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Spa Hotel Preservation Update

Yesterday afternoon President Chris Menrad, Advocacy Chair Peter Moruzzi and Executive Director Nickie McLaughlin had a productive discussion with representatives of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians regarding the announced demolition of the historic 1959-1964 Spa Hotel. In addition to PS ModCom, there were representatives from the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation and the Palm Springs Historical Society. Representing the Tribe were Chief Planning/Development Officer Tom Davis and the Vice Chairman of the Tribal Council Larry N. Olinger.

Following introductions we discussed the importance of the Spa Hotel in the architectural history of Palm Springs and why we believed that it was an integral part of our mid-century heritage. We then presented information as to why a restored Spa Hotel would be a tremendous asset to the Tribe as a destination natural hot springs spa/hotel for discerning high-end travelers drawn to an authentic mid-century experience. We envisioned the Spa as the Tribe's luxury anchor hotel with its large "legacy" rooms and generous balconies in a garden setting. As an example we pointed to the highly successful Valley Ho in Scottsdale, a 1956 ultra-modern hotel that was fully restored - and a new tower added - in 2004, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



We particularly emphasized the potential 20% federal tax credit available for restoration of the property with the realistic expectation that the California Legislature will be approving an additional 20-25% tax credit for such a project in the near future. A condition for receiving these valuable tax credits would be having the property listed on the National Register, which PSPF volunteered to write on the Tribe's behalf.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Olinger clearly stated that final decisions have not been made by the Tribe regarding the property and that they are open to considering our ideas. As a result, PS ModCom committed to quickly providing the Tribe with detailed information regarding preservation tax credits and specific hotel



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management firms, architects, developers, and contractors who specialize in turning historic hotels into destination properties targeting a high-end demographic.

Of course, we are fully aware that the Tribe could demolish the hotel at any time and no commitments have been made to save the building from destruction. Nonetheless, all felt that this was a good start in our dialogue and that the unexpected attendance of Vice Chairman Olinger - a key decision maker in the five-member Tribal Council - gave our discussion added weight.



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To view some magnificent vintage photographs of the Spa Hotel photographed by Julius Shulman, courtesy of the Getty Research Institute [click here](#).

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