

From: [Aly Serrano](#) on behalf of [Town Council](#)
To: [Town Council & Mayor](#)
Cc: [Kelly Churney](#)
Subject: FW: Demolitions
Date: Monday, October 12, 2020 10:33:46 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: Anne Pepper <annepepper@mac.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 11:40 AM
To: Anne Pepper <annepepper@mac.com>
Cc: Town Council <TCouncil@TownofPalmBeach.com>; Gail Coniglio <GConiglio@TownofPalmBeach.com>; Kirk Blouin <KBlouin@TownofPalmBeach.com>; Wayne Bergman <wbergman@TownOfPalmBeach.com>
Subject: Demolitions

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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