

Certificate of Review

Application for Demolition and New House Permit.

for 115 Chestnut Ave.

An application for a demolition and new construction permit submitted to the Town of Washington Grove Planning Commission by Carolyn Sanford was received for review by the HPC at its September 2005 meeting. The documents submitted at the time were inadequate to complete a written review. She provided further documents at the October meeting sufficient for review and was present to answer any questions.

General Description: The project includes the complete demolition of the existing house and construction of a new 2 story prefabricated house on a full basement in its place. The new house is not on the same footprint as the existing house and the Planning Commission has denied the permit on the basis of its exceeding the required setback for a new house on that lot.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: The documents ultimately submitted included a rough site plan, elevations, plans, and a rendering of the proposed house. There were no photos or drawings of the existing house.

Visibility from public ways: The new house would be visible from Chestnut Ave and Chestnut Road.

Contributing structure: The house is a contributing structure listed as dating from 1895.

Nearby Contributing structures: There are many nearby contributing houses along Chestnut and Grove Avenues.

Demolition: As the existing house is a contributing structure dating from the earliest era of the grove, the Commission expressed its regret that the Sanfords are requesting its complete demolition. The original section of the house has the steeply pitched roof characteristic of the early cottages and the scale of each of the additions to the house make it quite compatible with the Grove. It will be a significant loss to the heritage and historic character of the Town. Carolyn described her impression of the deteriorated condition of the house including roof leaks and foundation problems significant enough to make portions of the house unusable. In addition, the level changes and layout of the house make it difficult to use in the way she would like to. She indicated that she had earlier obtained the opinion of an Architect regarding the costs of a renovation and/or addition. The costs for the design and construction were greater than she was willing to consider at the time. She indicated that she would be willing to discuss the possibilities of saving at least a portion of the house further with another professional if the Town could help with the cost of the consultation. In addition, if the demolition permit is granted, she agreed to allow someone from the Commission to document the existing house for the archives.

Compatibility of the new house with the surrounding structures: The design presented for the new house was of modest scale. Its predominant eave line was at the first story and had a cross gable roof form with further smaller gables that broke up the scale of the roof and leant it similar character to other Grove houses. It had a porch that would face the Avenue which Carolyn indicated she wanted to enlarge from the standard design. The roof pitches are likely 6:12. She was encouraged to try to extend the eave overhangs somewhat further than shown. She also indicated her intention to add windows on the side to open up the house to the side yard, and the back to open to Chestnut Road. These further windows would make those currently blank facades more like typical Grove houses that are more equally open to the outdoors on all sides. The materials are likely to be vinyl siding and asphalt shingles. She was encouraged to make the enlarged porch out of wood and consider altering the material in the gables of the second floor and the chimney enclosure to further break up the scale of the walls. All of these characteristics except the vinyl siding will likely make this design compatible with the surrounding houses and the character of the Grove, should the original house be impossible to preserve.

Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.

Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:

The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible. The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.

Bob Booher
for the Historic Preservation Commission

Date

cc: Applicant
HPC Binder
Web site
Planning Commission