

Dear members of the Village Board of Trustees:

I write in support of the Local Landmark designation for the Wells Boathouse Lawn, and Campbell and Barler buildings on Wells College campus. The merits of these designations are well supported by the Village Historian's reports and the contributions of experts and others in your meeting record. I'd like to simply offer you encouragement and gratitude for your service to the Village at this time.

For the past 20 years, I worked as the chief legal counsel for the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia, where the governing body often found itself in your position -- charting course for an uncertain future. The challenge before you is daunting to be sure -- you are trying to make the best decisions for the community in a complex and fluid environment, balancing the flexibility that the College and CBRE reasonably desire for the marketing of the property, with the value that historic preservation adds to that same property and to the community at large. The sale and redevelopment of the Wells College campus will impact the quality of life and economic prosperity in the Village for generations to come.

The Local Landmark designation decisions pending before you, along with the Village's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law, will contribute to the ultimate outcome of this pivotal time period. Decisions by private actors - the College Board of Trustees and private offerors for the property -- will largely "drive the bus," but the Village Plan and laws constitute important frameworks, especially during the due diligence period(s), when private purchasers are assessing the development potential of the property. It would seem to be important to communicate clearly that the Boathouse lawn is not available for development, and that Campbell and Barler are not to be demolished -- in the absence of some proposal that would merit the award of a certificate of appropriateness.

Finding the right future owner(s) of the campus will be a significant challenge, and you can reasonably expect to encounter one or two failed attempts before achieving success. I sincerely hope and believe that the right buyer(s) will be attracted to the extraordinary beauty and opportunity that the Village of Aurora and the Wells College campus offer. While you are engaged in this endeavor, continue to know and articulate the value of the Village, and think and act strategically.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the Local Landmark designation decisions.

Kathleen Dooley
Fredericksburg, Virginia
Wells College Class of 1982