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Martha's Vineyard Commission

DRI # 651 – Masonic Avenue Historic Demolition MVC Staff Report – 2016-11-23

1. DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 **Applicant:** Matt Viaggio
- 1.2 **Project Location:** 96 Dukes County, Oak Bluffs Map 11 Lot 193 (0.43 acres). The property was two lots that were merged during the Bradley Square permitting process.
- 1.3 **Proposal:** To be permitted to demolish a 3,049 square foot house built in 1895.
- 1.4 **Zoning:** Approximately 2/3 of the lot is in the Residential District and about 1/3 is in the B-1 Commercial District.
- 1.5 **Local Permits:** Demolition Permit. The Building was identified as historically significant and designated as “preferably preserved” by the Oak Bluffs Historical Commission on February 10, 2015 beginning a six-month demolition delay. The MVC DRI Application has been on hold Since April 2015 because the Applicant did not file a DRI Application.
- 1.6 **Surrounding Land Uses:** The lot is surrounded by primarily single-family homes in both the residential and business district.
- 1.7 **Project History:** The Building was built in 1895 as a Mission to help Portuguese immigrants assimilate into American society. In the 1920’s the building became the Bradley Memorial Church, reputedly the first primarily African-American Church on the Island. The reverend Denniston lived upstairs with his family of five children. The building has been largely abandoned for several decades. The property was two lots that were purchased on June 29, 2007 for \$407,250 and \$497,750 for a total of \$905,000 by the Island Affordable Housing Fund, Inc (IAHF). The Bradley Square Project (DRI 612) was reviewed by the MVC and approved with conditions in 2008. The project was then revised somewhat and approved with conditions in March 2009. In 2010 the owners, IAHF, ran into financial trouble and applied for a demolition permit. The Building was designated as “preferably preserved” by the Oak Bluffs Historical Commission on December 8, 2010 beginning a six-month demolition delay which was referred to the MVC for DRI review and subsequently withdrawn. The property was auctioned off by the M.V. Savings Bank on August 3, 2011 for \$495,000. The Applicant said in early 2015 that it took him three years to obtain a clear title to the property.
- 1.8 **Project Summary:** To be permitted to demolish a 3,049 square foot house built in 1895. The Applicant has submitted no plans at this time to rebuild or redevelop the property. The building and property were the subject of previous DRI Review (DRI 612) as the Bradley Square project. The house has been known in the past as the Bradley Church Building and/or the Denniston house.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 **DRI Referral:** Oak Bluffs Building Inspector
- 2.2 **DRI Trigger:** 3.4 (Demolition in a Commercial District); 8.2i (Demolition of Building Identified as having Historic Significance) Mandatory P.H. DRI Review; 8.2ii (Demolition of Building over 100 years old). The Application has been on hold Since April 2015 because the Applicant did not file a DRI Application.
- 2.3 **LUPC:** March 23, 2015; November 28, 2016
- 2.4 **Public Hearing:** To be determined by LUPC if ready. Tentatively scheduled for December 15, 2016.

3. PLANNING CONCERNS

3.1 **Some Key Issues**

- How historically significant is this building?
- What is the structural integrity of the building? Is it salvageable? If so, at what cost?
- Are there other solutions other than demolition that could preserve the building?
- What role could or should the MVC play in approving, denying, or forging an alternative?

3.2 **Environment**

- **Vegetation:** The property had many (about 30) mature large oak trees over 100 years old, many of which were cut down in the last few years.
- **Habitat:** This is not an NHESP habitat area.
- **Landscaping:** The property has not been maintained for decades though many mature trees once created on grove throughout the property. Several mature oaks still grace the highly visible street corner. Several mature oaks in varying states of health were removed on the eastern side of the property. A flower garden was then planted on the east side of the house.
- **Open Space:** Currently the property is mostly privately owned open space.
- **Lighting:** The Applicant is not proposing any plan other than to demolish the building.
- **Noise:**
- **Water:** Town water.
- **Wastewater / Stormwater:**
 - The Applicant is not proposing any plan other than to demolish the building.

3.3 **Transportation**

- **Traffic Summary:**
 - The Applicant is not proposing any plan other than to demolish the building.

3.4 **Affordable Housing**

- The Applicant is not proposing any plan other than to demolish the building.

3.5 **Economic Impact**

- The Town of Oak Bluffs voted that \$425,000 in Community Preservation Committee funds be given to the Bradley Square (DRI 612) project. \$400,000 for affordable housing and \$25,000 for historic records. The previous owners spent approximately \$50,000 of the affordable housing money for the planning of the previous project.

3.6 **Scenic & Historic Values**

- **Streetscape:** The loss of so many mature street trees is a change to the streetscape. The loss of the iconic building, albeit in disrepair, would alter the historic streetscape.
- **Historic Preservation:** In the approved DRI 612-M Bradley Square plan the existing historic Denniston Building was going to be retained in its historic location. It was going to be lifted in order to build a basement and then reset in its current position.
- **Building Massing: Architectural Detailing:**

3.7 **Local Impact/Abutters**

- Abutters would be left in suspense as to what could happen with future plans on the property.

4. CORRESPONDENCE –
