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Anaïs Starr, AICP
Planner II/ Historic Preservation Officer
City of Norman
Planning Department
225 N Webster Ave.
Submission via online portal

Re: 733 S. Chautauqua Application for COA

Ms. Starr,

The purpose of this letter is to explain the work that has been completed on the property referenced above and the reasons for said work. Also, this letter will explain the overall goal of the proposed work and extenuating circumstances that are relevant to a decision to approve the already completed and anticipated work.

I am an alumnus of the University of Oklahoma College of Law. My son, Frank Sullivan, III and his wife, Amanda, are both alumni of the University of Oklahoma. This property was purchased so their daughter (my granddaughter), Addison, would have a place to live while attending OU. She is a junior at OU and a member of Kappa Alpha Theta, whose sorority house is one block south of this particular property. Additionally, Addison's younger brother is a high school senior and has just been admitted to OU, and so the property will likely serve as a residence for him in the future.

When purchased, we had no idea that this property was part of any Historical District. The Residential Real Estate Property Disclosure form did not indicate that the property was part of a Historical District, and the MLS listing for the property affirmatively indicated that the property was not part of a Historical District. We have taken steps to protect ourselves by giving official notice to the prior owner and listing agent, Ms. Judi Hadley. Notably, we have since spoken with Ms. Hadley and she has kindly apologized for the inaccurate information. Upon explaining to Ms. Hadley our planned improvements to the home, she was optimistic concerning the approval of the already completed work as well as the anticipated improvements.

Had we known the property was part of a Historical District, we would have approached the Historical Commission and the City of Norman in advance and followed all requirements

prior to commencing any work. We love Norman and specifically the area near campus, and so our initial thoughts with respect to the property were to make necessary repairs while improving the exterior appearance in such a way as to promote the architectural harmony of the neighborhood. Our goals for the property mirror the stated purposes for the creation of the Historical District.

We procured a thorough inspection of the property prior to consummating the purchase, and made multiple pertinent discoveries. First, none of the windows were operational and were in fact “painted shut.” This was obviously a concern, as they provided no means of egress in case of an emergency. Also, the wood siding above the brick line and on the gable ends was rotted in several places, which had resulted in water intrusion. It was also noted that the brick was not original, as evidenced by the fact that the brick courses were consistent and continuous around the exterior of an addition to the back bedroom. The extension of the back bedroom clearly occurred after original construction, in light of the fact that the floor joists run a different direction, and there is a flat roof over only the portion of the bedroom that extends beyond the original line of the pitched roof.

It was clear that I needed new windows and siding, and I wanted to improve the exterior appearance in a way that would promote the aesthetics of the neighborhood. The brick was somewhat brittle, had spattering of white paint from overspray of the trim, had some gaps in the grout lines, and in general was an ugly orange color that was an eyesore. Since my daughter is a Theta, and the Theta house was within a block of this property, I thought it would be a beautiful improvement to mimic the classic appearance of the Theta house. With white brick and siding, black windows, a black garage door, and black gutters, I believed that the property would more closely harmonize with some of the nicer homes in the immediate vicinity.

I purchased new windows and paid a contractor to install them, at a cost of approximately \$16,000.00. I had the rotted siding removed and replaced with Smart Wood, at an approximate cost of \$20,000.00. I hired a painter to paint the interior and exterior, including the brick and siding. The painter had primed all of the exterior brick when we were first notified that the property was within a Historical District that required approval before exterior modifications. We immediately stopped work and have not done anything to the exterior since that time.

It must be noted that according to the “Historic Preservation Survey Inventory Form” that was prepared in 1988, this property was built in approximately 1950 and is “Noncontributing to Chautauqua District.” Even though it is non-contributing by definition, my goal is that the improvements result in 733 S. Chautauqua actually adding to the beauty of the neighborhood. I have read the guidelines and the ordinances pertaining to the Historical District, and sincerely believe that the exterior modifications promote the underlying reasons for the creation of the Historical District. This property is now more aesthetically similar to nearby properties than it was before. It is more beautiful and does in fact contribute to the overall aesthetics of the neighborhood.

I have included several photographs that were taken before and after commencement of work. The windows are vinyl, but you could not possibly know that unless you were a builder/professional examining them closely. No person driving or walking down Chautauqua could possibly discern whether the windows are steel or vinyl. However, I would contend that all people driving or walking by will agree that the new windows are more beautiful than the

sloppily painted windows that were replaced. The non-original brick was ugly, but with a professional white paint job, they will likewise be beautiful. The siding was deteriorated, but the new Smart Wood siding, painted white, will have clean lines and further accentuate the contrasting white/black theme that is prominently on display with the nearby historic Theta house. We humbly request that you grant a COA or Bypass, not require that I undo the work that has been accomplished, and allow me to complete the intended work.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Sullivan, Jr.