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Heritage Advisory Committee
April 23, 2008

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY:



Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

DATE: March 31, 2008

SUBJECT: **Case H00216: Substantial alteration to St. James Church, 47 Old Taylor Head Road, Spry Bay**

ORIGIN

An application by the Friends of St. James United Church Heritage Society requesting approval to construct a new wheelchair ramp and front stairs for the former St. James United Church.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee approve the alterations as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

Mr. Glenn Miller, with the of the Friends of St. James United Church Heritage Society, has made an application to re-construct the front stairs and incorporate a wheelchair ramp on a municipally registered heritage building located at 47 Old Taylor Head Road (St. James United Church), (Map 1).

47 Old Taylor Head Road (St. James United Church) - a brief history

St. James United Church is situated on a hill, overlooking Spry Bay. The church has many associations with the sea; its rafters are made from timbers which once constituted the bowspirt of a wrecked ship called the 'Railway Queen', and the community of fishermen who built the church ensured that it would not be returned to the ocean by 'tying' the church to an outcrop of rock with a length of one inch rough iron fastened to a plate in the back of the church. The church dedication was held on January 24, 1874. The building is no longer used for religious gatherings, and is now cared for by a local group - The Friends of St. James Church.

The church is simple in its form and design. The one storey wood framed building has shingled cladding, with plain board trim along the roof, and quarter round for corner boards. The large vertically proportioned windows are wooden, 9 over 6 single hung windows. The pitched roof has a moderate overhang with returned eaves, and a simple flat roofed square tower over the front entrance. The building was registered as a municipal heritage property by the former County of Halifax on April 21, 1982.

DISCUSSION

Building Proposal

The existing front wooden stairs are deteriorated and need of replacement. The architect who prepared the drawings to replace the stairs has suggested incorporating a ramp to permit full access to the building.

The new landing and stairs will replicate the existing landing and extend 7' from the entrance of the church. The proposal includes handrails not previously found on the church, but the design is traditional with both hand and toe rails and simple balusters.

The ramp will extend 13' from the entrance and is located to the right of the stairs. The supporting posts will be covered with trimmed lattice. The entire new entry system will be painted white once it has cured.

Level Two Design Review

The addition of a wheelchair ramp is a building alteration requiring the Heritage Advisory Committee review and recommendation. While the *Building Conservation Standards for Heritage Buildings* is silent on this type of alteration, staff believe that an attempt such as this to allow full access to the building is desirable.

Building Conservation Standards

The proposal has been evaluated against the *Building Conservation Standards* (Attachment D), and staff provide the following comments:

- The use of the property will not change and the historic character of the property will not be altered. There will be no removal of historic materials or alteration to features which characterize the property.
- The property has a clearly distinguishable sense of its physical record of time, place, and use. The proposed ramp system will not create a false sense of historical development.
- Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques which characterize the property will be preserved, and will not destroy materials which characterize the property. It will be clear that the stairs and ramp system is new construction, but the design is complimentary to the heritage character of the building. The stairs and ramp could be removed in the future and the essential form and integrity of the site would remain unimpaired.

Summary

This proposal has been evaluated against the *Building Conservation Standards*, and based on staff's recommended approval, the proposal is deemed consistent with the standards. The proposed new stairs and ramp are sympathetic with the style of the building and allow the building to better meet National Building Code standards for accessibility. Based on these considerations, staff recommend approval of the proposal.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs to process this request can be accommodated within the C310 operating budget.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Heritage Advisory Committee may recommend approval of the alterations, with or without conditions, to 47 Old Taylor Head Road. This is the recommended course of action.
2. Alternatively, the Heritage Advisory Committee may recommend refusal of the proposed alterations. Should this be the chosen course of action the report will be forwarded to Regional Council for final determination. This is not the recommended course of action.


ATTACHMENTS

- Map 1: Location Map for 47 Old Taylor Head Rd
- Attachment A: Recent Photograph
- Attachment B: Front Elevation
- Attachment C: Left Side Elevation
- Attachment D: *Building Conservation Standards for Heritage Buildings in HRM*

