

St. Catharines Heritage Permit Advisory Committee

Minutes

Thursday, December 17, 2020

Electronic Participation at 2:30 pm

Attendance:

Dr John Bacher
Dr David Bergen
John Crawley
Andrew Humeniuk
Brian Narhi, Co-Chair
Holly Washuta

Councillor Carlos Garcia

Absent:

Robert De Wolfe

Staff Liaisons:

Michael Seaman, Heritage Planner, Planning and Building Services
Tage Crooks, Planning Technician, Planning and Building Services

-
1. **Call meeting to order (Chair)**
The Co-Chair, Brian Narhi, called the meeting to order at 2:31 pm
 2. **Recognition of Traditional Territories**
Co-Chair, Brian Narhi acknowledged that the land on which the St. Catharines Heritage Permit Advisory Committee meets today is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples.
 3. **Additions/Deletions to the Agenda**

There were none.

4. **Motion to approve the Agenda**

Moved by: David Bergen (SCHPAC)

That the SCHPAC ratify and adopt the Agenda for this SCHPAC meeting held on December 17, 2020, 2020, copies having been previously distributed

5. **Motion to adopt the Minutes of the previous meeting**

Moved by: John Bacher

Seconded by: John Crawley

That the Minutes from the joint SCHPAC & SCHAC meeting of September 24, 2020, be approved.

Carried

6. **Presentations (invited guests)**

- Larisa Brodsky, Larisa Brodsky Architect Inc. Regarding Item 8.1
- Ann Tassonyi and Gerald Darcie, Owners, Regarding Item 8.1
- Leah Wallace, MA, MCIP, RPP, Heritage Consultant, Regarding Item 8.1

7. **Business arising from the Minutes**

There was none.

8. **Business**

8.1 17 Peel Street (Port Dalhousie HCD)

Owner(s): Ann Tassonyi and Gerald Darcie

Agent(s): Larisa Brodsky, Larisa Brodsky Architect. Inc.

Heritage Consultant: Leah Wallace, MA, MCIP, RPP

File No.: 20 119108 HERT

- Demolition of existing cottage (1940s) and replacement with a raised bungalow with a large deck.

Ms. Brodsky gave a PowerPoint presentation about the proposal to demolish the existing building at 17 Peel Street located in the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District.

Ms. Brodsky thanked the members of the committee for hearing the proposal. Background information was provided about the property including the context of the subject lands and deficiencies which the owners have identified with the existing building.

It was noted that the lot is located across from the owner's current property at #18 Peel Street. 17 Peel Street has a 77' x 74' lot and the profile of the land is slightly raising up which means from the top point of the land you can see the lake. The current owners of the property acquired the property as a downsizing opportunity within the same neighbourhood.

It was noted that they are aware of the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District Guidelines which apply to the property and that while the owners liked the property, they saw a number of issues with the current building that pushed them propose demolition and replacement. These included the ceiling height which is 6'-10" to 7' and there are some door heights which are 6'-4" in height. The cottage is also small at around 664 sq. ft. in size with a car port. The current house is oriented to be parallel to the street. Another issue was that there was asbestos product in the house which is mostly in the ceiling and the siding. The left side of the building has bedrooms which are raised about 2' higher than the main floor. It was noted that this added complexity when considering an addition. The car port has a low roof and the current owner's vehicle is not able to fit beneath the roof. There is no basement, just a small crawl space. According to the architect all these factors limit what the owner can do with the site in terms of achieving a useful living space.

The proposed dwelling was discussed. It was noted that there are a variety of dwellings of shapes, sizes and designs in the area and that Peel Street is a very narrow street. The proposed new house is a mid-century modern home located at 15 Wood Dale Drive in St. Catharines. It was noted that having an environmentally sustainable new home and having a flat roof like 15 Wood Dale Drive which could be used as a green roof was a goal. The owners are aiming for a net-zero energy home, and so the use of solar panels is being considered. The owners are also exploring the possibility of using a cistern for rainwater storage and setting the foundation of the house on stilts to encourage rainwater absorption. The architect noted that the owners wish to explore the retention of the existing pine and cedar trees on the property and the use of a stilt foundation will facilitate this. The owners have also recently planted 8 new coniferous trees on this property and plan to plant more.

The architect noted that the uniformity of architectural styles in the cottage area has been diluted over time as new houses are built and old houses demolished and therefore permission to include a mid-century modern home should be considered as a distinctively modern addition to the area.

The architect presented plans of the proposed new home which has a similar appearance to the existing home at 15 Wood Dale Drive. It was noted that the large

extent of glazing proposed would facilitate the achievement of net zero energy use and conservation standards.

In describing details of the proposed house, the architect noted that the front wall of the proposed house is in line with the front wall of the existing house. There is no proposed garage. The intent is to build a car port as the existing house has a car port. The house will have two bedrooms and two bathrooms. The porch/deck on the front of the house is a visible feature and will be partly covered. The materials will be wood (deck, soffits, railing,), glass and artificial stone, as appropriate for mid-century modern. In order to view the lake, the architect provided a stair to a roof above the carport where the lake can be seen.

The architect discussed the context of the neighbourhood with narrow streets and illustrated a 3D rendering of how the proposed house would appear within the streetscape.

