

Updating the programmatic agreement

Written by BY SEN. BEN PANGELINAN
Thursday, 15 May 2014 03:00am

THE status update on the Programmatic Agreement (PA) provided by the Guam State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Lynda Aguon, during last Tuesday's roundtable was considerably informative.

As anticipated, there are several things people would have been able to walk away with if you tuned in.

Unique position – Guam SHPO

The first, in March 2011, the Guam SHPO signed the PA, relative to the realignment of the Marines from Okinawa to Guam, with representatives of the Department of Defense and the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The PA also satisfies Section 106 requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1969 for federal agencies to consider how their efforts will affect historic properties. Although there was significant pressure surrounding the signing off of the 2011 PA, the Guam SHPO explained that she did so at the time to ensure that a formal process could be put in place to safeguard the preservation and protection of our historical properties in light of the military buildup.

Second, we are quite fortunate to have the Guam SHPO listed within the government of Guam. It is one of the most unique positions within the government, created by statute, and placed at the Department of Parks and Recreation to manage the affairs of historic preservation on Guam. For all intents and purposes, the position of the Guam SHPO was established to have maximum flexibility, independence and freedom to function as necessary to protect our historical past and preserve our future.

27 new historical sites

Another issue that was raised was the historical projects in the PA, a list referred to as "Appendix E," that would be affected by the DOD undertaking. The Guam SHPO confirmed that, to date, there is an update to Appendix E. Given DOD's proposed preferred alternative to use Northwest Field, more accurately Tailalo – a more pristine forest that will require bulldozing and disturbance at the live fire training range complex – the issue of Ritidian as a designated surface danger zone was also discussed. Both the Guam SHPO and the Joint Guam Program Office (JGPO) confirmed that there are 27 new historical sites in the proposed area that would be affected, and would be required to go through the historical survey and plans. The Guam SHPO stated that, to date, she has not received a PA memo outlining the pertinent information needed for review and concurrence of their findings.

New PA

Apparently, what also seems to be quite significant is that because there is an entirely new preferred alternative never before discussed or presented to the people of Guam, outlined in the

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draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS), a new PA may be warranted. As stated by JGPO staff, the alternatives presently laid out in the 2014 draft SEIS are completely different, and never before seen in the 2010 draft EIS. Although the current PA grants great flexibility to DOD to change its plan, it does not give the Guam SHPO the ability to exercise the same authority to carry out the plan in a way that is fair and effective for Guam.

Access plan that is public

Due to concerns raised by the community, the Public Access Plan was raised. This plan is expected to grant the public the ability to visit historic cultural sites located on DOD-held land. The current access plan continues to wane and even regressed as testified to by a concurring party and community organizations, while the public awaits approval and completion of an access plan that actually includes the public.

The communication between the community, the Guam SHPO and the JGPO is lacking. There are websites where the public can view the PA memos and other important reports and documents, but are not widely publicized. Also noted is that in the draft Access Plan, the public would have 12 days out of 365 – one Saturday per month to visit certain historic sites on our island.

True involvement of concurring parties

In the drafting of this PA, there were a lot of discussions and the ultimate result in the PA, not only were the local and the state historic preservation offices part of the process, but we also had additional input from the community through invitations, and mainly through the work of the Historic Preservation Office, who consulted with individual parties in the community for the different work that was happening with regard to historic preservation and projects that affected the community. As that evolved in terms of additional feedback from the community during the NEPA process, they formalized to some extent, the public input process during the PA in that concurring parties were invited, and these were members of the community representing specific groups. It was a very welcomed feature of the development of the PA during the initial NEPA process. The signatory parties were “top-level,” including the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, the executive director of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Guam State Historic Preservation officer, the CNMI State Historic Preservation officer. Invited signatories were “second in command” including the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, regional director of the Pacific West Region National Park Service and administrator for the Federal Highway Administration in Hawaii. The public participation was gathered through the concurring parties during the development of the PA from members of the community. However, the position of the concurring parties is quite limited; they must sign off and concur, and only then might their public input be considered. Surely, our input must be more valued.

CRI website

The Cultural Resources Information (CRI) public website should provide information to the public so that any impact on our historical properties here in Guam is accessible. Please visit: <http://go.usa.gov/kZWG>

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You can also access the Guam SHPO's website at historicguam.org .

Ultimately, the mission I stand by is not one that is someone else's, but rather, it is that you, the people, have information accessible to you, as well as assured transparency in negotiations made on your behalf and that you are confident with knowledge in the decisions you make, and that those decisions prioritize and benefit the whole of Guam rather than a select few. As your government servants, it is incumbent upon us to give our people the opportunity to get information so that they can make informed comments and ask knowledgeable questions about our historic properties, especially as the comment period for the draft SEIS continues.

Public input

In this process, your government leaders owe it to you to listen to your concerns and digest your comments before jumping the gun and telling you what their position is. Even the military is required to seek your opinion before finalizing their plans and then subjecting it to the formal record of decision.

Anything less from your local officials should be unacceptable to you.

JGPO public hearings are as follows:

- Saturday, May 17 – Okkodo High School

Open House from 1 to 3 p.m.
Public Hearing from 3 to 5 p.m.

- Monday, May 19 – Father Duenas Memorial School Phoenix Center

Open house from 5 to 7 p.m.
Public Hearing from 7 to 9 p.m.

- Tuesday, May 20 – Gymnasium, Naval Base Guam, Santa Rita Annex, Building 4177 (former McCool School)

Open House from 5 to 7 p.m.
Public Hearing from 7 to 9 p.m.

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