

**HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Public Information Meeting  
June 14, 2006  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

Ms. Maggie Holm, Heritage Planner  
Mr. Bill Plaskett, Heritage Planner  
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER / OPENING REMARKS / PURPOSE OF MEETING**

Ms. Maggie Holm, HRM Heritage Planner, called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. and reviewed the rules and order of business of the public information meeting.

Ms. Holm advised that this matter was before the Heritage Advisory Committee on June 5, 2006, and the Committee recommended that Regional Council refuse the demolition permit. She commented that there are parallel processes associated with this property, due to the dual Provincial and Municipal registration of the property. She advised that only the Municipal registration will be discussed this evening, as there are no Provincial Heritage representatives present.

Mr. Bill Plaskett, HRM Heritage Planner, provided an overview of the staff report dated April 25, 2006, noting the following:

- C Staff are following procedure adopted in 1999, as set out in *Demolition of Municipally Registered Heritage Properties: A Procedure for Public Participation*,
- C Municipal Planning Strategy Policy 6.8 provides an incentive to heritage property owners by allowing additional uses and/or alterations which are permitted by zoning in an as-of-right situation, to avoid demolition of heritage properties,
- C Due to the large size of the lot (20,000 sq. ft.) and minimum frontage requirements (40 feet), staff believe there are many options under Policy 6.8 for other allowable uses for the property, such as subdivision and construction by development agreement of a sympathetically designed, modestly scaled, additional residential unit at the rear of the property,
- C Although there is no similar Provincial policy, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage has indicated that the Provincial Heritage Advisory Council would be "sympathetic to an application for an alternative reuse of the property",
- C The property owner offered to donate the structure to HRM, provided that it be removed from the property within three months, however, HRM has a surplus of properties which it is working to divest and does not have a use for the property,
- C Comments from this public information meeting will be forwarded to Regional Council, along with the Heritage Advisory Committee's recommendation to refuse the demolition permit.

**2. HERITAGE CASE H00177 - APPLICATION TO DEMOLISH 6454 COBURG ROAD, HALIFAX (COBURG COTTAGE), A MUNICIPALLY AND PROVINCIALY REGISTERED HERITAGE PROPERTY**

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C A Proposal Fact Sheet was distributed to attendees.

**2.1 Comments by the property owner**

Mr. Blake Houser, property owner, addressed those present. Mr. Houser advised that he is a co-owner of the property and is present at this meeting as a representative of the family. He commented that the family wish to sell the property at fair and full market value, which he believes they will not be able to do with the dual Provincial and Municipal Heritage designations.

**2.2 Presentations/questions/comments by members of the public**

**Mr. Alan Ruffman, Halifax**

Mr. Ruffman addressed those present, noting the following:

- C He was a member of the Provincial Heritage Advisory Council at the time the request for the deregistration of this property was refused,
- C A presentation was made to the Provincial Committee by a potential purchaser of the property regarding a possible restoration and addition,
- C No plans were put forward by the property owner,
- C MPS Policy 6.8 allows many options for the property, including subdivision of the lot to allow the addition of a modern development, for which there is a precedent with other heritage properties,
- C He recommends that this building not be considered for demolition.

**Ms. Megan Blanchard, Halifax**

At the request of Ms. Blanchard, Mr. Plaskett clarified that when this matter goes before Regional Council, Councillors will have the April 25, 2006 staff report, the minutes from this public information meeting, and staff will give a presentation on the property.

Ms. Blanchard commented on the different qualities and characteristics of neighbourhoods being lost through subdivision of lots. She inquired what was being done in terms of preservation of property, as opposed to preservation of buildings, to which Mr. Plaskett advised that there is the avenue of the establishment of a Heritage District with regard to neighbourhoods. Ms. Holm commented that each case is different in consideration of the siting of the lot. She noted that in this case, the lot is large enough and the building is situated in a way that would allow subdivision without negatively affecting the current building.

**Mr. Alan Parish, Halifax**

Mr. Parish addressed those present, noting the following:

- C He is an adjacent property owner to the property in question,
- C He is also the President of the Heritage Trust Society of Nova Scotia,
- C He moved to the neighbourhood in 1992, and knew Mr. Housser's parents, who voluntarily registered the property with the dual heritage designation,
- C He believes that if Mr. Housser lowers the asking price for the property, or undertakes updated standards to the building, he will be able to sell at a fair market value,
- C He commented that the market price of the property would be less if the building were demolished and the property subdivided, after consideration of the cost of demolition and removal of demolition debris,
- C He noted that demolition of what he considers to be one of the most important buildings in Halifax an extreme step.