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

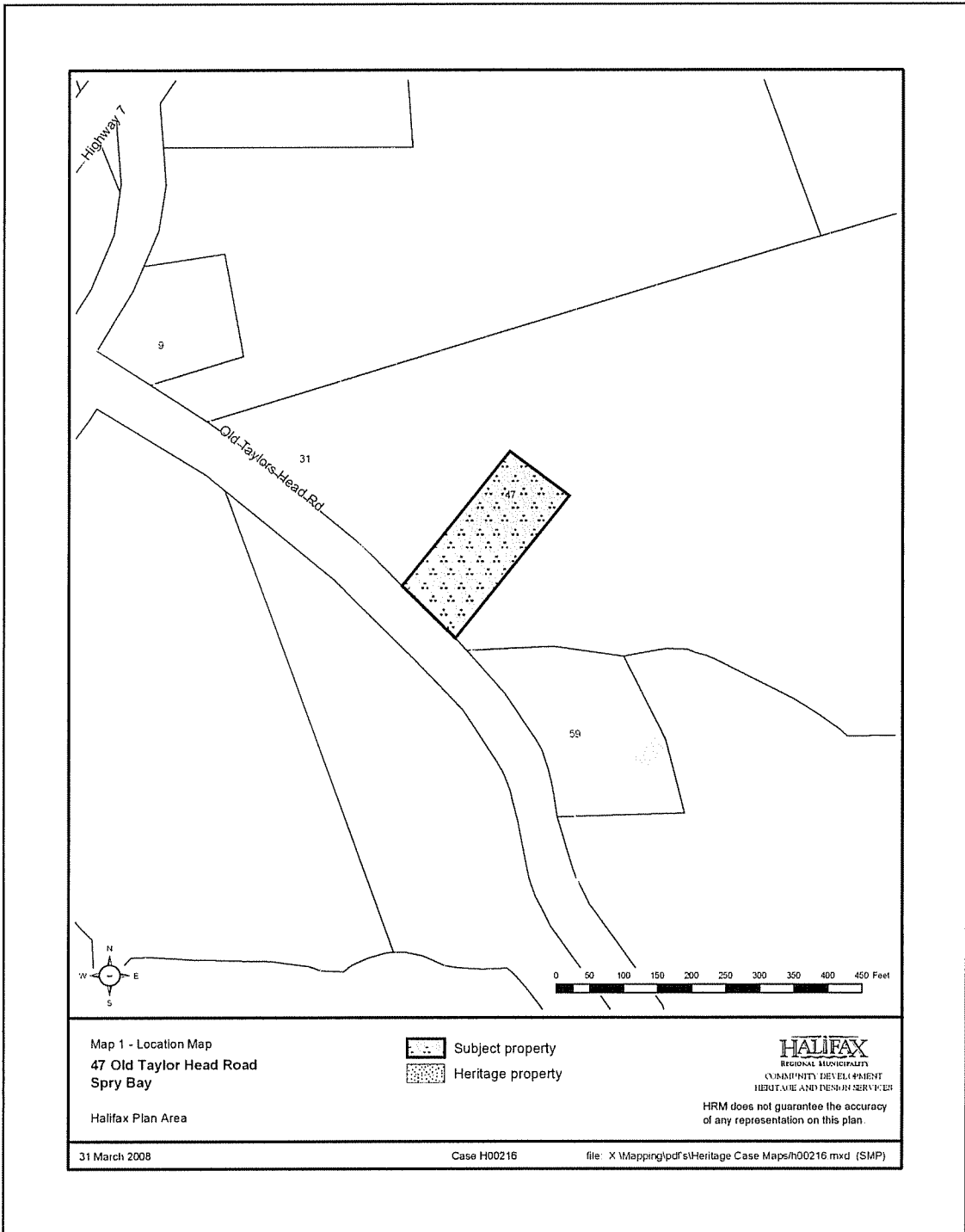
Report Prepared by : Maggie Holm, Heritage Planner: 490-4419

Report Approved by:



