

To Mayor Orman, Clerk Balloni, Village trustees and fellow panel and board members

I have been very much on the fence about this question from early in the process. On one hand, I have been hoping that something could be done to preserve McGordon House—recognizing that initiative doesn't rest with the CPP and believing it might already be too late in any case—as long as I have been on the board, which I believe is going on 20 years. And ruination of this building is exactly the sort of thing the CPP has been working to anticipate and prevent in our draft proposals for revision of the local code: we want building owners to be charged with affirmative maintenance, so that buildings won't get to a state of structural collapse for which demolition becomes almost obligatory. That requirement is already present in current codes, but the tools for enforcement are not what they need to be to make it effective.

On the other hand, neglect of this building is of such long standing—starting before the village even had zoning; and Mr. Fitzgerald's plan is a constructive one that addresses a real need. The latter considerations, along with the engineer's report, have pretty much won me over, even though I was and remain offended by the college's refusal to let us, any of us, visit the building with whatever precautions would be advisable to minimize risk. I don't accept that, and hope that we can make plain that we won't be willing to act in the future without provision being made for us to survey the site directly. We need to be able to see the basis for what we are permitting.

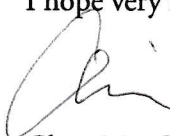
Then in the course of public comment there was the reminder that there have been at least three offers made to the college to rehabilitate the building—twenty years ago and again within the past couple of years. Which would, obviously, have provided a use alternative to demolition.

I don't mean to drag this out. I just want to make a few more, briefer comments.

I'm sorry it has taken this panel so long—too long—to consider making McGordon house a landmark building. Michael Miller might not have been exactly right in saying that it was the site of the first Catholic mass in the village, but it does have a large place in Aurora's cultural history.

Also, as Erin has pointed out, partly to answer the perception that the whole southern end of the village—not just one untended building—is rank and unattractive: this area is the most vigorous wildlife habitat remaining in the village. It might be better served with a modest pruning and tidying effort than by clearcutting to make more stark views and a proliferation of lawns. I suppose I am taking a position that may seem perverse to my friend the mayor, whom I know to be an avid lawn mower. I hope that we can put village energies into making the park that is being discussed, along the lakeshore there, and that we can keep the sumac and even plant more of it, encourage the bald eagle to stay: open up the area to more use by people while still keeping the wildlife happy. This comment is obviously not about demolition directly, rather about further development, of which this demolition would be a first step.

I hope very much that we can make good of our opportunities here.



Chris MacCormick