

March 6, 2024

Hi Lucy,

Hope you are well and thanks very much for the information you sent back in October – it's very helpful. Below are some thoughts of mine as an abutter to the proponent that I would like to submit to the MVC for their consideration.

Submitted Proposals

The Tisbury Historical Commission has found the Caleb Prouty House (CPH) “significant” which means that the building's historical architectural style is a good representation of the Greek Revival style in Vineyard Haven. That's why it hasn't been demolished and why they've been trying to move it. However, the MVC should determine whether the house is “preferably preserved” within the context of Amelia Hambrecht's proposal AND Stop & Shop's proposal.

Stop & Shop's Proposal

- To date, there hasn't been enough information provided by Stop & Shop for their proposed building to properly evaluate the removal of the CPH.
 - Over a decade ago, the THC weighed in on S&S's proposal for expanding their store (see attached). I can't quite recall what that design was, but based on their response, there was enough information and detail for the THC to write a detailed response in opposition to the proposal.
 - S&S has been saying for years that this is a “chicken and egg” problem: they can't start designing what they would do until the house is removed. That's incorrect. They should have a complete proposal in front of the MVC to show them what they want to do for the MVC to properly decide whether the CPH is preferably preserved within the context of the S&S proposal. Only then can the MVC decide whether to deny it or allow for the demolition or relocation of the CPH. If the MVC doesn't do this, they will be giving up significant leverage to get the best design and outcome for a new S&S building that contextually fits within the fabric of downtown VH while providing the efficient function of a grocery store that the town so desperately needs.
 - S&S is trying to save money by not designing a full proposal and leveraging a lack of a demolition delay ordinance in the town (see Final Point below and 2019 DRI-694 narrative attached) as a crutch to not do anything.

Amelia Hambrecht's Proposal

- Moving the CPH to 187 Lagoon Pond Road is not in the best interest for the preservation of the building:
 - The proponent wants to move the house into a potential future flood zone. The house would have to be raised above the 10'+1' FEMA buffer, but this does not alleviate the potential for future flooding given global warming.
 - If she complies with the FEMA regulations, she will then be in violation of the Zoning Ordinance with respect to the maximum allowable height. Thus, she will have to get a Special Permit.
 - The new foundation the house would be set on is higher than its current location to grade which is inconsistent with the historic style of the home where steps to these homes were typically only 3-4 steps. Currently, there are 3 steps to get through the front door.
 - The house will have a new addition to the house that is off to the side of it. This is inconsistent with the Greek Revival Style, where many “els” were always

justified off the back of the houses like the current CPH condition. In fact, if you look at ALL the Greek Revival houses in the Williams Street Historic District (there are 18) only 116 Williams street has an addition off to the side of the main body of the house. Section 1.13 (moving plan) in the MVC's staff report is incorrect: the existing kitchen el is not going to be moved and preserved.

- The existing chimneys would be removed during demolition and would no longer exist. Many historical commissions consider chimneys as "historical character defining features".

Overall, it's clear that both proponents' proposals (Amelia and Stop & Shop) to relocate the CPH are relying on a segmented review system which affords them a better chance to gain approvals by not developing more complete proposals for the MVC to review. The MVC was created in part to be that regulatory body that would weigh complex proposals. To do that, the proposals need to be fully flushed out so that the MVC can first rule on whether the CPH is preferably preserved within the context of the S&S proposal. If it is not, then the MVC needs to rule on whether the CPH should be demolished or moved within the context of Amelia's proposal.

As an architect who has presented to many regulatory boards in my career, none of these proposals are fully developed in my opinion. The Hambrecht proposal doesn't even include proposed architectural plans and elevations showing the restoration of the CPH back to its original condition. If both the MVC and the THC want the CPH to be preserved, they simply can't trust the proponent that it will be but rather need a complete proposal showing what alterations they are planning to make from the original configuration, nor can they afford to give up any leverage to get the best possible outcome for what will be one of the most significant new buildings in downtown in many years.

Demolition Delay Ordinance

One final point: in many cities/towns in Massachusetts, Historical Commissions have demolition delay ordinances that place a timeline on the delay of demolition. I sit on the Cambridge Historical Commission, and we have a 12-month delay in place (see the attached DRI-694 narrative that reverences the CHC's demolition delay ordinance. FYI, we voted to increase it from 6 months to 12 months back in 2022). After 12 months, the owners of the property can demolish the house if no one comes forward with a petition to landmark the building.

The intent of the delay period is not always to prevent demolition but to provide an opportunity for the development of preservation solutions to be considered. One of the reasons that it's only a 12-month delay is that the Commission wants to avoid further degradation of the building. Since the Tisbury Historical Commission has prevented demolition for so long and Stop & Shop has not maintained the building, it has fallen further into disrepair. Two issues here:

1. There is a risk that the house will not survive the move given its current condition.
2. To move the house to the new location, it will have to be carved up significantly. The proponent has received a proposal from a house mover that would remove the roof, chimneys At that point, is there much to save?

In Cambridge, we can save a building in perpetuity by landmarking the building. There are very few landmarked houses in the City (I believe only 16 out of 42 total buildings and structures). However, their established significance as a landmarked building is a much higher bar.

I realize that these points open a greater discussion as to whether the Tisbury Historical Commission adopts a limited demolition delay ordinance (and have been keeping up on the discussion over other cases related to this in town). However, it's worth pointing out that many historical commissions in the state (including the oldest: Cambridge) have adopted this approach.

Please forward this to the MVC Commissioners with my sincere thanks in advance for their time to read and consider my comments.

All best,
Kyle

Kyle Sheffield, AIA, LEED AP BD+C
Principal
617 226-9336 Direct

Blue Hour Design, LLC

Boston | Vineyard Haven | Big Sky

450 Harrison Avenue, Suite 412 Boston, MA 02118 | 617 226-9335

BlueHourDesign.com