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Katie Pereny, Secretary
Historic District Commission
City of Mackinac Island
Mackinac Island, MI 49757

Re: **DEMOLITION REQUEST**
6948 Main Street

Dear Ms. Pereny:

The owner of the Red House at 6948 Main Street, Cheryl Jacquiss, has submitted a request for approval (Notice to Proceed) to demolish the building. The Historic District Commission has asked for a review of the proposed new manufactured home to replace the existing historic structure. Typically my reviews are for a Certificate of Appropriateness, not for a Notice to Proceed, and are based on using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for new construction related to existing structures, not demolition as is proposed here. However as a historic architect I can offer my professional opinion apart from the historic district ordinance requirement on whether or not the proposed new building meets these Standards.

It is possible to add new construction to historic properties and in historic districts, if the design, density, and placement of new construction respects the overall character of the site and district. According to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, **Standard 9** states that "New additions ... or related new construction ... shall be compatible with the massing, size and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment." And under Sec.10-161(b), **(1)**, "The historic or architectural value and significance of the resource and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area" shall be considered. These standards would be applied to a new rear addition to the existing Red House. However, again, under the Historic District Ordinance and the Local Historic Districts Act, the Standards only apply to a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (new work on an existing structure), and not to a request for a Notice to Proceed (total demolition then new construction).

In response to this request, it should be stated, first, that the Red House has been determined to be a significant historic resource. Based on the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluation to be listed on the National Register a property must represent a significant part of a theme significant to the history of its local area; i.e., through its association with the life of a person significant in history, or, embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction representing the architecture of its area.

The Red House meets both these criteria. First, the house is associated with a person significant to the history of Mackinac Island, that being a previous owner of the property, James A. Van Fleet, author of well-respected nineteenth-century histories of Mackinac Island and the Straits region, published in 1870 and 1882. And second, the front / original portion of the Red House embodies the distinctive characteristics of a simple / folk version of the Greek Revival style, with later Italianate style alterations. Its age is documented to as early as 1865, when the house appears in a photograph of that date. As such, the property would be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and was determined to be significant by the City's Historic District Study Committee in its report to the community on the proposed East End Mission Historic District in February 2023.

In order for the HDC to issue a Notice to Proceed, at least one of four criteria (summarized below) must be established:

- (a) Does the house constitute a safety hazard? - no, it does not;
- (b) Is the presence of the house a deterrent to a major improvement program? - no, it is not;
- (c) Is retaining the house not in the interest of the majority of the community? - no, it is in the interest of the community to retain the house, as demonstrated by its historic significance;
- (d) Will retaining the house cause undue financial hardship? - this has not yet been shown to be true.

The Applicant has raised only items (c) and (d), and the HDC has not made a finding on a Notice to Proceed. Previously it was my understanding that the applicant intended to demolish the rear addition(s), and to preserve the original front portion, as I had several back-and-forth working discussions (late 2022 - early 2023) with the applicant's architect, Richard Clements Architect, who developed design concepts for such, culminating in a scheme retaining the front portion of the house, dated February 20, 2023. This was acceptable to me as the City's reviewing architect, but was never formally submitted to the HDC by the Applicant.

The project application now submitted is to demolish the existing historic house and replace it with a new house. As proposed, the appearance of the new structure would not be compatible with the historic value of the surrounding area, which along the north side of Main Street, from the Island House Hotel on the west to Truscott Street on the east, is comprised of nine other properties with historic buildings.

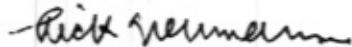
The Applicant suggests that since I preliminarily approved design plans for renovating the existing structure, those plans are equally suitable to complete new construction replicating the original historic structure. These two contrasting concepts are not equal, as a replication, or approximation of the original house, would not be historically accurate, and therefore not the same as preserving the original. Given an existing historic structure being replaced, a replication would be a deception - creating a "fake" instead of preserving the "artifact." Such an approach would undermine the integrity of this historic property, and the surrounding historic

environment. When a lost historic structure is reconstructed, historical and archaeological documentation is used to accurately replace the structure, but the Red House is not lost - it is an existing historic resource.

Based on my own experience with historic buildings over 45 years, and having worked on multiple projects involving repair and restoration of historic houses, including foundation repair, foundation replacement under existing houses, removal of additions, restoration of original circumstances, and construction of new appropriate additions, I believe the Red House certainly could be preserved. It would be helpful if access for inspection by a qualified structural consultant was granted to the HDC.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NEUMANN ARCHITECT



Rick Neumann

- c. Jim Murray, Plunkett Cooney
Dennis Dombroski, City of Mackinac Island
Gary Rentrop, Rentrop & Morrison