371 Indian Hill Road Demolition
DRI 706

Martha’s Vineyard Commission
January 6, 2022
371 Indian Hill Road Demolition

Owner/Applicant: Lois and Jeff Meyer; Philip Regan (Hutker Architects)

Permits: Demolition and building permits

Checklist: 8.1a (Demolition of house listed in MACRIS)

Mandatory review

LUPC: 11/8/21 (no recommendation)

Site visit: 1/3/21
Project history

• Existing Greek Revival house, known as the Captain Edwin Luce House, was built around 1840 and renovated in 1948.

• Listed in MACRIS and 1986 town historic resources inventory.

• Described in MACRIS as an “exceptionally fine example of the Greek Revival style so common in town and on the island during the mid-19th century.”

• In 1888, the house was sold to Albert Seaton Berry (Lois Meyer’s great grandfather) with 150 acres. In 1908, the house was left to his children and remained unoccupied until 1948 when Richard Berry bought the property from the family estate and renovated the house, including the addition of two dormers. In 1968, he sold the house and 21 acres to the Parker family. Much of the rest of the land was subdivided with some going to Sheriffs Meadow Foundation. The house was last occupied in 2017.

• In 2018, Jeff and Lois Meyer purchased the house and 22 acres, including an 18-acre conservation easement held by Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation.

• Additional accounts of the building’s history have been provided by the applicants, Lois Berry (wife of Richard), and the West Tisbury Local Historical Commission.
West Tisbury Local Historical Commission:

• Originally built for whaling captain Edwin Luce around the time of his marriage to Celina Hillman in 1838.

• Sits atop a hillside with view of Vineyard Sound.

• Area was open pastureland during first half of 19th century, with many stone walls on the property. (Capt. Luce farmed and sailed.)

• House is local Vineyard Greek Revival, common between 1830 and 1870. Includes many characteristic details:

  • Blocky “temple” look
  • Thinner chimneys in various positions
  • Larger windows and windowpanes than houses of the 1700s
  • Wide corner pilasters and cornice
  • Front entrance framed by wide lintel pilasters and sidelights
  • Gabled end faces the street, and doorway is off-center
Project history

• An earlier version of this proposal was reviewed as DRI 687 in 2018, but the project was put on hold at the request of the applicants.

• The applicants have since concluded that renovating the house is not feasible, and they would like to move forward with the demolition.
Proposal

Existing conditions:
• Four-bedroom, 2,464 ft² main house
• One-bedroom, 560 ft² studio
• Three-bedroom, 1,089 ft² guest house
• Granite well house/creamery (probably used by Luce)
• Garage

Proposal:
• Demolish the existing house, studio, and guest house
• Construct a four-bedroom, 4,605 ft² house
• Restore the granite well house

Total square footage of buildings on the property will increase from 4,113 ft² to 4,605 ft², and bedrooms will decrease from 8 to 4.

The applicants currently graze sheep on 3-4 acres, and plan to introduce additional small-scale agriculture in the future, but further details have not been developed.

The applicants intend to occupy the new house year-round.
Planning concerns

- Character and Identity
- Structural integrity
- Wastewater
- Energy
- Lighting and landscape
Character and identity

• The house is an example of local Greek Revival architecture and is listed in MACRIS as well as a 1986 West Tisbury historic inventory.
• The building had a significant renovation in 1948, but has undergone periods of decay, as indicated in materials submitted by the applicant.
• The house is not in a highly visible location.
• Proposed site plan and elevations have been provided.
PROXIMITY OF EXISTING HOME TO NEIGHBORING HOMES
PROXIMITY OF EXISTING HOME TO PUBLIC BEACH
MEYER RESIDENCE
AUGUST 30, 2021

PROPOSED ELEVATIONS
SCALE 1/8" = 1' 0"
West Tisbury Local Historical Commission recommendations (Oct. 2021):

The house has retained its original look, shape, and proportions. The several fireplaces are original with the summer kitchen having a beehive baking oven on the side. The front entryway, hall and stairway and bannisters are original. The granite foundation blocks should be preserved in some way.

