

Firchow, Kevin

From: Jim Powell [jamesdpowell@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, September 20, 2014 9:21 AM
To: bacantrell@charter.net; erics@cow.s.org; kenopin@ameritech.net; Zellers, Ledell; mcsheppard@madisoncollege.edu; melissaberger2@gmail.com; Heifetz, Michael; Michael Rewey; Resnick, Scott; King, J Steven; tonyalhn@aol.com
Cc: Firchow, Kevin
Subject: Comments on Lake View Nurses Dorm 9/22/14
Attachments: Nurses dorm comments Powell 9-22-14 mtg.pdf

Dear Plan Commissioners:

County staff have taken your comments about it original plan, presented to you last November, and have gone in the other direction. From an ambiguous, low profile nod to the the thirty-year history of the nurses dorm, they now are proposing a kind of mini-museum in an enclosed veranda, complete with multiple displays, lighting, a large mowed area around it, a new walkway and parking. This violates the park master plan and also promises made by Park Director Darren Marsh to you at that November meeting. Please see my attached comments for more information.

We have a rare opportunity to increase the natural area within Lake View Hill Conservancy Park through the demolition of the nurses dorm and oak-hickory restoration. The County is choosing to keep this area mowed for no good reason--no one wants it. The proposed mini-museum is also a grandiose proposal that most area residents are totally indifferent too; only a small handful of people have seen the proposal and at least a quarter of us have reacted to it in the manner set forth in my attached comments.

Thank you.

JIM POWELL

City of Madison Planning Commission
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Room 260

22 September 2014

Subject: **Legistar File ID # 31830** *Consideration of a permit to allow a former dormitory in Lake View Hill Park to be demolished to create additional open space; 1206 Northport Drive; 18th Ald. Dist.*

Dear Commissioners:

Please vote NO on the request for a demolition permit.

Only the post-demolition stormwater management plan for the proposed demolition has been satisfactorily improved. The changes to the demolition project itself remain seriously flawed. More than half the citizens who attend the public meeting on the proposed dormitory preservation scheme were opposed, including myself.

Now that the building must be demolished, because the efforts to re-purpose the building was a failure, it should be fully demolished, with the environs restored to oak savannah. Saving a nearly non-functional portion of the building and its footprint is a "folly" much like those that were built on the properties of Victorians, except that it is taxpayers who will foot the extravagant costs associated with responding to the persistence of a few preservation advocates.

The proposed dormitory "remnant" has a covered shelter area, which the public opposed during formation of the county park master plan. Both that shelter and the dormitory remnant as a whole will attract vandalism as well as risky outdoors activities such as boarding and wall climbing that are not compatible with the park's dedication to passive recreation. All this will continue already existing conflicts with nearby homeowners, while creating more public safety problems.

The mown/manicured lawn that the preservation scheme requires will add to maintenance costs. It will also make it harder for the county to achieve its stormwater management goals. Last, it fails to make use of an opportunity to restore the area to natural vegetation, one of the general goals of the county park master plan.

The current assemblage of Lake View Hill historical buildings, including the intact dormitory, has not become a "destination" tourism site. A dormitory reduced to a remnant will further diminish the already slim chances of a tuberculosis facility (that used an ineffective treatment regime) becoming a cultural draw.

If the folks who allowed the dorm to be demolished want to preserve its history, there are far better and less expensive ways to. Those include an idea from the county park master plan: a mini-museum in the lobby of the Human Services office, perhaps with an interactive digital display that is accessible from the outside, including during non-office hours.

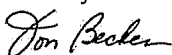
Furthermore, after more than two years, the county has still not provided satisfactory responses to some of the questions summarized in my letter of 18 November 2013 (please see below).

For example, citizens were informed that the dormitory roof had separated from the walls, adding to the already large costs of potential repurposing because of asbestos and elevator construction. Yet tonight the City is being provided reports stating that the building is structurally sound. County staff has apparently at little cost mitigated the asbestos problems. An elevator actually is not a requirement for re-use of a historical building, especially if public areas on the ground floor are accessible. Re-use options were pursued despite being incompatible with the outcomes of previous public participation processes. These problems compromised the county-financed research of re-use options.

Additionally, no effort was made to explore other options for re-use of the dormitory that would have been compatible with both the park master plan and input from past public participation, e.g., a bicyclist/pedestrian-oriented boutique hostel. This sort of facility has been a very popular category for hotel investors of late.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Jon Becker
Past-President, Friends of Lake View Hill Park; Northside resident
POB 3292, Madison, WI 53704

City of Madison Planning Commission
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Room 260

18 November 2013

Subject: *Agenda Item No. 8 Consideration of a demolition permit to allow a former dormitory in Lake View Hill Park to be demolished to create additional open space; 1206 Northport Drive; 18th Ald. Dist.*

Dear Commissioners:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment tonight, despite the October 30 cutoff for written public comment.

