

Owner Removes Three-story Chimney From Windsor Hotel

By Karen Gould

Just as balcony restoration at the Windsor Hotel is near completion, removal of the building's chimney is about to begin. Meeting Thursday, April 12, the Mackinac Island Planning Commission approved the chimney demolition to prevent bricks from falling on traffic below.

The building, on the corner of Hoban and Market streets, is used seasonally by Grand Hotel to house employees. The chimney has not been used in years, and an architectural review does not deem the chimney to be architecturally or historically necessary to the building, so the city will not require that it be rebuilt.

Commissioners also considered other architectural review reports on Island projects, approved construction of a new single-family home, and approved a barn roof replacement.

The three-story chimney faces Market Street.

"It's eventually going to fall," said building inspector Dennis Dombroski, "and we want to give them permission to take it down before it does fall."

— Dennis Dombroski, building inspector

Architect Richard Neumann, in his one-man review of the project, said its removal "would not significantly alter the historic appearance of the building. However, the chimney is an historic element of the exterior and the loss of any historic fabric lessens the

overall authenticity of a building."

While the building is within the city's historic district, Mr. Neumann concluded that removing it would be a "subtle change," meet appearance standards, and would not negatively change the structure's appearance.

Commissioners agreed there is no need to replace the chimney.

"Why build another chimney which is something that's never going to be used?" asked Chairman Bob Brown.

Practicality and safety should come first, agreed Commissioner Kay Hoppenrath.

Reconstruction of the balconies at the Windsor has proceeded throughout the winter, as weather permitted. Grand Hotel had originally proposed the elimination of the third floor balcony, but the architectural review concluded that it is historically significant. That has since been rebuilt and the railing on the second floor balcony has been replaced.

Another building chimney will be removed. Work on LaChance Cottage in the Mission was discussed at last month's meeting and received approval at Thursday's meeting, although Mrs. Hoppenrath voted against both accepting the architectural review and approving the project.

Alignment of three street-side balconies at LaChance Cottage and adding higher



Deteriorating and no longer used, the brick chimney on the Windsor Hotel is slated for removal. The Mackinac Island structure is owned by Grand Hotel and used for employee housing.

railings would be a safety improvement, wrote Mr. Neumann in his architectural review of the plans, although he added, "the proposed chimney removal would be an erosion of historic building fabric."

The outside brick chimney is not functional, said building owner Michael Bacon.

Mr. Neumann expressed concern over the width of a proposed window on the fourth floor facing the street. In his report, Mr. Neumann wrote the two front windows were different widths and would not be symmetrical, and commissioners agreed.

Dr. Bacon said he would make both windows 36 inches wide.

Before voting against accepting the architectural review and zoning application,

Mrs. Hoppenrath said commissioners did not have revised plans.

"Again, we're putting ourselves at risk," she said, "by approving these changes without something in front of us."

Ira Green, owner of Mapleview apartments down the road, asked commissioners to withdraw his zoning application to keep Mapleview a boarding house. Mr. Green wants to move forward with remodeling the building as apartments, having won a legal case against the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), which had sought to stop his plans to convert the dormitory to apartments.

Planners already had approved apartments for the same building last summer, but that decision was later overturned by the ZBA. In the meantime, Mr. Green asked the commission to approve

plans to remodel employee housing, while he appealed the ZBA's decision in Circuit Court. Last month, the court overturned the ZBA's decision and supported the Planning Commission's decision.

Mr. Green has owned the Main Street property since 1992. Its use preceded adoption of the city's zoning ordinance, so it is a permitted non-conforming use in a single family residential (R-1) area. Both the current use of the building and the proposed use are non-conforming.

Commissioner Bruce Lapine voted against Mr. Green's new request because it would be less conforming than before.

In another matter, Mr. Green's request to table his zoning application for remodeling the Iroquois Bicycle Shop was approved by commissioners. He purchased the building this winter from Margaret McIntire.

Commissioners approved repairs to a Market Street building housing the Jaunting Cart gift shop. An architectural review of the project ordered in March reported that the new facade would be an improvement to the building. A false balcony above the front door and display windows will be replaced with a canvas awning.

In his review, Mr. Neumann also suggested the "inappropriate narrow shutters" on each side of the display window be removed. Armin Porter, acting as an agent for building owner Frank Nephew, confirmed the shutters would be removed.

The replacement of a canvas awning with a shingled roof at the Chippewa Hotel did not pass architectural review because the material lacked a "festive nature of a summer awning."

Changes were made to the project based on the review and commissioners approved the new design, which includes a metal roof that will be painted with either green and white stripes or yellow and white stripes. Lattice work also will be used to create a summer pavilion appearance.

Last month, an amendment was granted to a zoning application for the Butterfly House to include the addition of a 30-inch by 42-inch window that will face Mission Hill. The window will enhance the building, stated Mr. Neumann in his report, which commissioners placed on file.

A new home in Stonecliffe Manor II received approval by commissioners and, at 1,600 square feet, it does not require architectural review. Only homes 3,500 square feet or more require architectural review. The Mapleridge Street home will serve as the summer residence for Michael and Cynthia Kenemuth of Melbourne, Florida.

Replacing the deteriorating roof on the Chambers' barn in Hubbard's Annex was approved.

The planning commission will next meet Tuesday, May 15, at 3 p.m. on the second floor of Community Hall on Market Street.

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