If the house is to be removed, the WTLHC would like to have the house and the original features documented with measurements and photographs for our files. Presently the house is in poor condition and current building requirements would dictate further cosmetic and structural changes for renovation.

The Meyers have respect for the history and provenance of the old farm and its surroundings. Clearing has restored some of the view to Vineyard Sound and stonewalls and grazing areas have also been restored. The proposed plans for a new house, while contemporary in nature, seem to echo the location of the original with its front facing gable.

The locations of both the original and the proposed building are not visible from Indian Hill Road when trees are in leaf. Other houses along Indian Hill Road are generally older or modest in nature and the area has retained a very rural look with farmlands and properties spaced well apart.
Structural integrity

The house has not been improved since it was renovated in 1948, and at that time it had been vacant for 30 years.

1948 renovation:
• Replacement of floors, doors, windows, and trim
• Addition of chimneys, roofing, two dormers, a new kitchen, and screened porch
As it was in the beginning  - April 16, 1948
October 1949 -
Bright eyes can see the planting
Structural integrity

• Structural report by Sourati Engineering in 2018 concluded that most of the house does not meet current building codes, and that a renovation would entail replacing the foundation and adding an overlay of new framing, including new sheathing.

• The report states: “An alternative to this would be to deconstruct the existing frame and foundation and reconstruct the essence of the existing house with code compliant materials and practices.”
Structural integrity

• A separate site inspection report by John G. Early Contractor and Builder in 2018 recommended demolishing the house, noting the high cost and other challenges associated with renovation, and the likelihood that only some framing, sheathing, and exterior trim could be preserved.

• A lead paint inspection in 2018 revealed lead-based paint on most exterior components of the building, as well as portions of the interior; and an asbestos inspection survey in 2018 revealed asbestos in the linoleum floor in the kitchen.

• The applicant has proposed salvaging some of the granite in the foundation, and possibly existing floors and railings, although the floors were added in 1948.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic/Cultural Significance</th>
<th>Built before 1800</th>
<th>Built between 1800 and 1855</th>
<th>Built between 1850 and 1875</th>
<th>Built between 1875 and 1900</th>
<th>Built after 1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**History/Culture:**
Associated with individuals, organizations, events, activities, patterns, or developments

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<tr>
<th>Design/Construction: Distinctive physical and spatial characteristics, style, designer, construction</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
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**Contribution to Context:** Contributing or integral part of historic streetscape, grouping, or area

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<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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**Integrity:** Retains essential character-defining features or has later alterations with acquired significance or which are reversible

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<th>4</th>
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**Historical Designation:** Federal, state, local

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<tr>
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<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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**Total Historic Significance:** 16/23

**Other Factors**

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<th>Location/Visibility: Visible from a public way. Public space or coast/shore (where a higher score indicates relatively greater visibility)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
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**Condition:** Estimated order of magnitude of structure condition (where a higher score indicates relatively better physical condition of the structure)

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3</th>
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**Safety Conditions:** Has the building been determined to be not safe and not secure? (a higher number indicates greater safety and security)

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<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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**Replacement Program:** A permanent replacement program has been proposed (a lower number indicates that a replacement program has been proposed and is reasonably assured of proceeding)

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<th>Replacement Program:</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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**Other Review:** The proposed demolition is subject to a special permit or other town review process able to require preservation (a higher number indicates no other review)

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<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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**Total Other Factors:** 5/15

**Total:** 21/38
Wastewater

• The existing main house has two cesspools that will be removed and replaced with a high-capacity infiltrator bed and 1,500-gallon septic tank.
• The existing guest house has a septic system and leaching field.
• The total number of bedrooms on the property will decrease from eight to four, accounting for the removal of the studio and guest house.
Additional planning concerns

• **Energy:** The proposed house will have all-electric utilities, with propane for cooking, and is designed to exceed the Building Code in terms of energy efficiency. The house will be solar-ready, and the applicant has indicated the potential for onsite solar applications such as battery backup and power for the well house/creamery, but that is not part of the current proposal.

• **Lighting and Landscape:** Most of the property will remain as open space, with stone walls, some sheep grazing, and possibly other agricultural uses in the future. A landscape plan has not been provided.
Interior photos