

Watts Remy

From: Patrick Cummings <pmc1445@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2019 3:50 PM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: Support for SB 927

To the Environment & Natural Resources Committee Members & Staff:

Thank you all for your work so far on this important bill. I write today as a resident of Eastmoreland, and thus someone who has actual lived experience with the terrible interaction between the NPS Historic District process and current Oregon law.

The good news is this: Correcting many of the negative effects of this linkage is as simple as delinking national listing from local protection. I would urge the committee to pass this bill on to the Senate body for approval ASAP to end the current farcical state of affairs.

The bad news is this current state of affairs, a short list of which includes:

- The current process is undemocratic. All owners are assumed to be in favor of an NPS listing unless and until they meet the seemingly arbitrary and absurd process of signing a notarized objection to the contrary. This is no way to run a railroad.

- There is no input from local elected officials. Local land use law and protections should be put in place only after proactive input and approval from neighbors and local elected and appointed officials. Otherwise large swaths of the state can "opt out" of local land use planning simply by engaging in the NPS process, circumventing local oversight. The neighborhoods most likely to do so are going to trend wealthier. This will exacerbate pressures on lower or middle income neighborhoods to bear the brunt of future growth in our cities.

- The approval process for NPS designation starts with, is managed throughout by, and is finally approved through individuals and organizations who are overwhelmingly - and perhaps entirely - pro-historic districts and architecture. The bias is therefore entirely towards approval of any and all applications. In my research, I could find no instances of historic district applications being rejected for any reason other than objections by neighbors.

There is this no one engaged in the process who serves as a counter argument for approval, meaning an application is as good as approval in almost all cases. Conflicts of interest abound.

For example: In the Portland area, one of the biggest supporters and proponents of more and larger historic districts is John McCulloch of the McCulloch Foundation. This foundation provides sound bites, meeting space, speakers, etc... in support of HD nominations. While I'm sure Mr. McCulloch is a fine individual, he is not unbiased in this matter, as his primary business outside his charitable work is as the owner of a construction firm that specializes in remodeling homes in - wait for it - Historic Districts.

In a similarly shocking bit of conflict of interest, the former chair of the Portland Landmarks Commission, Kirk Ranzetta, was supposed to lead one of the commissions that serves as a potential "check and balance" on the NPS process. This would be against his best interest, however, as he wrote the Eastmoreland application for National Historic District listing. It would be a bitter pill for his client, the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association, to swallow if they were to pay his consulting firm ~\$60,000 in fees and not have their nomination make it through a commission he chaired.

This just brushes the surface of the shortcomings of the current system. The more you dig into the process and hear about how it works, the more absurd and upsetting it will seem. Please move this bill forward with all expediency so that Oregon can put the NPS listing process back where it belongs: as an honorific, not a land use planning tool.

Best regards,

Patrick Cummings
(503) 752-2660

Sent from a phone. Please excuse the inevitable typos.