Austin French, Manager of Planning Services, 490-6717

Location Map



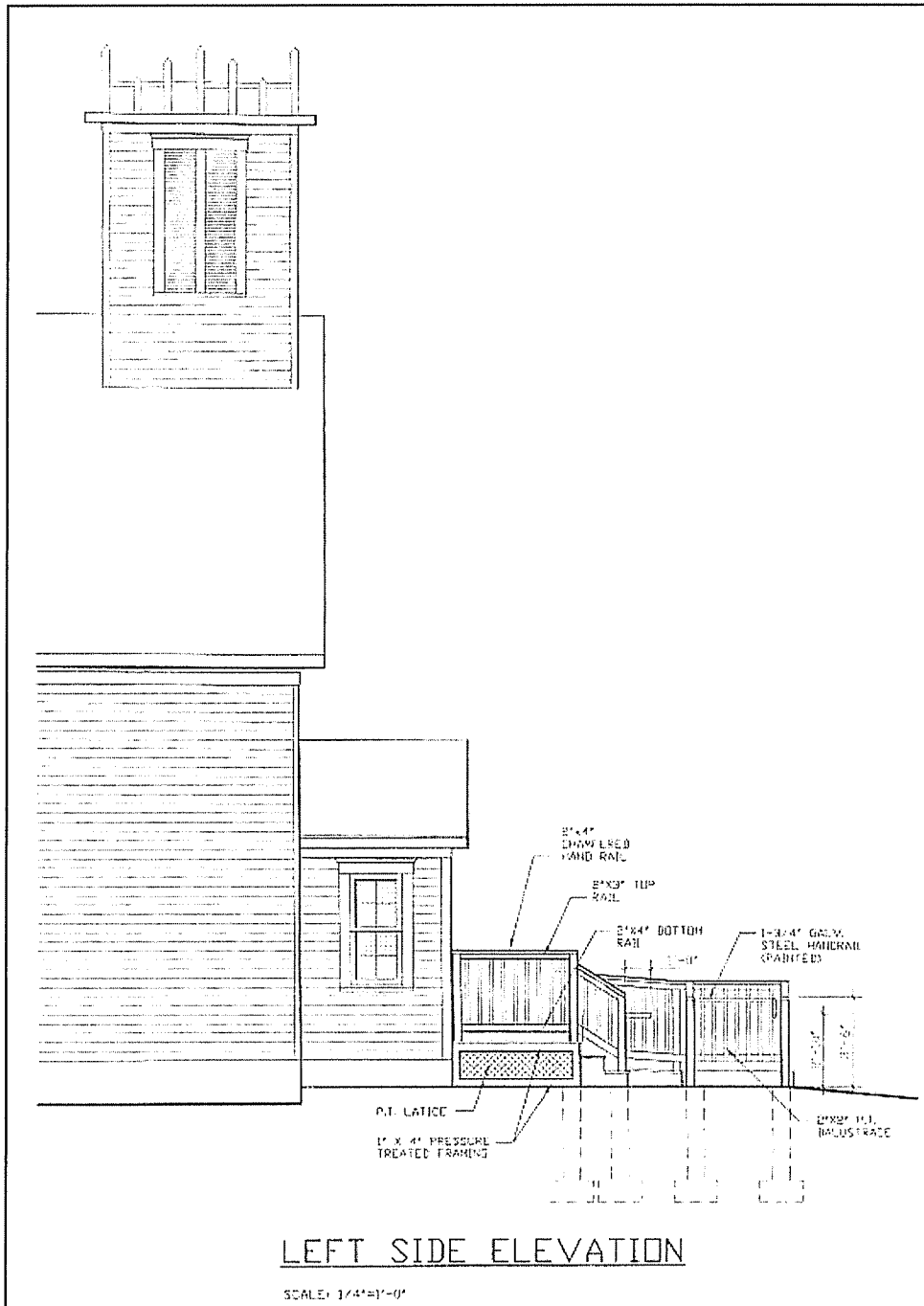
Attachment A - Photo



Attachment B: Front Elevation



Attachment C - Side Elevation



Attachment D - Building Conservation Standards for Registered Heritage Properties

The historic character of a heritage property is based on the assumption that (a) the historic materials and features and their unique craftsmanship are of primary importance, and (b) in consequence, these materials and elements are to be retained and restored to the greatest extent possible, not removed or replaced with materials and features which appear to be historic, but which are in fact new.

1. **Historic purpose and changes to characteristics, site and environment** - The property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building, its site and environment.
2. **Historic character and alteration of features and spaces** - The historic character of the property shall be retained and preserved; the removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be avoided.
3. **Sense of historical development** - Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding hypothetical features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. **Preservation of historical changes** - Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. **Preservation of distinctive features, finishes and techniques** - Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or craftsmanship that characterize the property shall be preserved.
6. **Repair of deteriorated and missing features** - Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old design in colour, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. **Surface cleaning** - The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials, shall not be used.
8. **Significant archaeological resources** - Significant archaeological resources affected by the project shall be protected and preserved. If resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. **Retention of characterizing materials** - differentiation from historic structure and compatibility of massing, size, scale and features - New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. **New additions and adjacent or related new construction** shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

The above noted standards are base on the Conservation Standards used by the United States Secretary of the Interior (36 CFR 67) (1991). They are generally in keeping with most Conservation principles, including the Venice Charter (1964).