



**HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 23, 2015**

PRESENT: Mr. Jason Cooke, Vice Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Mr. Brent Ronayne
Ms. Janet Morris
Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc
Ms. Pascale van der Leest
Mr. Scott Smith
Mr. Brian Cuthbertson
Ms. Emma Sampson, Chair
Ms. Shiva Nourpanah

REGRETS: Ms. Aurora Camaño
Councillor Brad Johns

STAFF: Ms. Maggie Holm, Heritage Planner
Ms. Erin McIntyre, Heritage Planner
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Cathy Collett, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Heritage Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/hac/Agendas.php>

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. and adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

The Chair welcomed the Committee's new member, Mr. Brian Cuthbertson.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 24, 2015

MOVED by Councillor David Hendsbee, seconded by Mr. Brent Ronayne, that the minutes of June 23, 2015 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

Ms. van der Leest advised that she would like to provide an update from the Old South Suburb Subcommittee, to which the Committee agreed.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS - NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 Case H00406: Substantial Alteration to St. David's Church, 1544 Grafton Street, Halifax, a Municipally Registered Heritage Property

The following was before the Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated September 4, 2015.
- Updated elevation drawings of the proposed development were circulated.

Ms. Maggie Holm, Heritage Planner, gave a presentation regarding Case H00406. She began by announcing that since the staff report was written there have been minor changes to the drawings, which have been circulated to the Committee.

As Ms. Holm explained, the proposed redevelopment will see the removal of the Church Hall on Brunswick Street and the addition of a seven story mixed-use building. Also included is a request to separate each lot, which will affect the cemetery. The developer has contacted staff at the Provincial Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and has secured a Heritage Research Permit. Ms. Holm noted that no alterations would be done to St. David's Church.

Ms. Holm outlined the heritage value of the property, commenting that the building is Gothic in style, featuring gables, buttresses, a steeply pitched roof, and large Gothic windows. She also noted that there is a small cemetery under the church and the Methodist burying grounds beside the church.

Addressing the approval process, Ms. Holm reviewed the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada as they apply to places holding the value of heritage defining elements. She commented that the site plan will go to the Design Review Committee, and that the Heritage Advisory Committee need only address the subject of heritage value.

Explaining that staff conducted a detailed evaluation of the development proposal using Standards 1, 3, 6, and 11 of the identified Standards and Guidelines, Ms. Holm informed the Committee that the staff recommendation is to approve the proposal for alteration.

Ms. Holm responded to questions from the Committee:

Mr. Scott Smith requested clarification regarding the Church's position on the removal of the burial grounds. Ms. Holm responded that the Church was in agreement with the development proposal.

Ms. Holm led the Committee through a review of the minor changes to the drawings, noting the removal of stairs at a doorway from the original drawing (east elevation).

Councillor David Hendsbee noted discrepancies between the 3D rendering and the elevation drawings. Ms. Holm informed the Committee that the authoritative text was the drawings.

The Committee reviewed A11, a new drawing, and A12, which demonstrates a slight change in window configuration.

Mr. Cuthbertson questioned if the land would revert back to the church after a certain amount of time. Staff explained that it is a 75 year land lease, after which ownership reverts back to the church.

MOVED by Mr. Jason Cooke , seconded by Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council approve the substantial alteration to St. David's Church, 1544 Grafton Street, Halifax, including the updated drawings circulated at the September 23, Heritage Advisory Committee Meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.2 Case H00408: Substantial Alteration to Benjamin Wier House, 1459 Hollis Street, Halifax, a Municipally Registered Heritage Property

The following was before the Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated September 15, 2015.

Ms. Erin McIntyre presented Case H00408, which addresses a substantial alteration to the Benjamin Wier House, a municipally and provincially registered Heritage Property.

Ms. McIntyre outlined the heritage value of the property, noting its Italian Style Palladian architecture and the series of notable early occupants that resided there. Its character defining elements include a Romeo and Juliet balcony, a two and a half story form, truncated gabled roof, central windows, two dormers, and Palladian style windows.

As Ms. McIntyre explained, the proposed six-storey addition would include parking, storage, commercial units and residential units. The requested alterations consist of the removal of the rear two-storey addition and the associated Palladian style windows, removal of the rear Juliet balcony, removal of two rear dormers, alteration/removal of the rear eaves, and alternation to the overall form of the building.

Reviewing the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, Ms. McIntyre explained that staff have determined that the majority of heritage value and character-defining elements are in the front of the building and the proposed alterations would provide a viable use to better guarantee the long-term existence of the historic building.

Ms. McIntyre responded to questions of clarification from Committee members.

Mr. Jason Cooke questioned if there is something specific in the proposed alterations that would help sustain the Benjamin Wier house, or if other forms of attachment and alterations might serve the same purpose.

Ms. McIntyre responded that, in consultation with the applicant, this is the design that allows them to move forward.

Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc suggested that the intrusive design may be necessary to connect the existing building and the proposed attachment from the inside, commenting that 3D renderings are helpful and may make the addition look less intrusive.

Ms. Shiva Nourpanah commented that she does not see the addition as aesthetically pleasing or holistic.

Committee members discussed the proposed cantilever in regards to whether it added or detracted from the aesthetic value of the addition and a consensus was not reached.

Councillor David Hendsbee questioned if snow and ice on the cantilever would cause damage to the original structure and asked if there were any drawings or floor plans of how the buildings merge together.

The Committee reviewed the floor plans provided by Ms. McIntyre.

