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I begin by addressing my fellow members of the public. This hearing is not about the relative merits of a deteriorated structure compared to two new ones; it is about demolition only. The Zoning Law sets out relevant criteria for the Community Preservation Panel, CPP, to use in its decision in Section 704.D.4. They are very familiar with these criteria, which include “present condition of the structure, pertinent historical significance..., the relationship of the affected parcel to its surrounding parcels, economic viability of use alternate to demolition, future plans for the property [and] public comment.”

The **present condition** of McGordon House is unquestionably poor after forty years of neglect. Its documented **significance** is comparable to its age-mates, such as the District School, the College Boat House, and the Aurora Free Library, though each is also unique. Tonight is **public comment**.

Now I turn to CPP with observations on the remaining criteria from recent meetings.

- 1) **“Economic viability of use alternate to demolition.”** As a Planning Board member pointed out, there is a wide discrepancy in the estimates provided for rehabilitating McGordon House for various purposes versus constructing two new homes. The estimates range from rehabilitation costing somewhat *less than* two new buildings to costing *twice as much*. These estimates come from representatives of companies specializing in new construction. According to the procedure in Section 704.C.4 of the Zoning Law, you are entitled to request independent review from appropriate experts, without cost to the Village. I propose that you need an independent estimate from a firm specializing in historic rehabilitation; there are at least two in the area.
- 2) **“Relationship of the affected parcel to its surrounding parcels.”** At both the CPP meeting and the Village Board meeting, there was discussion of the Village's Right of First Refusal for the lakeside property involved and its relationship to a hoped for adjacent public park. The Village Board called for a meeting including all involved parties with their legal counsels.

To answer your own question, you need to know if this meeting has occurred and its result.

- 3) **“Future plans for the property.”** Again, this is not about the appearance of the replacement houses, but about demolition in a larger context. Assessing the scope of future plans is especially important to avoid segmentation, as mentioned in Village Board discussion. Again, a meeting with Wells to discuss its strategic plans for adjacent properties is appropriate.

Note that each of these questions has been raised by Village officials, including you, at their meetings. In order to write a defensible decision, you need the answers. Without them, you cannot even write a conditional approval that isn't a legal can of worms.

Therefore, I believe that your best course of action tonight is to turn down the demolition permit, but list exactly the additional information you require. This leaves the door open to re-application.

Finally, I have been singled out by name in a letter submitted for tonight, so I have a right to respond. I favor rehabilitation whenever possible: it minimizes waste, expands options for re-use, and can attract good publicity as well as grant support. I do not argue that all old buildings *must* be saved whatever the cost. That is neither my position nor that of preservationists in general. I support obtaining an independent expert opinion on the cost of rehabilitation versus new construction, clarification on the Right of First Refusal and its impact on an adjacent park, and information sufficient to avoid segmentation. These are reasonable requests for the citizens you represent.

Thank you for your attention.