

**CITY OF VICTORIA
HERITAGE ADVISORY PANEL
MEETING MINUTES
October 13, 2020**

Present: Pamela Madoff, Chair
Avery Bonner
Douglas Campbell
Graham Walker
Helen Edwards
James Kerr
Steve Barber
Aaron Usatch

Absent: Kirby Delaney
Shari Khadem

Guests: Jeff Sheldrake (1421 Grant Street)
Ken Johnson, Hallmark Society
Councillor Thornton-Joe
Mikal Baker (1171 Rockland Avenue)
John Keay, Keay Architecture (1171 Rockland Avenue)
Barb Grant (1205 Pandora Avenue)
Chuck Morris, School District 61 (1623-1625 Bank Street)

Staff: John O'Reilly, Senior Heritage Planner
Andrea Walker Collins, Planning Secretary

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm

1. Adoption of Minutes of the September 8, 2020 Meeting

Moved by Graham Walker **Seconded** by Aaron Usatch

Carried Unanimously

2. 1171 Rockland Avenue – Delegated Heritage Permit No. 00142

3. 1421 Grant Street – Delegated Heritage Permit No. 00153

4. 1205 Pandora Avenue and 1511 Chambers Street – Delegated Heritage Permit No. 00154

5. 1623 -1625 Bank Street

Attendees: Chuck Morris, School District 61

- John O'Reilly gave a presentation on the item and read the wording of the Council motion, which referred the matter of the potential designation of the heritage-registered Bank Street School to the Heritage Advisory Panel for their opinion on the Heritage values of the Bank Street School
- John explained that a report was to be brought back to Committee of the Whole by October 22, 2020 for further consideration.

Moved

Seconded

1. The building has high heritage value, as it is an excellent example of a small masonry school in a nearly original state and a neighbourhood landmark, therefore the Heritage Advisory Panel recommends that Council, working with School District 61 and the community association, develop a plan to conserve the building, given that other schools of similar scale and vintage have been successfully rehabilitated in the past.
2. Recognizing the inadequacy of the information received to date, the Heritage Advisory Panel commends Council for authorizing staff to retain independent consultants to complete a building condition assessment and market value assessment
3. Given the building's architectural, social and historical significance, the Bank Street School is worthy of designation

Carried

Questions and Comments

- Pamela Madoff reminded the panel of the scope of the request from Council to provide their opinion on the heritage value of the Bank Street School, and reminded the panel of the mandate of the Panel and of Council
- John clarified that the panel's opinion should take the form of a motion
- In the absence of a statement of significance, Pam read out the citation on the Bank Street School from the Victoria Heritage Foundation- the special features of the building including the concrete foundation, bell cast slate roof, decorative metalwork, tapered bricks with recessed mortar, vertical emphasis is given to the front façade with mock brick pilasters with metal capitals and embossed shields, roof modillions, shaped metal dividers crossing all the main windows and giving horizontal emphasis to the windows, large brackets on the side porches that are made of concrete and galvanized metal. The interior is characterized by double stairways from both doorways and the building has been described as Edwardian and even colonial empire with classical and oriental details.
- Pam opened up the discussion to questions
- Steve suggested that the committee not limit its evaluation to heritage value and asked which consultant prepared the cost estimate and what experience they had with heritage buildings, since their report condemned the building
- John answered that it was D. Mattson Construction Services from Nanaimo and asked if Marni or Chuck Morris wished to speak to the selection process
- Chuck responded that the architect the School District retained selected the consultant
- John explained that the architect had heritage experience, but the building consultant's experience was limited

- Steve asked why this building is being treated so differently compared to the other heritage-registered schools that the School District maintains, given that they are of similar vintage, have similar layouts and have been rehabilitated (such as Oaklands School)
- Chuck responded that he was new to the School District, and his understanding was that the Bank Street School had been leased since 1975 and that no upgrades were made in that time
- Aaron Usatch asked if there were any other consultants retained prior to the report being prepared and how the award process worked
- Chuck responded that Island Environmental was retained to do the hazardous materials assessment, and added onto his answer to the previous question, that when a building is leased, the School District does not come forward with funding to proactively make upgrades to the building
- John added that Stantec was retained to complete a preliminary structural assessment
- Pam closed the question portion of the item and opened it up to a general discussion
- Aaron suggested that there is not enough information to reach an understanding of what the panel is dealing with.
- Aaron reiterated that it was his impression that the Bank Street School was being dealt with in a radically different manner than the other schools under SD61's control, despite having all of the form and character of the other buildings and contributing architectural elements that would make it highly eligible for conservation and rehabilitation.
- Aaron suggested it has landed in this position due to other factors, such as the lease suddenly ending and the School District being left with a building that has not been upgraded, but that this did not address any considerations other than cost
- Pam stated that another way of looking at the issue is if the owner came forward to HAPL nominating their building for designation and rehabilitation, would the committee feel it was eligible? This is a way of framing the discussion.
- Doug expressed that the heritage value of the building is very high. He loves the building and goes by it all the time. No matter what the style, it's a lovely building and an integral part of the community.
- Doug stated that it should be saved. The building is especially significant because it is a school.
- In Doug's opinion, education needs to impart a sense of historical continuity to students and there are examples of two styles of school on the same site with the potential for a new one in the form of a new addition. The panel has seen what can be done at Victoria High and this school cries out for that kind of a creative solution. What is missing in the calculations is a will to save the school. All the schools that are heritage registered are important and none are expendable. It's a defining characteristic of Victoria that it has a wonderful legacy of historic buildings and the City can't afford to lose the building, especially in that neighbourhood, on that site. In his opinion as a taxpayer, 3.5 million would be money well spent
- Doug moved a motion that the heritage value is very high, Avery seconded
- John clarified that Council is interested in the panel's opinion on what it should do in addition to the value of the building
- Avery commented that it would be difficult to say it has no heritage value. Specific to this neighbourhood, it is important to keep the limited heritage buildings of this style. In terms

of advice to council, Avery suggested an amendment to the motion to say that Council, working with the School District and the Community Association pending their survey to work on a plan to keep the building there

