



# ACG

Architectural Consulting Group™

July 19, 2017

City of New Bedford  
City Council  
New Bedford City Hall  
133 William St Rm 215  
Joseph P. Lopes, City Council President

Dear Councilor Lopes

RE: 24. COMMUNICATION/ DEMOLITION New Bedford Historical Commission, to City Council, re: BUILDING DEMOLITION REVIEW OF 899 PLEASANT STREET, (MAP 58/LOT 302), a Circa 1876 Carriage House – advising that “the Humphrey House and its carriage house are contributing resources within the North Bedford National Register District; the carriage house is a rare surviving outbuilding from the period in which prominent citizens built their homes just outside the village center and it also reflects the transition of the North Bedford District from an area of large estates to an area of mixed business and residential uses; because these buildings’ original purpose is now obsolete, these structures are prone particularly to neglect and demolition; the proposed reuse of this vacant property would introduce professional offices in this area of the City which the Master Plan identifies as a commercial corridor, one particularly visible from a Downtown gateway area, due to the site’s high visibility, the retention and preservation of the carriage house would provide a more attractive and historically authentic streetscape for visitors and neighboring residents; to accommodate the City’s parking requirements, the carriage house necessitates removal or relocation; the Commission encourages the applicant to pursue the initial submitted plan to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals which demonstrated the relocation of the carriage house and its adaptive reuse as a separate office space, and furthermore to consider the available option from the Planning Board to seek a Special Permit which *would allow a reduction* in the parking requirement, if according to the Ordinance, the Board “finds that the reduction is not inconsistent with public health and safety, or that the reduction promotes a public benefit.”, “in light of these findings, the New Bedford Historical Commission has determined that the structure at 899 Pleasant Street is a historically significant and a Preferably Preserved structure.”

We respectfully request that the demolition permit be granted without having to wait six months.

In contrast to the wishful thinking of the Historic Commission that “someone will restore the building” in fact, the property in question has sat vacant for many years with nobody coming up with a restoration proposal. Concerned Historic Commission members had ample time to seek out solutions that met their concerns. Our proposed restoration of the remainder of the site and main house building along with a new addition will enhance the neighborhood. It will bring job opportunities, increased taxes to the City, and more commerce to the downtown business area.

The last time the “Carriage House” was used as a place to keep a horse carriage was probably over a hundred years ago. With automobiles being introduced to the public in the late 1890’s, it is more likely that it was used more as an automobile garage than it ever was as a carriage house.

In its current condition it cannot meet any building code for habitation other than a garage. It is also suffering from rotted sills, and original floor is gone.

We guess that sometime in the late 1960’s or early 1970’s a fireplace and exterior chimney were added along with a modern panel overhead garage door. Possibly around the same time a large antenna was added to the rear of the building. For the past fifty years the building has been covered with modern asphalt roof shingles and oversized aluminum wall siding. The only historic recognizable feature on the exterior of the building is the (possibly) original cupola. There is no photographic evidence provided in the Historic Preservations decision to find that this structure is “Historically Significant”.

In fact, the entire matter of the Commission’s decision is based on a few documents organized by a local historian with no contemporary evidence from the time of construction. Since the structure has been remodeled sometime after its original construction date, without knowing when or what was done to it leads me to believe that there is a possibility that the structure may not even be as old as assumed.

We also note that there is no evidence that this is also a “rare surviving outbuilding from the period”, but rather assumptions are being made here as well. Has a study of all “rare surviving outbuildings” been prepared? How many are needed before “rare” can be used as a description?

With regards to the statement of the “developer’s original plans to relocate the building”, we agree that we originally preferred to break the lot into two parcels, and try and save the garage and rehabilitate it into an office with shared parking. The financial justification would have been met by the site having two separate lots with two separate structures. Without the ability to separate the lots on a “Form A subdivision”, there was no financial reward in trying to continue that path.

For over a year and a half this project was known to Ann Louro the agent representative for the Historic Commission at the more than 3 meetings held with City Officials and by the way actually shares an office in City Hall with the Planning Board. In our opinion if there was a grave concern over this building being demolished, actions by the Historic Commission agent during the Site Plan review hearings could have been helpful.

At no time did the Historic Commission try to intervene on behalf of this project and now it expects the developer to try to go through additional future meetings and hearings attempting to save the building at much cost of money and wasted time for the developer.

The fact that the “Commission” was quizzing us about potential design chances or uses of the remainder of the property was out of bounds as they have no legal authority to dictate or suggest additional efforts

on the part of the developer to satisfy their own personal opinions such as the new addition "seems to be too large" quoting one of the members.

The requirements that that the Planning Board Site Plan review committee made the developer go through to accommodate all the required parking, ADA compliance, landscaping, etc. along with site drainage and improvements, required by the Department of Public Infrastructure finally negated the ability to try and save the garage at all.

Since this building is not protected by any State, Federal, or even Local Preservation requirements, the delay to demolish is only costing additional money and time that could be more wisely used by the developer in proceeding with the final approved site plan by the City of New Bedford Planning Board.

We respectfully request that the Council waive the six-month delay and allow the demolition of the garage to proceed in this project.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Josefek, AIA, LEED AP, MCPPO

Agent for the project 899 Pleasant St.

Map 58/ Lot 302





PROPOSED PROJECT



GARAGE



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