

Portions of this letter were submitted through the town's website on July 19, 2019 to Mayor Hemminger, town council members, Attorney Karpinos and Manager Jones. I have updated and tailored portions of that letter to introduce tonight's petition to the Historic District Commission.

Unfortunately a climate of negativity from a few citizens has surrounded the work of the HDC in the last several months, influencing members of our town government and distorting the intent and integrity of a few HDC members and their work on this commission. However that attitude runs counter to the results of the town's 2019 survey that indicated that 46% of our citizens did not think the HDC was doing enough to protect its historic districts and 36% of the respondents were satisfied with the job the HDC was doing. Generally, I've noticed that it seems to take a lot of courage for people residing in an historic district to speak against an application. Does this have something to do with fear of reprisal from other neighbors? From my own experience, at the HDC meeting on July 9th, rather than being deemed inappropriate, my actions and those of two other former members of the HDC reflected our dedication, follow-through, and love for our town's historic places. We were there to present facts and add continuity to the proceedings based on the anticipated new evidence to be presented that night. It is also interesting to note that that very night, another applicant returned with a new application and thanked commissioners for enlightening him as to the historic value of a small 1920's garage on his property — one that he previously expected to tear down and replace with a new structure. So I hope in the future, passion and dedication to this work, albeit via our public participation, won't be construed as prejudice and bias.

While it requires dedication, passion and expertise in order to serve on this quasi-judicial board, members also fully understand that their findings must be based on facts and on the evidence provided by an applicant. And in recent months, it has been made more and more clear that the burden of proof falls upon the applicant to provide this evidence. In my opinion, the application process for more complex and complicated changes has become more difficult to navigate because the applicant doesn't have access to a courtesy review. Take for example, the concept of the special character of the district. It is not based simply on mathematical setbacks provided by the town. It never has been, but at least well experienced commissioners and those familiar with the town's history would be able to help explain the qualities that contribute to this special character during a courtesy review. In the town's previous workshops, experts in the field of preservation have told commissioners to look at each application **individually** in order to decide if it is **not incongruent** with the special character of the district. That is because collectively the different aspects in each application create a unique situation that is best measured by standards as they are illustrated in the Guidelines and the LUMO.j

What I have said thus far is leading to my petition tonight. Last week, a few former members of the HDC encouraged by a local preservationist, Catharine Burns, attended a design review committee meeting in Raleigh. It is a committee made of former members of the HDC, town staff, and local professionals in related fields. And as it relates to the subject of the special character of an historic district, I noticed that the committee used two measures to make that evaluation: Built area to open space and Built mass to open space — a useful clarification for our LUMO J. - Architectural Scale. Tonight, I encourage this body to form such a committee in order to help citizens, the HDC, and our town government to work together as stewards to preserve our historic neighborhoods and places because this common goal slips farther away with each demolition, over-sized construction, two-story garage, and solid fence. I thank you all for your time and service and would say from experience, in light of tonight's recommendations for vacancies on the board, that having qualified people is critical to this board's ability to be strong leaders in the cause of historic preservation. Again, thank you.