During service as a director and past-Board President of the Friends of Lake View Hill Park, I was the main proponent for the 2009 master plan.

That plan calls for preservation of the former Nurses Dormitory, which has historic value.

This essential fact should not be overlooked in tonight's discussion, even though the master plan does indeed also prohibit covered shelters, and does indeed also call for any public gathering area to be located in front of the building now hosting offices for Dane County Health & Human Needs (the former tuberculosis Sanatorium).

In my view, tonight you should refer this issue, pending provisions of answers to the following questions:

1. Who was responsible for letting the building deteriorate during consideration of its re-use, such that the roof reportedly separated from a wall?
2. Why did the consultant hired to research re-use of the building pursue functions that had already been rejected by participants in previous public planning processes?
3. Why were potential redevelopers and the public told that asbestos removal would cost in the millions? What was the actual cost of the asbestos mitigation action that has since been completed, apparently at a modest cost?
4. Why were potential redevelopers and the public given the impression that a costly elevator would be necessary for any type of re-use?
5. Why didn't the consultant interview citizens who wanted to offer alternative uses that were congruent with prior public input?
6. Why was the responsibility of fundraising for re-use of the building given to citizens who were known to be opposed to fundraising for Lake View Hill Park?
7. Why hasn't the post-demolition landscape plan been integrated with planning for replacement of the nearby water tower, as requested by citizens?
8. Why hasn't the post-demolition landscape plan been integrated with planning for a proposed eco-community landbridge to south, as requested by citizens?

The building should be stabilized to protect it from further damage, until the above questions have been answered.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Jon Becker

DATE: September 20, 2014
TO: Madison Plan Commissioners
FROM: Jim Powell

RE: Proposed nurses dorm demolition and reuse plan

As a nurses dorm reuse ad hoc committee member, founding member of the Friends of Lake View Hill and immediate neighbor to the nurses dorm itself, I present these comments regarding the disposition of the building and the future reuse of the land.

SUMMARY

- The County has fumbled quite egregiously during this project, but can salvage a good outcome by working within financial constraints, creating a modest memorial to the nurses dorm's modest ancillary aspect of the sanatorium history (no roof/2nd floor ceiling and no lighting veranda) and taking the rare opportunity actually increase natural area conservation in an existing conservancy park (oak-hickory tree restoration, no mowing, no new walkway/parking).

REUSE PLAN

- The best reuse is restoring it to a natural area (like the surrounding oak-hickory woods in adjacent Powell and Esch Addition properties) and would create a larger, more ecologically-sound wooded area which best serves the goal of a conservancy park. Lake View Hill is a conservancy park after all. A minimum of four of the 16 people who participated in the recent public meetings process are opposed to any structure on the site. The four are Friends of Lake View Hill members including a past president, a past vice president and past board member and a current board member. It should be noted that the Friends board of directors has neither consulted its membership about preserving the veranda nor has it voted on the matter.
- A natural area restoration would serve the "healing nature" of the tuberculosis sanitarium experience that the park cultural plan wishes to create. During the master planning and more recent processes, a recurring theme expressed by participants has been a focus on the healing nature of the tuberculosis sanitarium in a natural setting (a major artifact of the cultural history), restoring oak and hickory, to express this contemplative, healing aspect of the site. The personal experience is perfect for this space.
- The memorialization of the brief 30 year history of the Dormitory for Help should be modest, in keeping with the conservancy nature of the park. A simple plaque with an image of the door ornamentation will do. The cultural history of the tuberculosis sanitarium should be memorialized at the actual Old San building.
- The remnant of the nurses dorm should not prevent natural restoration from occurring. There should be minimal mowing around any memorial and the goal should be natural restoration, which does not include turf grass. The park already has acres of turf grass on a steep slope in front of the Old San (which generates a tremendous amount of stormwater runoff and, unfortunately, is

not addressed in this project.