Mr. Scott Smith asked if the Committee would like to hear from Ms. Elizabeth Pacey, a member of the public in attendance at the meeting. The Committee agreed.

Ms. Elizabeth Pacey, speaking on behalf of Heritage Trust, suggested that if a proposal fails a specific standard of the Standards and Guidelines, then the proposal itself should fail. Speaking specifically to the proposal for the Benjamin Wier house, Ms. Pacey commented that she believes it should fail because it fails a number of the important standards and poses a substantial alteration caused by the removal of several dormers, a balcony, and the Victorian "L" shape. Ms. Pacey stated that the Benjamin Wier house is a wonderful, freestanding building and something more than twice its size attached and cantilevering over is not a good design. She explained that when the Provincial Council looked at the proposal, they did not go through the standards the way Municipal Committee does, and that reviewing adherence to the standards is crucial to the decision making process. She suggested that the proposed substantial alteration would ruin the impression of the rare Italianate Villa and that there are not very many mid-Victorian buildings left. Ms. Pacey concluded that this addition would be damaging and sets a bad precedent for the Old South Suburb.

MOVED by Mr. Jason Cooke, seconded by Ms. van der Leest that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council approve the substantial alteration to Benjamin Wier House, 1549 Hollis Street, Halifax.

Councillor Hendsbee commented that he would support the application.

Mr. Cooke commented that he will not support it and that while he respectfully disagrees with Ms. Pacey's criteria that failing one standard should necessarily fail the proposal, the proposal at hand fails a number of standards and he is concerned for what this will mean for the existing property.

Ms. van der Leest addressed the difference between substantial heritage value and de facto heritage based on age. She commented that the Benjamin Weir House has substantial heritage value on the front, but she is not sure if the L shape is part of this substantial value. She suggested that the worst examples of additions to heritage buildings are the ones that attempt to mimic the heritage features and come across as fake. She commented that she wants to be sure that the addition is respectful and, while it does not need to imitate the original structure, should complement its features in a modern style

Ms. Nourpanah commented that it seems unusual to separate the front and back of a building and that the building should be considered as a whole.

Mr. Brent Ronayne commented that any addition will affect the back of the building and that the depth of the cantilever might be exaggerated in the images.

Ms. Janet Morris commented that she has many concerns with the proposal and believes that it contravenes the standards and guidelines, especially standard 11. She suggested that no attempt has been made to keep it compatible with and subordinate to the original structure. Ms. Morris expressed concern that the section cantilevering over the heritage building might be dangerous because of snow and ice loads and explained that, as the building is across the street from Government House, which receives many visitors from other countries, it is worth noting that the proposal would not be considered an acceptable treatment of a heritage building by international standards.

Mr. LeBlanc expressed agreement that the proposed addition does not take visual cues from the house itself, commenting that just because it is taller, however, it does not mean it is not subordinate to the original structure. He indicated that he would probably support it.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED by a tied vote (5 for/5 against)

The Committee reviewed the alternate motion included in the staff report.

Ms. Maggie Holm, Heritage Planner, explained to the Committee that the best motion to Council is a robust, full motion.

Ms. van der Leest questioned if the Committee members who voted against the proposal did so because of the entire addition or because of specific aspects.

The Chair commented that Council should hear both arguments from the Committee, and thus a balanced motion is required to represent the divided position of the Committee on the matter.

Mr. Cooke commented that, in terms of standard 3, no business case was made that the work done to the back was a minimal intervention; in terms of standard 11, compatibility is not considered and there is too much intervention; and in terms of standard 12, the new addition does not leave the integrity of the original structure intact.

Mr. Smith questioned if the developer could re-approach this issue with a different plan, to which Ms. McIntyre replied in the affirmative.

Ms. van der Leest explained that she voted in favour of the proposal because, for a modern building, taking into consideration the future development of this area, the glass façade is quite an effective contrast. She commented that she was pleased with the amount of the building that is conserved in the proposal, and considers the addition to be a pretty good balance overall. Mr. LeBlanc concurred with this comment.

Ms. van der Leest continued to comment that she does think that the cantilever might be a problem because of ice and snow, and that even though she voted in favour of the proposal, she is concerned about this issue.

The Committee discussed the best way to proceed with the matter.

Ms. Janet Morris commented that nowhere in the proposal does she see a statement that the addition will make it feasible to preserve the heritage building.

Ms. MacIntyre commented that additions are one way of supporting heritage buildings and that there is no way to determine if all the features of the proposed addition are needed for conservation as opposed to being desired by the developer.

The Chair reviewed the options for the Committee and the Committee decided to put the following motion on the floor.

MOVED by Ms. Nourpanah, seconded by Ms. Janet Morris that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommends that Council refuse the proposed substantial alteration to the Benjamin Wier House as outlined in the report dated September 15, 2015, as it does not conform with a substantial number of the standards and guidelines and presented in The Standards and Guidelines for Historic Places in Canada (2nd edition), specifically standards 3, 11, and 12.

Ms. Edmonds explained that if there was a tie again, an information report would be provided to Council outlining the concerns of the Committee.

MOTION PUT DEFEATED. (5 for/5 against)

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Update, Old South Suburb – Ms. Pascale van der Leest

Ms. van der Leest commented that the process is moving quickly. The Committee is seeking the input of key special interest groups and has already met with the public several times. The Stakeholder Steering Committee meetings are open to the public.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – October 28, 2015

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

Cathy Collett
Legislative Support