County's landmarks panel tries to pinpoint its legal limits

By Herb Belanger
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Because of the confusion that developed while the County's Landmarks Commission was in session, the old Moroch House in Highline, a member of the prosecutor's staff will sit in on future meetings.

The commission has been operating only a year, but had difficulty determining its legal status. The Moroch House is its first "case."

Krist Lund, the county's historic preservation officer, said the commission has been unable to determine if a landmark designation is required, or whether the house is already an historic landmark.

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County Councilman Paul Bar- dous, whose district includes the Moroch House, has permitted the commission to comment on the propriety of reconsidering the site for landmark designation.

At a February meeting, the commission was unable to make a decision on the status of the property.

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But during an earlier meeting on the James W. Cline residence next to the courthouse, the chairman recommended that the commission consider that property a landmark. The commission agreed.

In this case, the commission was unable to make a decision on the status of the property.

Uneasy over the stipulation, another commission member, Dr. James Warren asked, "Can we string it in like that?"

Lund informed him that the commission was setting up the decision "clearly allows us to reconsider."

"I don't see a very clear decision," Warren said. "It's not a either (county) landmark or not. There's no 16 in between. There should be no strings on it."

Warren was the only councilman to vote against the decision. He argued that the decision would "put the landowner in a bad situation."

"We say it's not a county landmark, but you don't dare do anything to it until we decide."

Skolnik later withdrew his motion and introduced a conditional phrase. This time, it