

From: Chris Osborne [<mailto:schamhorst1943@yahoo.ca>]
Sent: June-05-19 5:04 PM
To: Bob Boyce
Cc: Bob McVicar; Armstrong, Blake; Cc;; Sampson, Emma
Subject: Report Recommending Denial of Heritage Designation of 152 Watson Street

Dear City Staff, Board Members, Council, and Mayor,

Yesterday I acknowledged Emma Sampson's email dated Monday June 3rd at 3:30pm, that I would be able to attend tonight's Heritage Review Board meeting, however I regrettably was remiss in my assertion as I have a conflicting Union Local meeting that I must attend. I therefore, after finding the meeting agenda online and reading through the report from Emma have written the following which I would have intended to read aloud given the opportunity this evening.

While the project to restore Dr. Peters House has remained more or less on hold, pending the civic heritage designation; with hope of accessing the grant programs for the restoration of the exterior of the building, coupled with the protections it gives, we have been far from idle. We recently confirmed the sale of one of our non-heritage properties, which will enable us to reinvest further into our local built heritage.

Furthermore we now own a second historic property, which we were also going to request designation of. The initial research we have done on that property indicates that it was built about 1850, and was in fact owned by a relation and associate of Dr. Peters. I am deeply saddened and somewhat disturbed by the findings as laid out, and have written the following rebuttal, which I hope you will give consideration of:

Report Recommending Denial of Heritage Designation of 152 Watson Street

I have some questions and concerns regarding the denial for Heritage Designation of 152 Watson Street. Based on what I have read in the report to the board, you are denying my application for a few reasons. I wish to address six points.

One; that the property is significant, but spot designations don't work or fit in future plans.

- If spot designations have occurred in the past, and under the current by-laws, why if those examples which were given have been and continue to be a contributing piece of the historic fabric of the city would my application now be denied. Please explain the strong resistance to adding one more property to the register, especially when clearly that building is, as is stated in the report; worthy of other designations and is presently on the Parks Canada list of Historic Places.

Two; that you are understaffed and are unable to add anything new for an indefinite period of time.

- If there is desire to assist us in getting the property Provincially Designated, then why is there such an issue with it being designated by the city? Being also a public servant, in a different capacity than you, I can certainly appreciate the feeling of being understaffed. However I feel that, the excuse of being under staffed is not a professional or appropriate reason to deny a taxpayer access to the resources and services which clearly they should be allowed, especially when the required historical and architectural

information is readily available to document the property's significance. My wife and I have been very understanding of the delays due to changes and workload, but this reason for denial is inappropriate. To go further and suggest that all individual applications for the foreseeable future be denied is unacceptable. Our city needs to prosper, and while to some, the designation of an individual heritage building may be small, the fact remains that these are the buildings that draw people here, keep people here and add to the colourful cultural fabric of the community. These heritage property owners also typically maintain their buildings to a higher standard, which is to the benefit of all, meanwhile protecting and enhancing our local tax base.

Three; that one person a couple blocks over wants their property removed from the heritage conservation zone.

- I take issue with the notion that this one petition; when improperly conducted, poorly formatted and inappropriately presented can, with very limited contact information of the signatories, be considered in any way a factor in the denial of my separate property being designated. Our property stands apart from those and is a cornerstone property and a landmark of the area. As stated in the report, this metric is truly ineffective, and a proper survey of the area would need to be carried out to properly gauge public opinion. Notwithstanding this however, I can personally attest that the public perception and opinion with regards to Heritage Designation is generally misinformed, often swayed by many false rumors, and fueled by those who dislike the idea of being restricted in what they can or cannot do to a heritage property. It is under this inauspicious mindset that the public is then goaded into disliking official heritage designation. I'm certain that your own board member Mr. McVicar, has likely encountered this public aversion towards officially designated properties in his impressive career as a realtor, focusing on our local built heritage. We need to protect more and educate the public on the benefits of our built heritage.

Four; that I only applied to protect the building, and in particular the interior; this is not accurate.

- In the report given in tonight's agenda, there is made no mention that we also made this application to also gain access to the grant programs that we have been told are presently under-utilized. Our project has been on hold pending our hope to gain access to said grant programs, as that would assist us financially in making the necessary repairs. This was mentioned more than once during our contact, and to think that it is not a factor in the application is irrational. Why was this factor ignored and not considered? While our primary concern may be the long term-protection of the building, it is not the only consideration.

Five; the drawn out process to simply be denied after repeated delays, and little communication.

- I also need to address the lengthy delay in receiving this outcome, when the existing bylaws already allow for spot designations, as is clearly evidenced in your report to the board. If information is needed regarding the history or the property it only need be requested and we will provide all documentation we presently possess. I also am concerned about the lack of proper notification/communication regarding this meeting. I was emailed only on Monday, June 3rd at 3:30pm that this would be on the agenda, barely 48 hours' notice of the meeting; I was not called or left a voicemail regarding the item on the agenda for the meeting tonight. I again can appreciate what being understaffed is like, but it is not a reason to turn down an application without a discussion, particularly with the property owners. If we were to be denied so readily, why was it not done so immediately instead of prolonging a discouraging 'no' response?

Six; during the past 1.5 years of our application being 'tabled' we were not advised of any desire to review the property, provide additional information or further discuss.

- After the initial meeting to discuss our hopes and plans for the property we were placed in a holding pattern. I had directly requested that I be notified of and meet with any staff wanting to look at the property. I was not contacted before the attached photographs were taken and never have been for any other visits. In a number of instances I enquired as to where our application was, and was initially told that the board was awaiting a consultant's report, which was subsequently told was delayed. I was told that the present legislation would not support individual designation, though it clearly does and there are examples across the city of individual designations. Months passed and a further enquiry as to the status of our submission resulted in us being told that it would now be held up until a by-law review was completed. We are now being told that it is denied for the reasons noted previously. I submit that this file was in fact left to languish and thereby needs further review under the current by-law, not a future by-law which may be a long time coming. The city of Saint John states that it is focused on growth, and as an individual looking to invest in further buildings in this city, this is not giving us a very good impression of the ability for the city to grow. Should growth and development not also include growing the Designated Built-Heritage base as well; that which truly draws people to our city?

Our intention was to purchase and restore more property in the city, and while we presently have a couple projects on the go, we are wondering whether there is a support network to encourage the development of more of our built heritage in a sympathetic manner, not just maintaining the status quo.

Best Regards,
Christopher & Melissa Osborne

Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 25

Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture

by Mathilde Brosseau



25

152 Watson Street, Saint John, N.B

Constructed: ca. 1840

Architect: John Cunningham

Material: wood

The architect designed this house in a particularly romantic manner by embellishing it with details taken from the Gothic Revival repertoire. Thus the ample overhang of the eaves highlights a strip of wooden festoons, the windows are given a very prominent drip moulding and the main entrance, consisting of a door and pointed lateral windows, is set off by a miniature replica of the roof. All these highly three-dimensional details lend a vivacious, fanciful aspect to a type of house that had become traditional at that time. This house was built for a civil servant named George Harding, probably by the architect Cunningham on the recommendation of his father-in-law, Attorney General C.J. Peters, for whom this architect had built an elegant home on Cobourg Street, Saint John, in 1819.

(Canadian Inventory of Historic Building.)

25 St. John, N.B., Museum Archives, Peters' Family Papers, Quinton Family Papers, and Ward History: St. John's: 1783-1843, pp. 171-80.