

HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

June 6, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Waye Mason, Acting Chair
Mr. Nelson Brison
Ms. Emma Sampson
Ms. Sarah Levy
Mr. Richard White
Ms. Deborah Larter
Mr. David Houlihan
Ms. Monica MacDonald
Councillor David Hendsbee

REGRETS: Mr. Stephen Terauds, Chair
Mr. Marcel Parsons

STAFF: Mr. Seamus McGreal, Heritage Planner
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Mason, Acting Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Ms. Sampson, seconded by Mr. Houlihan that the minutes of April 12, 2013, April 24, 2013 and May 22, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

MOVED by Ms. Larter, seconded by Mr. Houlihan that the agenda be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES: None

5. DEFERRED BUSINESS: None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence: None

6.2 Petitions: None

6.3 Presentations: None

6.4 Updates from HAC Members _ HRM Committees/HAC Sub-committees:
None

At 2:02 p.m. Ms. MacDonald entered the meeting.

7. REPORTS:

7.1 Case H00373: Substantial Alteration to 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove (Stella Maris Church), a registered municipal heritage property

A staff report dated May 1, 2013 was submitted.

Correspondence was submitted from:

- Phil Pacey, Chair, HRM Committee, Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, dated May 21, 2013
- Alan and Linda Ruffman, Halifax, dated May 22, 2013.

Mr. Seamus McGreal, Heritage Planner provided the staff presentation on the application for a substantial alteration to 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove, a registered municipal heritage property. Mr. McGreal began his remarks by reviewing the history of the property, highlighting the following points:

- Built circa 1846 as a place of worship for the Catholic population of several local communities, and the Fort York Redoubt military site.
- 1976 conservation initiative lead by local community members restored the church to its c. 1900 condition while preserving all original fittings.
- Perched on a high elevation of land, significant community landmark.
- Contributes to the heritage character of the Fergusons Cove community, York Redoubt National Historic Site and Halifax Harbour.
- Excellent example of an Elizabethan or country Romanesque church.
- Unique in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Mr. McGreal noted the character-defining elements relating to the architectural significance of the Stella Maris Church. With respect to the proposed application Mr. McGreal advised of the following:

- It involves changes to all four sides of the heritage building.
- Two additions will be constructed at the front and harbour-side of the building, both with rooftop patios.
- A second floor level will be added within the interior of the existing building.
- A sliding glass door will be installed on the side of the building facing the harbour.
- Most of the framed openings will be preserved. Many historic windows will be removed or converted from wood to vinyl. A parking area and swimming pool will be installed in the front yard between the church building and Fergusons Cove Road, behind a buffer of trees.

Mr. McGreal pointed out that the church building ceased its religious institutional use in 1993 after almost 150 years of service and the building has been vacant for the past 20 years, which has resulted in structural deterioration. He added that the proposed new use is substantially different from the historic use but a significant improvement over its current vacant status, and the new use of the building is an opportunity to restore the structural integrity of the building while maintaining a number of character defining elements.

Mr. McGreal elaborated in further detail on the proposed alterations. He advised that the top half of the harbour-side tower was inspected by an HRM Building Official and determined to be in poor structural condition. It has been estimated that it would cost \$10,000 to stabilize the tower. He added that the property owner will make every effort to preserve the harbour-side tower in its entirety; however, the property owner would like the option of removing the top half of the tower if it is deemed unsafe by a structural engineer and becomes an insurance liability. Therefore, to provide this option, this proposal must be understood to include the preservation of one tower in its entirety and only half of the harbour-side tower.

In concluding his remarks, Mr. McGreal advised that the proposed residential use and Bed & Breakfast operation would be a significant improvement over the current vacant status of the former Stella Maris Church, adding that the building has not found a suitable community facility use in twenty years. He noted that many character defining elements will be preserved, the proposed additions will be differentiated from the old and compatible with the massing, size and scale of the heritage building, and that they will be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.

The Chair advised that previously, the applicant had made a request to speak on this matter. He asked if there was consensus from the Committee to hear the applicant. The Committee agreed to allow the applicant to speak on this matter, and the Chair invited Ms. Eva Foster to address the Committee at this time.

Ms. Eva Foster, the applicant, addressed the Committee and explained that the design of the proposal has been driven by the structure of the building, and to ensure better heat distribution and energy conservation. Ms. Foster pointed out that the amount of time the building has been vacant has resulted in significant deterioration and she felt it would have been destroyed if it had been left vacant for much longer. She added that she and her husband want to make this their home and by making it into a Bed and Breakfast operation it will enable them to make a living and help offset the restoration expenses.

Mr. Tom Foster, the applicant, provided photographs illustrating the structural deterioration and rot of the building and advised of the work that has been done to date to try and preserve as much of the structure as possible.

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Mr. Brison that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommends Halifax Regional Council approve the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church as outlined in Attachments A through E of the May 1, 2013 staff report.

Councillor Hendsbee advised that he was very supportive of the application. He pointed out that given the state of the building, it is surprising that it can be saved at all, and he applauds the efforts of the property owners. Councillor Hendsbee added that he hoped that both towers could be maintained.

Ms. MacDonald advised that she felt the changes were not considered in the spirit of renovating a heritage use. She added that she realizes there has been structural deterioration but that she feels the building can be renovated without any changes to the heritage defining characteristics.

Mr. White noted that the windows are proposed to be a mix of PVC and wood and he suggested that it should be one or the other. He expressed concern about the possibility of one of the towers being altered and the impact on the symmetry of the building. Mr. White also noted that it was a landmark building and there needs to be a more careful approach.

Mr. Houlihan advised that he felt that the tower should be saved.

A discussion ensued with staff responding to questions.

In response to a question of clarification on the towers, Mr. McGreal explained that if the staff recommendation were approved, it would give the property owner the option of taking down the top half of the (harbourside) tower. He added that an HRM Building Official inspected the tower and advised that it was very unstable.

In response to a question on the process, Mr. McGreal explained that whether the Committee recommends approval or refusal, the application will go to Regional Council and Council will make a final decision. He added that if Council did not approve it, the applicants can wait three years, after which they can proceed with their plans. He noted that if they wanted to demolish the building they would have to apply for a demolition permit.

In response to a question, Mr. McGreal advised that any plan for subdividing is not part of this application, and that if the property owners wanted to do this in the future, they would have to come back through the Heritage Property program.

Following discussion, the Chair noted that there were concerns about the application and some indication of a desire to amend the motion. He suggested that the Committee take a brief recess to give this some thought.

The meeting recessed at 2:34 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 2:39 p.m.

Ms. MacDonald advised that she would prefer to have an architect review the proposal, feeling that an architect would be more sensitive to the Committee's guidelines and would have ideas to maintain a good balance of new and old and repair versus replacement that would be acceptable to the Committee.

Mr. White also indicated he had many concerns with the proposal, and suggested that there were other ways of making the building more acceptable.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

A discussion ensued and the following motion was presented:

MOVED by Ms. Sampson, seconded by Ms. MacDonald that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommends that Regional Council refuse the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church as outlined in the May 1, 2013 staff report as the Building Conservation Standards, in the Committee's opinion, would not be met. In particular for example:

- **Building Conservation Standard 2 in regard to wood windows, symmetry of the building, and the retention of the harbourside tower;**
- **Building Conservation Standard 9, e.g. the relationship of the extension to the original structure;**
- **Building Conservation Standard 6 which states that deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8. ADDED ITEMS

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – June 26, 2013

Councillor Hendsbee provided his regrets for this meeting, noting that there were school graduation ceremonies in his district during this time.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant