



## Planning & Development Services

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# Historic Preservation Commission

## Hearing Minutes of March 26, 2012

Commission Members Present    Barbara Dawson, Vice-Chair, Beth Lassen, Steve Smith, Stephanie Clarkson and Danielle Weaver

Staff Members Present    Sarah Schafer, Matthew Halitsky, Rob Lockward (Legal) and Nicki Heckenlively

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### **DRH12-00053 / Syringa Construction / Isley Development**

Location: 1715 North 7th Street

Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish existing structure and construct a single-story with basement single-family dwelling with detached two-car garage in an R-1CH (Single Family Residential with Historic overlay) zone.

**MATT HALITSKY:** Although the property is contributing and an asset to the neighborhood the applicant has met the required three of five findings under the Historic Preservation Ordinance necessary for a demolition.

- Finding b. That the building cannot meet landmark status.
- Finding d. That the applicant has demonstrated, through competing bids, that rehabilitation is not economically feasible.
- Finding e. That if the demolition proceeds the proposed redevelopment will have a positive effect on the neighborhood and that it is in substantial compliance with the Residential Design Guidelines for new construction.

These elevations show the proposed single-family dwelling redevelopment. The home is largely consistent with respect to the Design Guidelines for Residential Historic Districts including those pertaining to scale, massing and the use of materials as conditioned in the staff report. Two options have been submitted for the front porch. A roof that would add to the overall lot coverage as seen here or a pergola that would not add to the lot coverage. I will say however, that the addition is minimal. Here you see an artist's rendering of both. Either option for the front porch would meet the Design Guidelines for new construction and be acceptable. With the conditions of approval recommended in the staff report we recommend approval of the application.

COMMISSIONER LASSEN: When determining if it is not feasible to rehabilitate a property is there a percentage or number that you use to determine what is feasible and not feasible for remodeling versus new construction?

MATT HALITSKY: There is no metric that is outlined in the ordinance for us to use to make that finding. You have to take into consideration the overall value of the property, the amount of work and the cost to rehabilitate that specific structure or subject property and the cost to demolish the building and construct a new similar building of equal size and compare those two preferably with multiple bids to compare the bids of different contractors.

BELINDA ISLEY (Applicant): Staff gave an excellent overview of the project. We had a little bit of a miscommunication about the driveway so items c. and d. on staff's recommended conditions of approval are a moot point. Is that correct Matt?

MATT HALITSKY: The applicant is correct. Conditions c. and d. have been met so we can strike those.

BELINDA ISLEY: We agreed to the site specific condition to replace the Masonite trim with the hardi-board trim and to use real cedar shakes instead of a Masonite material. Conditions f. and g. are in regard to the chain link fence and to replace it with wood. We understand a fence permit is needed. We don't really know if that chain link is on the property or not so at the point this is determined we'd be happy to replace that with a wood fence. The siding was listed in the application as a smooth hardi-board horizontal lap siding. None of the windows, even though on the color rendition it shows a 4/1, have grids. We have met or exceeded the setbacks. We are six feet on each side. It was brought to my attention that the tree removal was an issue with some of the neighbors. There is one tree that will need to be removed. The largest trees are in the backyard and we're hoping to save both of those. One tree is very close to the garage in the front. It's probably the largest tree on the property and we hope to save that tree. The perspective owner Sharon Hansen would like to save all the trees on the property. There is one however that would be right in the middle of her bedroom so that one will have to be removed. This dwelling has been vacant for at least two years and is in a poor state of repair. It is uninhabitable as it is now. Having a vacant building in a neighborhood sort of attracts unsavory activities. It is my understanding that the owner, who will speak to you in a little while, does not wish to remodel the dwelling because it is financially not feasible for him to do so. What it would cost him to rehab this building in comparison to what he'd be able to get from rent doesn't make it financially reasonable. It makes much more sense to build an Energy Star rated home on this site that will accommodate a family. The structure as it is now is only 648 square feet. A family can't live in that home even if it were to be rehabbed. A nice single-family Craftsman influenced home on that site would substantially enhance the character the neighborhood. The neighborhood is comprised of single-family homes. It has duplexes. The lot adjacent to the subject property is a four-plex. There are large homes and there are small homes in the neighborhood. It is a very eclectic neighborhood. The home we are proposing is completely congruous with the look and feel of the neighborhood. We've been working with Sharon Hansen to design an Energy Star rated home that meets her needs and the needs of her significant other. Between them they have four children. This location is ideal for Ms. Hansen because it is close to her work. She is a teacher at Boise High. I would like to talk about the landscape plan