Leah Wallace, Heritage Consultant Planner spoke concerning the Heritage Impact Assessment. In preparation for the project the consultant visited the site and went inside the house. The impact to the site was evaluated against the Ministry of Heritage Sport Tourism and Culture Industries Info Sheet, the St. Catharine's Official Plan's heritage and urban design policies and the Heritage Conservation District Guidelines. The conclusion was that there is no one style in the cottage enclave, with few distinctive styles. The subject cottage was built during the cottage period, however, the opinion expressed was that the building had been altered and that identifying the original form of the building would be difficult. It was expressed that to restore the building to a cottage like form was akin to the notion of an archaeologists hammer argument in that there would be little or no authentic presentation of what the house originally looked like with no material left that is original. A conclusion was expressed that the character of the cottage enclave was not so much design of individual buildings but rather the layout of the land with the narrow laneways and cultural landscape elements. It was expressed that the proposed new building while it doesn't meet all of the guidelines, meets many of them with an appropriate scale. It was noted that there are modern buildings in the cottage district with flat roofs, so this building would fit well within the districts, so long as it was set back more-or-less as the current building is now. Ms. Wallace indicated that her conclusion was that the impacts are acceptable, there are problems with the existing building and the proposed building does not detract from the general character of the district and the cottage enclave, where few buildings are in their original configurations.

Chair Narhi welcomed questions from the committee. Member Humeniuk noted that the focus on green construction and tree preservation is commendable.

Chair Narhi asked if the owners had any plans to salvage anything from the existing house prior to demolition. The architect indicated that there was nothing worth salvaging from the existing home. It was also noted that the cove ceiling is an interesting feature but due to its low height (about 6'-7") that it was not salvageable.

Councilor Garcia asked about the policy contained in the heritage district guidelines that demolitions of contributing buildings should be discouraged. He further noted that when the heritage district was established, the cottage district was seen as an integral part of the heritage character of the area and that the individual cottages built from the early 20th Century up to the late 1940s were important in defining this character. He noted that the conclusion at the time of adoption of the district was that while many of these formerly seasonal cottages did not have architectural significance on their own, it was the collection of these cottages within the landscape that is important. The historical trend of the former seasonal cottage community in the area was also defined by the continued existence of these buildings. It was also noted that part of the character of most buildings involves their continued evolution over time which tells the story of multiple periods of history in which the structures have existed.

The heritage consultant noted that the word in the plan related to demolition is discouraged and not prohibited. It was further noted that the cultural heritage value of the building was not apparent, and that the extent of renovation required to make the building habitable would result in a loss of a large amount of the remaining historic fabric. It was noted that in this case, the opinion was that demolition of the existing building does not detract from the character of the cottage enclave.

The architect noted that the cottage was built in 1947 which at 74 years of age is one of the more recent buildings of heritage value in the district. The historical era is described in the district plan as those structures built prior to 1950.

Mr. Darcy asked if there were criteria which defined which structures within the heritage district could be demolished. The heritage consultant noted that there is nothing in the district plan that provides a list of criteria which defines what needs to be satisfied for demolition of a building to be supported. It was noted that every building needs to be habitable, and that the subject building is difficult to occupy at reasonable modern standards and that much of the historic fabric would be lost in achieving a reasonable standard of livability.

Councilor Garcia noted that if there is a property of heritage value that could be maintained the way it is then demolition would definitely be discouraged.

The Heritage Planner noted that while there are guidelines for new construction in the heritage district these written largely for vacant lots, not the replacement of contributing building stock. Interpretation is therefore required when considering expectations for the design of replacement buildings that is proposed here.

Member Bergen indicated agreement with Councilor Garcia in the importance of vernacular architecture in defining the character of the cottage district. There was a general agreement that the proposed design is attractive but is not necessarily a good fit for the character of the cottage enclave.

Chair Narhi asked for confirmation of the structural integrity of the building. No professional opinion on structural integrity could be given, however, it was noted that there are some inconsistencies with floor level and that generally older buildings, such as this which was built at a summer cottage may have some areas that are in need of repair.

Chair Narhi asked about the existence of asbestos in the building. It was noted that there is asbestos tile on the exterior of the building and asbestos tile on ceilings. The Heritage Planner noted that whether the house is demolished, or not asbestos remediation would be required.

Chair Narhi asked about reuse of the existing basement. The owners and the architect had no firm plans for this feature in the proposed new building.

Member Humeniuk noted that there are two separate issues, the demolition, and the new build. He noted that in relation to the concern put forth by the consultant that the existing building had been altered, that the heritage value of the structure was not necessarily about preserving a single point in time but rather about illustrating historic continuity in the cottage enclave and the district. Demolition ends that historic continuity.

Member Humeniuk noted that most of the concerns with the existing building that have been brought forth are repairable. Concerns have been raised about structural integrity; however, no professional evidence has been brought forward to confirm this. It was suggested that if the owner brought forward a report from a structural engineer as to the structural integrity of the building this would provide clarity for the committee.

Member Bacher indicated that he believed the committee should consider the demolition proposal first and then if supported consider the proposed new construction separately.

The owner indicated that the application will be withdrawn tomorrow to allow for the gathering of additional information to support an application

Moved by: John Bacher

Seconded by: Andrew Humeniuk

That the St. Catharines Heritage Permit Advisory Committee has received the information regarding the proposed demolition and new construction at 17 Peel Street and notes that the property owner has requested that the application be withdrawn to allow for the compilation of additional information, including a report by a structural engineer, and that the applicant will submit a new application at a later date for consideration by the St. Catharines Heritage Permit Advisory Committee.

Carried

9. **Information/Correspondence**

- Supporting information for 17 Peel Street was received.

10. **Date of next meeting**

January 28, 2021

11. **Other business**

Committee members discussed undertaking a future site visit to the property at 17 Peel Street.

Member Bergen discussed the ongoing initiative to identify criteria for the consideration of demolition applications in St. Catharines and suggested that this continue.

12. **Adjournment**

Moved by: Holly Washuta

“That the SChPAC meeting be adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Carried