

CULTURAL COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 18, 2013

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3D

APPLICANT: Tom Porada, Nevada State Prison Preservation Society
Vern L. Krahn, Park Planner

REQUEST: Discussion only regarding the Nevada State Legislature's final action to preserve the decommissioned Nevada State Prison.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

On March 25, 2013, the Carson City Board of Supervisors took action to convey to the 2013 Legislature the Board's support on Assembly Bill 356 (BDR S-493), a bill authorizing the cooperation between the State of Nevada, Carson City, and other nonprofit organizations for the development of a plan to preserve the Nevada State Prison as a historical, educational, and scientific resource.

Since that time, Parks and Recreation Department staff has been tracking the progress of Assembly Bill 356 (BDR S-493) as it moved through the 77th Nevada State Legislature (Refer to Exhibit A). Staff is pleased to report that Assembly Bill 356 passed both the Assembly and Senate unanimously and was sent to Governor Brian Sandoval for his signature (Refer to Exhibit B).

Staff has asked Nevada State Prison Preservation Society representatives to attend this Cultural Commission meeting and provide the commission members with an update on the plans to move forward to convert the decommissioned Nevada State Prison into a museum and tourist attraction.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: This agenda item is only for discussion. No formal action can be taken at this time.

Supporters pitch ideas to save NSP in Senate

By Geoff Dornan

gdornan@nevadaappeal.com

Supporters of converting the historic Nevada State Prison into a museum, archaeological dig, a movie set or even a bed-and-breakfast asked the Senate Government Affairs Committee's support Monday.

Assembly Bill 356 by Assemblyman Pete Livermore, R-Carson City, would give the Nevada State Prison Preservation Society group the next two years to flesh out a plan for preserving the prison, which was closed down a year ago.

Livermore said they want to ensure that the prison doesn't fall into disrepair.

NSP was operated continuously from 1862 — two years before statehood — until 2012. Former Director of Corrections Glen Whorton said the group is most interested in the oldest part of the prison, which has 100-year-old buildings. He said the prison has significant historic value since it's been part of Carson City since the capital was founded.

Whorton said as the Warm Springs Hotel, it was a gathering place for the territorial legislature. He added that scientists have found significant geologic and fossil remains on the property including giant sloth footprints. Whorton also expressed his opinion that the prison is an excellent site for Hollywood films.

Witnesses even suggested

PRISON

From page A1

there are people who would pay to spend the night in one of NSP's old cells almost like a bed-and-breakfast.

But he said AB356 is designed to let supporters work out a plan for the old prison.

"We're not exactly sure where this is going to go," he said. "It's a planning process."

Myron Carpenter said he believes NSP has huge potential as a tourist draw.

"It will be self-supporting," he said pointing to the success other states have had in converting old prisons to tourist attractions. "It will draw tourists in here."

E.K. McDaniel, deputy director of the Department of Corrections, assured the committee that, not only do they support the bill, they intend to keep NSP "in a way it can be preserved."

He also pointed out that the prison isn't completely decommissioned. The license plate "tag" plant and the execution chamber still

are in operation there.

Carson Mayor Bob Crowell said the Board of Supervisors has unanimously endorsed the project and is concerned NSP may be torn down.

"We have had experiences where landmarks have been obliterated," he said citing the old V&T Roundhouse north of the capitol, which was torn down more than a decade ago.

The committee took no action on the bill, which has already been passed by the Assembly.

LEGISLATURE

Prison bill headed to governor

Nevada Appeal Capitol Bureau

The Senate on Monday voted unanimously approved legislation that enables conversion of the Nevada State Prison into a museum and tourist attraction.

Assembly Bill 356, which also passed the Assembly unanimously, goes to Gov. Brian Sandoval for his signature.

The prison opened in 1862, two years before Nevada became a state. It was shuttered a year ago

except for the license plate factory and the state's death chamber.

Sponsor Assemblyman Pete Livermore, R-Carson City, said the idea is to give the prison-preservation group two years to design a plan to preserve the prison, potentially making it a museum, an archaeological dig, a movie set or even a bed-and-breakfast.

Former Director of Corrections Glen Whorton said the oldest standing part of the prison is about 100 years old and that

the entire site has historic value. Not only is it an excellent site for Hollywood films, he said, but there have been significant geologic and fossil discoveries on the property including giant sloth footprints.

