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**Subject:** Oak Bluffs CCHDC  
**Date:** September 8, 2023 at 11:27 AM  
**To:** saltzberg@mvcommission.org  
**Cc:** Philip Regan pregan@hutkerarchitects.com

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## Cottage City Historic District Commission

September 8, 2023

To: Martha's Vineyard Commission  
P. O. Box 1447  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Attn: Rich Saltzberg  
DRI Coordinator

Email: [saltzberg@mvcommission.org](mailto:saltzberg@mvcommission.org)

Re: #3 Uncas Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA

On behalf of the Cottage City Historic District Commission "CCHDC", this letter reflects the CCHDC's interaction with Mr. Robert Sawyer and his proposed demolition at 3 Uncas Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA. Mr. Sawyer has been before the CCHDC in March 2019, September 2021, and November 2021, before withdrawing his application in January of 2022.

At each of the three meetings, the proposal and later revised proposal included the demolition of the "Steven Flanders" house (circa 1875) along with a replacement structure comprised of 8 (eight) housing units, a bank component, and a small parking lot. With each presentation by Mr. Sawyer, his position included the building's poor condition and its inhabitability. The CCHDC's position has been, the house was occupied prior to Mr. Sawyer's purchase of the property, and it has been intentionally allowed to fall into disrepair under his ownership, including the removal of the exterior siding, the opening of doors and windows and the allowance of a SWAT tactical operation on the premises in September 2019 (see attached e-mail from chair Phil Regan to Ewell Hopkins of the Oak Bluffs Planning Board committee dated August 22, 2019).

The CCHDC, during all proceedings devoted to 3 Uncas Avenue has consistently and unanimously stated their concerns over the potential demolition of the Steven Flander's house

based on its Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System listing, it is a very visible location on the corner of Circuit Avenue and Uncas Avenue (Circuit Avenue acting as the defining line between the Cottage City Historic District and the Camp Meeting Grounds) and its exemplar architectural style (Victorian Eclectic, or more locally known as “Campground Cottage”). The house, even in its current state, offers significant architectural detail representative of a residential past found throughout Oak Bluffs.

Historically, the CCHDC has granted demolition approvals only in cases where a building is in danger of imminent failure and/or the building has no historical significance. Note – Building Inspector Tom Perry submitted his opinion in a letter dated August 8, 2022, that the building was “not in danger of imminent failure.”

As for the CCHDC’s review of Mr. Sawyer’s plans for reconstruction on the property, there has been consistent concern for the lack of compatibility (scale, siting, and exterior detailing) the new building depicts, in place of the current house, within the architectural context of the surrounding neighborhood. For those reasons, if the MVC approves the proposed demolition, the CCHDC asks that the approval be inclusive of a condition that returns the project to the CCHDC for architectural review and approval.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Phil Regan, Vice Chairperson  
Cottage City Historic District Commission



Attachments: CCHDC Meeting Minutes of 11/10/21  
CCHDC letter to Ewell Hopkins, Oak Bluffs Planning Board Chair



Ewell Hopkins



Meeting

Lwen Hopkins meeting  
letter.pdf minute....21.pdf