

10 February 2011

Amy Scanlon - Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development
Bill Fruhling- Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development
Dan Stephans – Chair, Madison Landmarks Commission

In advance of the February 14 meeting of the Landmarks Commission, please see comments below on agenda items from the *Madison Trust for Historic Preservation* and *National Trust for Historic Preservation*.

Item 1 - 1341 Jenifer Street

We concur with the staff report, and encourage the Commission to mitigate the proposed casement windows on the addition, either by requiring the use of double-hung windows or by requiring that, as staff suggests in comment #4, the casement windows be of similar size and spacing to the windows openings in the original section of the house. Casement style windows, although not explicitly prohibited in the guidelines for Third Lake Ridge, are not typical on Victorian-era residences in the district.

Item 2 – Authorizing issuance of RFPs for James Madison Park houses

Selling these houses to private owners is a positive step for the city and for the deteriorating houses themselves. The city will divest itself of the maintenance concerns for the properties, and gain funding to invest in James Madison Park. Private ownership will have a positive effect on the maintenance of the houses. However, we are concerned about the potential for the houses at 640 and 646 E. Gorham St. to be moved from their original locations on Gorham St. Instead of requiring the houses to be sold and kept in their original locations, as per the recommendations of the committee that assessed this situation back in 2008, the RFPs leave open the possibility of the houses being relocated if a proposal were to meet all of the other criteria but proposed to move the houses.

Mayor Cieslewicz has advocated for relocating these houses, but rationale for relocation has been scarce. Relocation of designated historic houses like these which are contributing elements to the Fourth Lake Ridge National Historic District should only be considered under the most intractable of circumstances. Moving brittle masonry buildings is extremely risky, alters their appearance and integrity even if reconstruction of foundations, porches, stairs and chimneys are done carefully, and it removes them from their historic context, reducing them to mere architectural artifacts. These houses have been part of the fabric of the Fourth Lake Ridge area since they were built, and there seems to be no urgent or significant reason to relocate them.

We realize that the Landmarks Commission's charge on this item is to simply review the RFPs and comment on them to the current Surplus Committee. We would encourage the Landmarks Commission, in your recommendations, to take a position against the potential for relocation of 640 and 646 E. Gorham St.

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Item 3 – Buildings proposed for Demolition

No concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Tish
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