

From: [Anne Pepper](#)
To: [Kelly Churney](#)
Subject: Fwd: Demolitions
Date: Saturday, October 10, 2020 12:04:43 PM

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Kelly,
Please forward this to the ARCOM commissioners.

Dear ARCOM,

I listened to your discussion about the need for demolition review which I completely support. Below is my letter to the Council. Although as a Sea Streets resident I hope to see as much of its fabric as possible as it has had the greatest integrity. However, having only the older 50+ years be subject to demolition would continue to put them at a disadvantage given the negative view that real estate agents have managed to paint landmarking with. I hope that all of you will write the Council or attend the meeting on Oct. 14th to support your need to have demolition review and that it is in the best interest of the Town. Combining it with some of the other ideas you have all expressed at other times regarding this problem, would be helpful to put forward. Perhaps one of you has an idea of how to write the details of this ordinance so that it is fair to all, clear to real estate agents, etc. and doesn't have unintended consequences. Thank you all for your hard work and thoughtful deliberations.
Anne Pepper

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anne Pepper <annepepper@mac.com>
Subject: Demolitions
Date: October 10, 2020 at 11:40:04 AM EDT
To: Anne Pepper <annepepper@mac.com>
Cc: Palm Beach Town of <council@townofpalmbeach.com>, mayer@townofpalmbeach.com, kblouin@townofpalmbeach.com, Wayne Bergman <wbergman@townofpalmbeach.com>

Dear Council, Mayor, Town Manager and Planning, Zoning and Building Director,

Isn't it time that the Town of Palm Beach stops giving lip service to preserving the character of the town's unique neighborhoods? Is it not also time to support our hardworking volunteer commissions? Over many years ARCOM has expressed great frustration when they are powerless to save older houses which are not landmarked or on the list for landmarking from demolition. These structures often constitute a vital part of the overall fabric of a neighborhood. Their loss rips holes in our built environment and, with current FEMA building codes(that's another email topic), what replaces them destroys the street scape. ARCOM is charged in the Town's code with the responsibility for preserving the

beauty of Palm Beach. To fulfill their obligation, they need to be able to review demolition requests. Worthy and desirable houses can often be rehabilitated, expanded, modernized without demolition and destruction of their integral relationship to the neighborhood. If owners, sellers and buyers knew that demolition was not automatic, more consideration to working with a structure might be given at the outset. A recent action on Root Trail is a case in point. The question is how to write an ordinance that is simple and clear and that all real estate agents can understand. What is most fair, as one commissioner suggested, is that all demolitions be subject to review. Putting only older houses under the ordinance would continue to have real estate agents discourage purchases of the very structures which the ordinance seeks to review. Logically, ARCOM would be the commission to review demolition requests. They are responsible for the built environment-what is too large, too similar, too dissimilar, not beautiful, ruins neighbor's views, privacy etc. They would look at a proposed demolition and see what is worthy of saving. ARCOM has also discussed the need to approve what will take place on a property that is approved for demolition. This avoids the sodded lot which is a blight on the neighborhood, reduces values and causes anxiety for neighbors not knowing what might be built next door.

Landmarks has such a small budget that it can only bring to consideration 10-12 properties a year. This leaves so many significant and contributing properties at risk. Furthermore, The Council has recently postponed and postponed even voting on the few that have been proposed. Property owners ask for automatic demolitions to avoid being Landmarked or put on the list for consideration. This has to stop. Landmarks has lost many significant houses because they cannot get designations or Council caves in to an owner who doesn't want his property landmarked. Our Landmarks ordinance is one of the strongest as it does not require owner approval. When it was written there was obviously a greater will on the part of the Town to support landmarking. How else would we have been able to landmark the signature structures we have? But the ordinance has not been upheld in numerous cases where the owner or buyer lawyers up. There are many advantages and incentives and more ought to be provided to encourage landmarking.

The historic resources are known. There is Jane Day's list, the recent historic structures list completed last year and the Landmarks consideration list. We must come up with a plan since the Town doesn't seem to support historic districts which are the best way to preserve neighborhood character. Make our code clear that neighborhood character preservation is primary to the intrinsic value of Palm Beach. Demolition review for all properties is the most equitable way to make sure valuable assets of our town's built environment are not lost. Keep it broad so that no property of any age is disadvantaged or advantaged and require ARCOM approval of any new structure before approving demolition.

Sincerely,

Anne Pepper
333 Seaspray Ave