

Aurora Planning Board
Aurora Community Preservation Board
PO Box
Aurora NY 13026

RE: Request for Demolition permit on McGordon House

Dear Members of the Planning Board and CPP:

I attended the Public Hearing last Wednesday and listened to all of the comments. There were comments both for and against approving the demolition permit. Initially, the most persuasive to me was that of Rebecca Ruggles who said that denying the permit would not save the McGordon House because there was no one waiting in the wings to put the money into rehabbing it. (Instead Rebecca suggested we concern ourselves with the houses in the village that are just starting fall into disrepair such as the Beck house on Main Street. I walk past it every day- it is a nice house but in the past year it is just starting to fall down: two weeks ago the shutters fell off; this week the entire porch railing fell off. It is just tragic and unnecessary -- I hope the village does do something about it).

But after I had some time to think about it, I realized we simply DO NOT KNOW if there is someone who would be interested in purchasing the house to renovate it because it **has never been made available to purchase**. The whole time I have lived in the village I have heard people discuss the McGordon House and state that Wells would never sell it because there is an old dump on the property. But clearly that is not longer true- Wells will sell it. However instead of listing it with a realtor Wells has entered into a back door deal about which nothing is public or transparent. The discussion made it seem as though there are only two options: demo the property or let it continue to molder. However if the village tabled the demo permit but permitted it to be refiled if the property was put on the open market for a set period of time, we would be able to discover if there is a buyer who would purchase it in an arms length transaction with the requirement that the house be retained and rehabilitated. If after a set period of time- say 6 months, no one is interested in the property then the demolition permit could be reinstated. I don't know how large the proposed parcel is that Wells is planning on conveying but I wonder if it would be large enough to convey a parcel large to still allow the construction of two rental homes which likely would not require a large lot without conveying the portion on which the McGordon House stands.

Additionally the Village historian referenced the fact that the estimates given for rehabbing the property were from new home builders. That is not their wheelhouse but there are organization which specialize in historic renovation. Or a talented craftsperson might take it on as a personal project but we don't know if that would be a possibility because it is not one which has even been permitted to be pursued.

I hope the committees will consider giving McGordon House a chance by delaying the demolition permit decision pending a six month placement of the house on the open market.

On another Issue, I agree with Bonnie Bennett. We need to know what the grand plan is for the piece of property that Wells would like to convey to the LLC. We were told at the hearing that we could only comment not ask questions but I would like know this information before a decision is made by the village. I have also heard that the village has a right of first refusal on the lakefront. I have looked through several months of minutes and can't find any discussion on this. If the LLC acquires the lakefront how does this play into the village's interest in the lakefront. From an economic perspective tearing down one house to build two rental properties doesn't seem to make sense. Are the ultimate plans to build more houses? To develop the lakefront? After the hearing I have more questions than answers and I believe one hearing where we weren't allowed to ask questions is insufficient to protect the village's interests in an early home and a large parcel property which everyone has referred to as our southern gateway. When Wells wanted to convey the old apartment building called the "chicken coop" there were numerous hearings and besides comments we were permitted to ask questions. The village should take its time, learn what the residents concerns and comments are, require more information from Wells and the potential purchasers on their overall plans before undertaking something which we may all eventually regret.

Finally if there truly is a landfill on the property what investigation has been done of that situation? Can the property even be used for a residential housing or must there be abatement? If Wells transfers the property to an LLC what protection is there for the village if the LLC discovers that that is an issue more complex and expensive than it wants to deal with? Is there an assessment of what the state of the

property actually is at this point? Is that a part of the public record? Once again there are more questions which I would like to see answered.

Very truly yours,

Robin A Driskel