- Given that the County is now set on preserving the veranda, the following should be done to better serve the points described above:
 - The veranda should be both roofless and have no floor on the second story because the park master plan forbids shelters¹, and the remnant as currently proposed will definitely be a place where people hang out year round. At recent public presentations, the County has described the veranda as “an attraction,” “a destination” and a “shelter; well, no, it’s not a shelter.”
 - A roofless veranda create a more natural open air feel to what should be an outdoor interpretive kiosk kind of setting (given public expectations created by the County over the past two years). This also will require less maintenance, an important aspect of anything in a conservancy park.
 - Interpretive signs should be the inside walls of the lower level only.
 - There should not be any lighting; it won’t be necessary in a roofless open remnant. Also, a no lighting promise was made by Park Director Darren Marsh as part of his testimony to the Plan Commission last November (and in in several conversations with us).
 - Numerous interpretive signs on the inside walls of the upper story will also attract longer term visits since it creates an inside museum feel of sorts; this contradicts the passive, walk through aspects of the area as previously promised by Mr. Marsh.
 - The veranda as presented will attract after hours use (which is illegal) and potentially graffiti (taggers will be out of view in such a setting).
 - The current plan will attract snowboarders in winter who will hang out there as they jump off the nurses dorm wall and may well jump off the second story of the veranda. Jumping is a big attraction to snowboarders and, as we have pointed out to County Parks over the past two winters, snowboarders have really discovered the nurses dorm in the past two winters (damage to our fence is one result).
 - Whatever the final plan for the nurses dorm remnants is, County Parks should erect a snow fence every winter around the site to prevent snowboarders from congregating in the area, damaging vegetation (they break off tree branches to make bases for show-packed jumps along the slope of the hill near our house). This should be done this winter too, no matter what the demolition schedule turns out to be.
 - The nurses’ dorm building is 25 feet from our western property line. We know the use of this area of park better than anyone. Aside from snowboarding, people are rarely in the area in daylight hours. At night people have partied in an around the nurses dorm for years; the County efforts of the past few years (lighting, denuding the areas of trees and boarding up broken windows has reduced the practicing but has made the

¹ From the *Lake View Hill Park Master Plan* (pages 34-35): “The master plan does not support the addition of any covered shelters within the Park.”

are more unattractive). Natural restoration can restore the beauty of the area as a mowed- grass memorial cannot.

- Recognizing the thousands of years of Native American history on Lake View Hill is critical and in line with the “healing” and “ecological restoration” themes brought up repeatedly by nurses dorm reuse ad hoc committee and 2013 charette members as important goals for the site. It is indisputable that Native Americans lived in this area for thousands of years before European settlement, and of course they lived, hunted, and did many other activities on the hill whether or not they built mounds on it. Given that it is the highest point in Madison and midway between Lake Mendota and Cherokee Marsh (both of which have effigy mounds, some have speculated that the hill may have been an important place to Native people. We have heard stories of Ho Chunk Indians remaining on Lake View Hill well into the 1800s and possibly even the 1900s (some Ho Chunk people stayed in the Madison area or returned after their forced removal in the 1800s). To assert that there is no evidence of Native American activity on the hill, and remove reference to Native from interpretive material about Lake View Hill is Euro-centric, if not racist.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

- We are grateful the County is finally proposing to address stormwater runoff in this area. The size of the proposed project demonstrates the scale of runoff that has been eroding the hill for decades. Keeping all runoff onsite should be the ultimate goal; the County should make every effort to reach or get close to this 100% water retention goal, given how it aligns with larger County watershed
- management plans (this is where capital funds should be allocated, in 2015; if building remnants funding needs be deferred until 2016 or beyond, it should be.).
- The efforts to keep stormwater runoff onsite are commendable and necessary. We appreciate the plan to redirect runoff in the paved maintenance area on our northern boundary to the west, as well as building a new curb (hopefully higher) along that boundary. A higher curb will help prevent road salt seepage into our woods, as well as provide a more distinct boundary to guide snow plowing in the winter. The County facilities manager has told us that the county will NOT plow snow onto our property, but will rather plow snow along an east-west axis.
- The proposed plan correctly avoids damaging or removing trees. We appreciate the engineering that went into doing so. The evergreens to the west of the proposed stormwater basins should not be disturbed; keeping the basin in the meadow will help maintain the quality of the rain gardens to be established there. While County Parks has been eager to cut down many trees in this area, the Lake View Hill cultural history, which describes the intentional planting and maintaining of the pines, will be diminished by the removal of more pines, just as the unwarranted recent removal of trees in front of the nurses dorm did.

NO PARKING

- With the idea of making the veranda an attraction and destination, the County is asking for permanent handicap-accessible parking spaces in the “temporary parking lot” that is forced the Plan Commission to accept in July. This is outrageous (make a promise one month, break it the next). Additionally, the parking is not needed. Handicap-accessible parking already exists at the Human Services building as well as a sidewalk path that leads to veranda area.

DEMOLITION

- The nurses dorm and access to it bounds our property on two sides. The County should consult us regarding ingress/egress and actual demolition processes and time frames as there is a potential negative impact on our property and lives. Safe asbestos removal, protecting our property from damage by machinery and trucks entering and leaving the site, and erosion control that keeps construction site debris off our property are all concerns that we hope the County can assure us about.
- Demolition will result in a big hole in the ground when the basement is removed. What will the fill be? The County has indicated this will be demolition debris with some topsoil. Not a good plan. Since the conservancy aspect of this area is paramount, dry mesic soil (appropriate to the area) at an appropriate depth should be used to assure natural restoration can successfully occur.