

December 17, 2012

Re-evaluation request – WP1163Summary Response

Alaine Lafreniere DRPM 3

DRAFT

Base Commander CFB Esquimalt

Alaine: Thank you for responding in this matter and I am sorry you don't support the request for a re-evaluation of the building. I understand you did consult Ian Doull's influential dialogue regarding the report but not clear if you agree with the denial of a re-evaluation or just concur with the decision of the Base Commander. I am also disappointed you did not comment on the circumstances of the evaluation and curious if you condone the manner of notification of demolition of this pioneer historical expropriated Esquimalt house by a FHBRO representative rather than one from DND.

The FHBRO evaluation report relied on a thirty year old study for substance, contained sketchy overnight commentary and reference from local interest with nothing of real value from DND, and there was no visit to the site. These points, the category of evaluation followed and the rushed manner, questions the results which may unfortunately just pave the way for the bulldozer. Regarding previous evaluation scoring by FHBRO, it seems that a number of buildings in Work Point received points just shy of the 50 required to be "Recognized," affording "no obligation" and simple demolition rather than consultation with other departments and jurisdictions. The very significant Officer's Mess, WP1027, also had the evaluation rushed through unfortunately to its demise, receiving fewer points than WP1001, the former Guardhouse. A historic building inventory was done by Transport Canada for the Guardhouse prior to sale but I don't believe the DND did the same for the Officer's Mess prior to demolition.

Captain Auchterlonie: I appreciated a response to the issues and that you copied the Mayor in a timely manner. I understand you have regular business to attend to, however, find it unreasonable that you have denied the re-evaluation request. Your response was quite scripted in its content and the basis for re-evaluation deserves more consideration than just being "interesting," and hope you will see to revisit the request. The manner of notification, where the FHRBO first contacted the Township advising of the pending demolition rather than yourselves, actually lacked basic co-operative courtesy and respect for the Township of Esquimalt, its Official Community Plan, Heritage Context Plan and Heritage Policy, all which through proper process promote the DND in community reference.

As a reflection to previous Base involvements with historic buildings at Work Point, I have included five additional paragraphs. These are based on perception of the current WP 1163 situation and the on-going surplus / disposal procedures involving Historic structures at Work

Point and Macaulay Point, to which I have been following with some detail since 1989. I hope you will endeavor to engage the issues I raise, albeit in this rather lengthy letter.

Firstly, I find it quite astounding that the Township resorts to the current operative term of "Moral Persuasion" when dealing with the Base regarding community issues of historic DND buildings and structures, this due to the lack of consultation by the Base over the years. Accordingly, I understand that the Base denied the Esquimalt Archives permission to take photographs of the interior of WP 1163 for their historical records prior to its demise and also has declined the Township's requests to have a representative attend meetings of heritage interests.

Secondly, noting the letterhead of Real Estate Services, formerly part of the BCEO, I was reminded of that department's biased email dialogue in 2004 / 2005 regarding the disposal of historic structures at Work Point. This included statements: "the longer these buildings stay in our inventory, the more risk that they do attract heritage values (time and community interest has a way of doing that) which will attract even more O & M and liability" and "I am not sure I would spend effort to determine what they would attract if they were put back into use. The bottom line is they are an eye sore on the landscape around our new facility. Retention shouldn't be an option that we want to consider." The particular disposal process involved with the above was based on a report six years old at the time. I could elaborate on this item.

Obvious is the old issue of "Methodical Demolition by Neglect," or "Constructed Disposal" which of course ultimately devalues the building involved, reduces the opportunity for any "repurpose" in situ or as a relocation, and involves extraordinary HazMat costs due to likely resulting demolition.

A fourth, points I wish to reflect on are the circumstances involved with the Base disallowing the sale and associated relocation off site of the Historic and "Recognized" Officer's Mess, which lead to the eventual demolition of the building in July 2006 amidst controversy and contrary to community and political involvement. Prior to that, the Base would not support the application by the WPAPS for National Historic Site status at Work Point in January 2004 and there was no response to what was termed a WP1027 "counter intervention" request by a private citizen in October 2005. More recently in 2011, the BCEO declared no involvement with cutting off the water service at WP1001, the former Guardhouse. FOI requests proved otherwise but unfortunately too late.

Last but not least in my references are the lowest and decreasing number of buildings on the National Register for Work Point and Macaulay Point compared to the number at Colwood, Dockyard, Naden and Signal Hill. This curiously enough, seems to represent the ongoing culture of indifference by the Base with respect to heritage value of the first two locations.

The issues that I have raised may seem extraneous to your station's affairs but are real to Esquimalt and Greater Victoria resident's concerns.

Yours truly

Jack Bates OPCMH

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