

Memo

To: Historic Preservation Committee

Fr: Trevor Fuller, Director of Planning and Community Development

Re: ACTION RE: CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REQUEST TO RAZE A LOCALLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC LANDMARK – THE MONUMENT COMMEMORATING THE SITE OF THE FIRST COURTHOUSE IN WISCONSIN LOCATED AT HERITAGE HILL STATE PARK (2640 S. Webster Avenue)

Date: 17 February 2023

Background & Process

The Certificate of Appropriateness process is meant to provide the Historic Preservation Committee the opportunity to guide the alteration, rehabilitation, reconstruction or razing of any improvement upon an historic site or within an historic district. The committee must find the requested action to be appropriate to the general character of the historic site or historic district.

Section 248-6C(2) of the Village Ordinances states that the committee shall approve the application unless one of the following are found to be true:

- (a) In the case of a designated historic structure or historic site, where the proposed work would detrimentally change, destroy, or adversely affect any exterior feature of the improvement or site upon which said work is to be done.
- (b) In the case of the construction of a new improvement upon a historic site or within a historic district, where the exterior of such improvement would adversely affect or not harmonize with the external appearance of other neighboring improvements on such site or within the district.
- (c) In the case where a building or structure, although not itself a designated historic structure, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the historic district as a whole.
- (d) In the case of any property located in a historic district, where the proposed construction, reconstruction, exterior alteration or razing does not conform to the purpose and intent of this chapter and to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district.
- (e) In the case where the building or structure is of such old, unusual, or uncommon design, texture and/or material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty and/or expense.
- (f) In the case where the building or structure is of such architectural or historical significance that its razing would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the Village.
- (g) In the case of a request for the razing of a deteriorated building or structure, where any preservation or restoration efforts would not be structurally or economically feasible, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner which is self-created or which is the result of any failure to maintain the property in good repair cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness.

Section 248-6C(4) of the Village Ordinances:

At such time as a property owner or person in charge of a property applies for a certificate of appropriateness to raze an improvement, such application shall be filed with the Historic Preservation Committee. Upon such application, the Committee may refuse to grant such written approval for a period of up to 60 days from the time of such application for single-family homes and up to 90 days for other types of structures, during which time the Committee and the applicant shall undertake serious and continuing discussions for the purpose of finding a method to save such property. During such period, the applicant and the Committee shall cooperate in attempting to avoid razing of the property. At the end of the required time period, if no mutually agreeable method of saving the subject property bearing a reasonable prospect of eventual success is underway, or if no formal application for funds from any governmental unit or nonprofit organization to preserve the subject property is pending, the Building Inspector may issue the permit to raze the subject property without the approval of the Committee. If such mutually agreeable method for saving the subject property is not successful or no such funds to preserve the subject property have been obtained and made available for disbursement within a period of 30 days following the end of the required time period, the Building Inspector may issue the permit to raze the subject property without the approval of the Committee.

Request

Heritage Hill State Park is requesting to raze a locally designated historic landmark (designated March 16, 2021) at Heritage Hill State Park, more specifically the monument commemorating the site of the first courthouse in Wisconsin. Further information has been provided by the applicant and is included in the agenda packet.

Staff Comment & Recommendation

Staff has spoken with the applicant and serious fundraising and preservation efforts have been attempted to save the structure. The work needed to save the structure far exceeds original estimates and would take away funds for preservation work of other structures in the park. Furthermore, the applicant has explained that a replica of the original courthouse was constructed in the location of the original courthouse after the monument was constructed. The replica marks and tells the history of the structure. Records of the monument commemorating the courthouse will be preserved in the organization upon razing of the structure.

Staff recommends delaying the razing of the structure until at such point the committee can arrange to view and document the structure. Village Ordinance permits the village to delay razing of the structure for no more than 90 days. Since it appears efforts have already been made to raise funds for preserving the structure, staff recommends delaying the razing of the structure for no more than 45 days.

The Historic Preservation Committee is asked to review and approve or not to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness request. If any contingencies are requested, including the number of days to delay razing of the structure, those contingencies should be included in the motion.





Heritage Hill State Historical Park

Condition Summary of the Granite courthouse Monument (performed in August 2021)

Ten of the top cap stones in the center section of the monument were removed to gain access into the space between the front and back faces of the monument. The front and back face stones are approximately six inches thick each with a twelve-inch space between the two. The space was filled with various materials including pieces of granite (cast-off pieces from the construction), brick, mortar, and concrete. Many areas of this rubble were capped with poured in mortar as a method to lock the commingled materials together for stability. Further investigation of a wide diagonal stepping mortar joint on both the front and back faces of the center portion revealed the concrete foundation had cracked and separated. Excavation of the foundation on the back of the monument showed that the concrete was formed and poured in a way frost had been pushing and stressing the foundation. General advanced deterioration and widening of the mortar joints on both the front and back faces exist throughout, resulting in the noticeably large bulges and shifting face blocks, this is especially noted in the center section of the monument. The “book end” columns that frame the Center, North and South walls have been affected by freeze thaw cycles also, resulting in an out of plumb condition of the four columns as well as the increased overall length of the monument.

Conclusion -Method of repair:

Failed mortar joints allowed water penetration into the interior of the monument. Over an extended period of time, much of the rubble had settle downward through the freeze thaw cycles making the re-alignment of the bulging front and back walls not Possible without the total disassembly and reassembly of the Monument. The inherent design flaw of the foundation would require its removal and the installation of a new structurally enhance foundation.

Heritage Hill’s Building and Grounds committee consulted with RJ Jacques Inc. A restoration company specializing in masonry (1710 Steffens Way Green Bay) R.J. Jacques recommended a full disassembly with a new foundation as the appropriate long-term repair.

Estimated cost to restore: \$150,000.00 -\$200,000.00.