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# Tahquitz

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The process of determining Class I designation can be lengthy.

"The process can take several months to several years," said Gary Johns, who chairs the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board. The property review process begins with the Historic Site Preservation Board and continues on to the City Council, which approves or denies the "designation."

Some of the most recent Class I designated properties include the Town & Desert Apartments and Pompeii de las Palmas neighborhood.

The last significant commercial building to receive Class I Historic Site designation was J.W. Robinson's — now known as The Alley Department store on South Palm Canyon Drive.

There are three other properties in process for historic designation: Sandcliff Garden Apart-

# The Desert Sun

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2015

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## Tahquitz Plaza up for Class I Historic label

By Skip Descant

The Desert Sun

Tahquitz Plaza has been nominated to become Palm Springs' next Class I Historic Site, the highest level of historic preservation protection the city can drap over a building.

The nomination — a 50-page document prepared by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation and filed with City Hall on Monday — may be the preservation community's last Hail Mary

Pass to save the set of office buildings from demolition.

Nexus Development, the owner of the four-building site designed by local architect Hugh Kaptur, has been issued a permit to demolish the buildings. However, a stay has been placed on the permit due to an appeal filed on behalf of the Palm Springs Modern Committee, a local preservation group.

That appeal will be heard by the Building Code Appeals Board at a date to be determined, said Doug Holland,

who serves as city attorney for Palm Springs.

The nomination for Class I Historic Site status is the latest effort to not only possibly delay demolition, but protect the building site from future demolition proposals.

Tahquitz Plaza — built between 1974 and 1977 on Tahquitz Canyon Way, across the street from the Regal Cinema and just west of the Renaissance

Please see TAHQUITZ, 9A

ments, Orbit In Hotel and the Morse Residence (Joan and Gary Gand home.)

The fate of Tahquitz Plaza has been up in the air since Nexus Development came forward with a proposal to construct a 91-unit mixed-use development known as Aberdeen on the site.

The project failed to gain approval from both the Palm Springs Architectural Advisory Committee and the Palm Springs Planning Commission. The company appealed that decision to the City Council, which has not yet ruled on the project.

On Thursday, Nexus formerly pulled the Aberdeen project from consideration for city approval.

The recent chatter surrounding Aberdeen also

focused on business ties between Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet and Richard Meaney, who serves as a principal with Nexus, and threats from the Palm Springs International Film Festival to sue the city if the project is approved.

Organizers of the film festival are concerned about losing parking by the convention center in an area with more than 400 parking spaces known as the Prairie Schooler lot.

Pougnet reported in financial disclosure documents that he worked for a company called Union Abbey in 2013 and 2014, earning more than \$100,000 a year. Meaney formed Union Abbey in 2004 but neither he nor Pougnet have offered details about what the com-

pany does.

Pougnet has said he would not participate in the Aberdeen vote.

Pougnet has acknowledged he mistakenly voted for a Meaney-backed project in December when the City Council approved the sale of the Casa del Camino property on North Palm Canyon Drive. The city last week rescinded that sale offer.

On May 1, after The Desert Sun asked Meaney about more than \$47,000 Union Abbey owed the state for late income tax payments, Pougnet announced he had ended his job with the firm.

Skip Descant is The Desert Sun's tourism reporter. He can be reached at Skip.Descant@DesertSun.com and on Twitter @TDSkip

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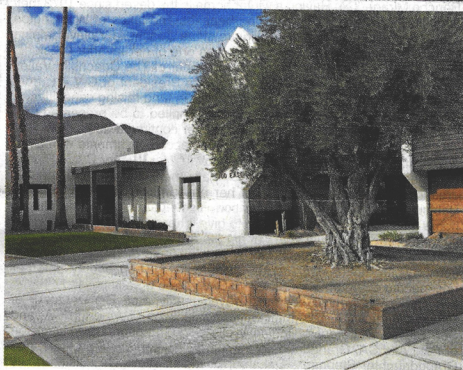
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SKIP DESCANT/THE DESERT SUN

Palm Springs preservationists are trying to save the four office buildings on Tahquitz Canyon Way that developers would like to demolish for the Aberdeen project. The complex, known as Tahquitz Plaza and built between 1974 and 1977, was designed by well-known Palm Springs architect Hugh Kaptur.

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