Mr. Parish inquired as to why Mr. Housser is of the opinion that he cannot sell the property for fair market value with the dual heritage designations. Mr. Stephen Vail addressed those present on behalf of Mr. Housser, noting that the owners had three assessments made of the property by three different real estate agents. Mr. Vail commented that Mr. Housser's father, who registered the property, has passed on, and the family is no longer able to financially maintain the property.

**Ms. Beverly Miller, Halifax**

Ms. Miller commented that value is determined by what someone will pay. She noted that if this demolition were approved, it could set a dangerous precedent for future cases of property owners applying to demolish heritage properties that are slow to sell. Ms. Miller indicated that she believes "fair market value" is not a definite enough term to be used in this case as a defence for the demolition.

Mr. Housser commented that "higher and best use" has not been addressed throughout this discussion.

Mr. Vail commented that it is unfortunate that not everyone at this meeting has a copy of the staff report. He indicated an error on page five of the report under Conclusions, noting that the

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request for Provincial deregistration was refused, not a request for demolition. Ms. Holm and Mr. Plaskett thanked Mr. Vail for pointing out this error.

Mr. Alan Ruffman commented that “highest and best use” depends on an interplay of many different factors. He noted that the term is mainly used by property appraisers and is inappropriate in this case given the dual heritage designations of this building.

Mr. Housser commented that the staff report indicates that staff are encouraging a developer to look at the site for subdivision and potential development. Ms. Holm clarified that staff have indicated that there are a number of options available for the property, which could, done sympathetically, be appropriate for the building. She further clarified that staff are not supporting any one option in particular.

**Mr. Tom Creighton, Halifax**

Mr. Creighton advised that he is the Chair of the Heritage Advisory Committee. He commented that MPS Policy 6.8 is intended to add to the building, and demolition is not part of that avenue. Mr. Creighton indicated that as a private citizen apart from the Heritage Advisory Committee, he cannot understand the logic of wanting to demolish an 1816 constructed heritage property.

Ms. Miller commented that she believes the highest and best value of the property is with the original building remaining, not as two building lots.

Mr. Parish inquired of Mr. Housser what plans he has for the property if the building were demolished. Mr. Housser indicated he did not wish to comment.

**Mr. Phil Pacey, Halifax**

At the request of Mr. Pacey, Mr. Plaskett commented on the condition of the building, noting that the building inspectors assessment revealed that there were various structural issues that are not unreasonable to fix, including bowed floors, a post that had been shifted, and separations at one of the additions. He further commented that Mr. Miller, an architect, was also in attendance at the time of the inspection. Ms. Holm noted that the building inspector’s assessment was a visual, non-intrusive inspection.

At the request of Mr. Pacey, Mr. Housser advised that the tax assessment value of the home is over \$650,000, which creates a considerable tax burden.

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At the request of Mr. Vale, Mr. Plaskett read the conclusion of the Structural Integrity Study Report prepared by Mr. Gerald Donahoe, Building Inspector, (Attachment C to the April 25, 2006 staff report) which reads "Although the building appears straight and true from the exterior there are very significant structural issues internally that must be addressed. As I initially stated the inspection was of a non intrusive nature therefore one can only speculate causes of structural problems."

**Ms. Janet Morris, Halifax**

Ms. Morris inquired of the approximate cost to remedy the structural issues of the building. Ms. Holm indicated that a full structural assessment would have to be undertaken by a structural engineer to determine the cost to remedy the structural issues.

**3. CLOSING COMMENTS**

Ms. Holm and Mr. Plaskett thanked everyone for attending and for their comments, which will be forwarded to Regional Council. Ms. Holm indicated that her contact information is at the bottom of the Proposal Fact Sheet distributed earlier in the meeting, if any questions or comments arise after the meeting. She further noted that the report of April 25, 2006 is available online, through the Municipal Clerk's Office and the Heritage Office.

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Jennifer Weagle  
Legislative Assistant