

Sean Mullin

From: Bess Wiersema [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2026 4:17 PM
To: Sean Mullin
Subject: Kendra's request from the HPC PC mtg

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[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Sean,

Thanks for hosting the PC meeting agenda item regarding the HPC's request and notifying architects locally so we could participate. I am certain we all are happy to continue a productive conversation when more folks (both from the HPC and local professionals) can be present - summer is always hard on schedules!

To Commissioner Burch -

Thank you for allowing us to speak at the recent PC meeting regarding HPC's request to update regulations, ordinances and interpretations of local historically designated homes. I did speak fast - so here's my write-up of what I said at that meeting, per your request:

I encourage the Commission to develop a clear and usable set of local evaluation standards that reflect our Town's unique history while remaining consistent with National Park Service guidance. These standards should identify the historical themes, development patterns, architectural styles, and community values that are important to our Town and establish objective criteria for determining significance and integrity. Such guidance would provide property owners, applicants, committee members and commissioners with a common framework for evaluating resources and would reduce uncertainty, inconsistency, and subjective decision making.

I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to direct the HPC to apply nationally recognized preservation standards, including guidance found in National Register Bulletin 15, when evaluating historic resources. The NPS makes clear that age alone does not establish historic significance or historic integrity. Rather, a property must retain sufficient integrity - through aspects such as location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association - to convey its significance. The Commission's responsibility is not to determine what individual members personally believe is historic, but to ensure that evaluations are conducted using objective, established criteria. By directing HPC to consistently apply these national standards, we can promote fair, defensible, and transparent decision making while ensuring that resources are evaluated based upon documented and nationally accepted means.

A locally adopted set of standards should clearly define what constitutes a historic resource in our community, distinguish between buildings that are merely old and those that are indeed historically significant, and establish expectations for the level of integrity required for designation. By creating these standards through a public process and grounding them in recognized preservation practices, the Town can ensure that future evaluations are consistent, predictable, and defensible. Such an approach will help preserve the resources genuinely contributing to the community's historic character while avoiding

the designation of properties that no longer retain the integrity necessary to convey historical significance.

Ultimately, the goal should be to preserve and protect resources that genuinely represent our history and heritage, not simply those that have survived based upon age alone. A combination of nationally recognized preservation principals and clearly articulated local standards will provide a stronger foundation for identifying, protecting and managing historic resources that truly contribute to the Town's character.

I also encourage the Planning Commission to direct HPC and the planning department to seek input from local architects, preservation professionals, contractors, and other qualified experts in developing practical local guidelines. We bring valuable (and free) expertise regarding building materials, construction methods, architectural styles, rehabilitation practices and the realities of maintaining and adapting older structures to today's current building and fire codes, as well as materials and methods. We are here - and ready to help. We need consistency! Creating real, appropriate definitions and standards benefits all of us and only strengthens our community's aged building inventory as a whole.

In follow-up you asked me about where do I have experience with other jurisdictions where addressing potentially historic structures is successful / consistent - and I believe I stated Carmel and Santa Clara - and the reason, in my perspective, is that they rely on professionals to inform decisions, or at least interpret/defend status.

Thank you for your time!

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