

13 June 2017

RESOURCE CONSENTS

Porirua City Council

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FORM 13

SUBMISSION ON APPLICATION CONCERNING RESOURCE CONSENT THAT IS SUBJECT TO PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OR LIMITED NOTIFICATION BY CONSENT AUTHORITY.

Sections 95A, 95B, 95C, and 96 Resource Management Act 1991

To: Porirua City Council

Full Name of Submitter: Historic Places Wellington

This is a submission on an application from *(State Name of Applicant)*

Porirua City Council – Growth and Partnership

The application is for a resource consent for: *(Briefly describe the type, proposed activity, and location of the resource consent).*

To demolish the US Marines Hall at 20 Whitehouse Rd, Titahi Bay

I am not a trade competitor for the purposes of section 308B of the Resource Management Act 1991.

The specific parts of the application that my submission relates to are: *(Give details)*

The whole application.

My submission is -

I support, are neutral or oppose the application or specific parts of it:

HPW opposes the whole application.

The reasons for making my submission are:

Heritage Value

The Council has not demonstrated that the heritage values of the existing hall are no longer of such scale as to negate the requirement to retain it or to restore it. The US Marines Hall is the only surviving building of its kind in NZ. Over 27,000 marines were camped in NZ during WWII either recovering from active service in the Pacific or training to join that fighting effort. Of the hundreds of buildings built for the marines, no other similar building

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exists today and very few exist at all, and not on their original site. This building is unique in NZ for both its recreation type and original site. The association of NZ and US forces during this time of global warfare is of tremendous historical importance. The main phase of training and recuperation at the Titahi Bay camp was in 1943 and this was when the building was built by a local contractor. It was designed by the Public Works Department.

No plans or specifications survive.

The building has a plain and unadorned style. It was the largest and most prominent building at the camp being surrounded by tent sites and huts. It was of a stronger built quality than sometimes implied.

The hall was built for American jazz, music, comedy and dance. The forces were welcomed by an hospitable local community. The huge benefit was that the marines did not need to travel to Wellington for entertainment. The camp accommodated some 2000 marines.

After the war the building was re-purposed by the NZ Government and from 1951 continuously occupied by the Titahi Bay Little Theatre group. The building was substantially renovated in 1957 at public cost and opened by the Chair if the Makara County Council, the local authority of the day.

After this time its semi-isolated location became surrounded by state built housing. The hall had a strong and wide community focus with balls, sports, regular movies and other events.

There is a long history of the community demonstrating its great appreciation for the hall and efforts to retain the heritage resource for community use.

The building forms part of a unique memorial precinct honouring NZ/United States joint heritage. It is adjacent to the NZ war memorial. The building has a Category Two listing with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and is recognised in the District Plan as a historic building.

Failure to Avoid or Mitigate

The Council has tried but failed to demonstrate effectively its obligation to avoid, mitigate or remedy the effect of demolition of this heritage listed building of national significance.

The Council caused damage to the building by raising the adjacent ground level enabling water egress. The Council has left the building to rot and deteriorate. This has been "demolition by neglect".

The building is the only local venue of its type. Demolition will render significant environmental effects which are irreversible.

The lack of present finance in Council Annual Plan to undertake the necessary repair or restoration work is not sufficient grounds to eliminate this obligation. An interpretation panel marking the site is not an adequate mitigation.

Decision making: Options

Furthermore the Council has predetermined its decision to demolish the building.

The Council considers only 3 options: like for like remediation and repair; demolition; or demolition and rebuild of hall. This is not a sufficient consideration of the suitable options supported by the community.

The Council has not adequately considered the proposal by Save Our Hall and other interested groups representing the local community to take on themselves the responsibility of restoration and avoiding, remedy and mitigating the effect of demolition by a flawed (or absent) process of considering sale or leasing the building to that group for a minimal cost (e.g. \$1).

While the Council rejected an alternative invitation to contribute either funds or a bank guarantee to that community led fund raising effort, it has failed to consider transferring the obligation to another willing party in whole.

This sale (or long term lease) of the building is a reasonable option for the Council at no cost to itself. That option would in fact save the demolition costs now proposed (\$200,000). Local community groups are also exploring an option to relocate the building to the Kapiti Coast historic

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visitor destination site at McKays Crossing.

Post Covid-19 Recovery Context

Furthermore, the background context is now very different to when Council made its predetermined decisions to favour demolition. Post Covid-19, central government is looking for "shovel ready" infrastructure projects which could use local building and construction skills for supporting economic recovery. The restoration of this building is such a "shovel ready" project which would clearly have significant community benefit.

Investment in this building would also support the new school curriculum of teaching NZ history. The nearby Whitereia Polytechnic furthermore teaches building skills. This project would be suitable for post Covid-19 recovery funding in partnership with central government or the local tertiary training institute.

The Hall's focus as an historic American music and dance venue, if restored, would resonate with local youth. The building is an opportunity to bring together history, music and dance for the local community. The relationship between New Zealand, the United States and the Pacific gives unique meaning to this structure which has extremely high heritage values of national significance.

I seek the following decision from the consent authority: *(Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought)*

To decline the application for resource consent to demolish this heritage listed building.

I wish (or do not wish) to be heard (speak) in support of my submission

HPW wishes to be heard.

*** Pursuant to section 100A of the Resource Management Act 1991 I request that you delegate your functions, powers, and duties required to hear and decide the application to 1 or more hearings commissioners who are not members of the local authority.**

Signature of submitter: *(or person authorised to sign on behalf of submitter)* F Wong

Date: 18 May 2020