The prison's history include the first execution using poison gas. It is also the only prison ever to have an inmate-operated casino; it wasn't shut down until the late 1960s.

The biggest obstacles to converting and preserving the prison are disability access and safety.



SHANNON LITZ / NEVADA APPEAL FILE

Visitors tour the Nevada State Prison following decommissioning in May 2012.

For Assemblyman Livermore,
congratulations!

Barbara
Governor

Assembly Bill No. 356—Assemblymen Livermore, Hickey; Ellison,
Grady, Hansen, Hardy, Healey, Oscarson, Swank and
Woodbury

CHAPTER.....

AN ACT relating to the Nevada State Prison; encouraging the
development of recommendations to preserve the Nevada
State Prison for use as a historical, educational and scientific
resource for the State of Nevada; and providing other matters
properly relating thereto.

Legislative Counsel's Digest:

This bill encourages the development of recommendations for the preservation
of the Nevada State Prison for use as a historical, educational and scientific
resource for the State of Nevada.

EXPLANATION - Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~(omitted material)~~ is material to be omitted.

WHEREAS, The Nevada State Prison located on East Fifth Street
in Carson City was originally built in 1860 by pioneer Abraham
Curry as the Warm Springs Hotel; and

WHEREAS, The landmark prison was established in 1862 by the
Nevada Territorial Legislature and administered by Abraham Curry
at the site of the Warm Springs Hotel, and thus represents the first
executive agency created in the State of Nevada; and

WHEREAS, The sandstone quarry on the site contributed to the
construction of state, city and private buildings during the early
history of the State of Nevada and Carson City, including the
Capitol Building, the United States Mint, the Virginia and Truckee
Railroad engine house and many other public and private buildings;
and

WHEREAS, The lands and grounds of the prison are known to
contain unique specimens of extinct species and the legend of *Homo
Nevadensis*; and

WHEREAS, The first lethal gas execution chamber in the world
was designed and used at the prison and is currently active; and

WHEREAS, The prison has a well-established and colorful
history as a maximum security prison, replete with riots, escapes,
gangs, executions, musicians, gambling and Hollywood filming, all
of which provide intriguing historical value; and

WHEREAS, The history of the manufacture of Nevada's license
plates is integral to the prison; and

WHEREAS, The Nevada State Prison was decommissioned in
May of 2012 and is likely to fall into a state of disrepair without
continued maintenance and upkeep; and



FYI

WHEREAS, Efforts are underway to establish the historic sections of the prison as a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places; now, therefore,

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The Nevada Legislature hereby finds and declares:

1. That the Nevada State Prison is an integral part of the history of the State of Nevada, particularly with respect to Carson City and the early development of this State, and should be preserved as a historic place.

2. That Carson City, any nonprofit organization and any other interested stakeholder are encouraged to work cooperatively with the Department of Corrections, the Office of Historic Preservation of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the State Land Registrar to:

(a) Develop recommendations for the preservation, development and use of the Nevada State Prison as a historical, educational and scientific resource for the State of Nevada; and

(b) Present the recommendations to the Nevada Legislature along with any recommendations for legislation that may be necessary to fully implement the recommendations.

Sec. 2. This act becomes effective on July 1, 2013.



Nevada State Prison (yellow) Proposed area of preservation (red)

Nevada State Prison Preservation Society



Legend

1. Main Entrance
2. Gas Chamber
3. Cell blocks
4. Mess Hall
5. Quarry/"Hole"
6. Court Room
7. Warden's House
8. Guard Towers (3)
9. Sloth Footprints
10. Earth Based Religious Area
11. Guard Housing
12. Pump House
13. Check Point
14. Greenhouse
15. Hot Spring Pond
16. Multi-Use Building
17. Swimming Pool

Vern Krahn

From: D Chaney <valleyjobline@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 2:56 PM
To: Vern Krahn
Subject: Cultural Commission meeting

Dear Vern,

I wanted to thank you so much for your help in getting the resolution passed by both the Carson City Historic Resources Commission and the Cultural Commission. Your help in my presentation last night was definitely integral to pursuing our goal for preservation. We all appreciate the help and input you have provided!

Didi

FYI



"With us, it's personnell!"

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"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."
Mahatma Gandhi