- Pam suggested that the motion be amended to read that the building has high heritage value and that the panel recommends that council continue to work with the school district and the community on a plan to rehabilitate the building
- Avery said that if the community felt the building could be conserved and all parties agreed, then that it could be accomplished through community efforts
- John read back the motion to the panel
- Pam asked the panel if there was anything anyone wanted to add
- Helen expressed that although the school was small, sometimes that adds to its charm and that this building was part of the social fabric of the neighbourhood as it emerged.
- There was a reason the school was built. It was a landmark and it would be a tragedy to take down
- Steve suggested an amendment to restate a portion from the report “as this school is an excellent example of a small masonry school in nearly original state and a significant neighbourhood landmark”
- Avery asked whether the original motioner (Doug) had accepted subsequent amendments (by himself and Steve)
- Doug confirmed that he accepted the amendments and commented that he understood the constraints on the site, but still on a site of this size, he was not convinced all options had been explored. The community and owner need to do further explorations of how to meet the school’s needs and saving the building.
- Jim said that if the school is considering an expansion, it would be critical to see from a design perspective, how the old building could fit into the expansion plans and there has been very little work done to understand that to date. This is a huge opportunity to save the building and work with it. It’s been done before in Victoria.
- Pam asked for further comments
- John read back the motion
- Graham commented that as far as being a landmark, he lives in the neighbourhood, it’s not just an architectural landmark, it’s a defacto community centre and its quite significant to the smallest geographical neighbourhood association. Despite being off the main roads, it’s the defacto community centre and very important to the neighbourhood
- Pam said it was part of the logo of the letterhead of the association for a long time, dating back to her time on Council as liaison to the neighbourhood
- Steve suggested that before the final part of the motion, adding a phrase stating “given that other schools of similar scale and vintage have been rehabilitated in the City.”
- Doug confirmed his acceptance of the amendment
- Pam said this would be the first time since 1975 that a school of this significance had been considered for demolition
- Aaron made a comment and suggested an amendment- that the owners obtain additional information and consultant commentary prior to any further discussion
- Pam reminded the panel of Council’s October 8 motion directing staff to retain additional consultants, so an amendment suggesting consultants be retained was not needed
- Pam also suggested that the panel send a commendation to Council for authorizing the additional consultant work after the panel votes on the first motion

- Pam asked for any further comments
- John read back the motion
- Pam called the question and the panel voted unanimously for the motion
- Pam suggested a motion commending council. Doug moved and Steve seconded
- Jim suggested an additional clause that the information available so far doesn't address the many questions involved in retaining the building
- Pam suggested wording
- Jim moved the amendment to the motion, Aaron seconded
- Pam called the question and the panel adopted unanimously
- Avery asked if staff could update the panel in future
- John confirmed that an update could be provided November 10
- John requested confirmation that the implicit message of the motion was that the panel felt that building merited designation, which was consistent with the message staff delivered to Council
- Pam asked if the panel should be more specific
- John said he should have spoken up sooner to request more specificity. He thought it would be helpful if there was no question in Council's mind about the panel's opinion of the building's eligibility for designation
- Steve moved that "given the building's architectural, historical and social significance, the Bank Street School is eligible for designation", Avery seconded
- The motion was carried unanimously
- Pam asked if there were any further comments
- Steve commented that there are many other heritage buildings in the city that have, or had, outdated mechanical and electrical systems that required seismic upgrades and that needed to be rehabilitated.
- Steve said that some of the conclusions in the consultants report state things like "the windows are at the end of their service life and need to be replaced" and on other similar buildings, further investigation showed, for example, that the lower sash might have a deteriorated piece and could actually be repaired. Steve reminded the panel that if they look downtown, the majority of heritage buildings retain their original wood windows.
- Steve said in relation replacement of the slate roof, the Empress Hotel recently completely renewed their slate roof. So it is fair to say there have been numerous examples of buildings in the city like this one that have been rehabilitated. There is also a comment about the building's interior not meeting modern educational requirements and Steve said he couldn't help but be reminded that some of the most noteworthy educational institutions in the world, such as Cambridge and Oxford in England, which have faculties located in centuries-old buildings. So just because a building is old does not mean that it can't be rehabilitated for modern educational needs.
- Doug thanked staff for their work
- John thanked Council and the panel
- Steve expressed astonishment that the school district would prioritize a staff parking lot and a 1960's building with marginal architectural value as opposed to saving this school
- Pam said there's a lot that can be said, but that her experience mirrors his comments. We have seen buildings in far worse condition be rehabilitated and it is unfortunate that the only thing missing is will. Pam said that she hoped that we could continue a collaborative relationship that can come up with a solution that is supportable on all

sides. This site has much land around it. The notion of keeping Sundance, which is also not seismically upgraded doesn't make sense. Thanks to Chuck for listening in.

- Pam invited Chuck to make closing remarks
- Chuck said he had no closing remarks
- Doug moved to adjourn and Avery seconded

Adjournment at 1:31 pm

Motioned by Doug Campbell **Seconded** by Avery Bonner

Carried Unanimously