **following applicable sections of the International Special Review District Ordinance:**

Secretary of the Interior Standards

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

It is the staff opinion that the original architectural integrity has been lost and the placement of the arch is out of context with the site and the history of the school and not consistent with the intentions of Standard #3.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

The proposed plantings and treatment upon removal would be appropriate for the site and not have an adverse impact on the District.

MM/SC/ML/HH 4:0:0 Motion carried.

080823.4

STAFF SUMMARY and BOARD BUSINESS

Administrative approvals since July 25, 2023

Ms. Frestedt reviewed administrative approvals.

Ms. Frestedt said she will provide an update on the ISRD board election process and noted community members support mail in voting with a drop off site day of voting.

Ms. Frestedt said the site of the fire at 10th and King has been fenced off until redevelopment occurs. She will issue an emergency Certificate of Approval for demolition after SDOT issues a notice of violation because of the hazards at the site.

The Board adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Rebecca Frestedt, Board Coordinator
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