because it is a bit different. The client is a single mother and she works full-time. She has requested that the landscaping be beautiful and be very drought tolerant. All of the plants that are used are either hardy and/or drought tolerant. There is no lawn on this plan. The front is a ground cover. It will be irrigated by a drip system and the back has a lot of hardscape on it because it is met to be a sort of Zen inspired backyard. These are inspiration photos that we used when designing the landscaping for her. We figure in about three years there will be about 80-90 percent coverage except for the backyard and it is a minimalist design. We'd actually prefer to use pea gravel as that last photo shows, but staff has told us that mulch is a more desirable material for the district so we've replaced all the pea gravel in the back with the mulch material. As far as the cost to renovate versus the cost to build I have two bids. One from a builder that I know, have worked with and respect a lot and one from builder that I had never met until I met him at the property for him to do this bid. I was quite surprised to be honest with you after I got these bids. To the point that I made a couple more phone calls and talked to Strite Design and Wallace Custom Design to make sure that these bids were in line. They confirmed that these bids were in line with industry standards. I won't go through all of the numbers, but to rehab this home it is going to cost \$125,000 - \$129,000 dollars. To build a new 648 square foot home is going to cost between \$52,000 - \$58,000 and depending on finishes it could be a little bit more. On one hand it is kind of crazy to do this because we can build an Energy Star rated home that is going to be more energy efficient, stable and work better for this family than trying to rehab the home. Even if you rehab a 648 square foot home it really doesn't work for very many people and it certainly won't work for Ms. Hansen. With that, as staff presented in the summary and findings and with us excepting the conditions, we do meet three of the five requirements that rehab is not feasible relative to the cost of constructing a similar structure. The plans submitted are consistent with respect to the Design Guidelines and the building cannot meet landmark status.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON: On Page 4 of your application you call for vinyl windows that are 2/2 and yet you said you won't have grids in your windows?

BELINDA ISLEY: Those are the existing windows in the house now. There is a conglomeration of windows on that house now. The proposed windows are vinyl and we propose a sill depth of two inches over four to five inches. They are single hung with these right below the existing windows.

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: On Page 3 of the application you indicate that the proposed height to the building eave...you're going to have a two foot foundation?

BELINDA ISLEY: We're looking at a two foot foundation because this house has a basement. We want to do some tall windows in the basement so it gets enough light. We're proposing about a two foot foundation.

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: You're saying that the way the house appears in this drawing is that it sits on grade?

BELINDA ISLEY: Right. It is on grade, but there will be a foundation.

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: It will be two feet above grade?

BELINDA ISLEY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER LASSEN: There will actually be three to four steps up to the front door?

BELINDA ISLEY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER LASSEN: Is this shown on any of the elevations?

BELINDA ISLEY: No, it is not. It may be one and a half feet. It depends on the grade of the property. That property is relatively flat in comparison to the properties across the street, which step down.

COMMISSIONER CLARKSON: I would like to clarify that the applicant is in agreement with all of staff's conditions of approval with the exception of the chain link fence because we're not sure if it is on the property or not?

BELINDA ISLEY: If it is on the property we will replace it.

COMMISSIONER WEAVER: Could you clarify the desired option of the two options that you have for the front entry or is that still in the works as to how it will be constructed?

BELINDA ISLEY: Personally I feel that the covered porch is a nicer look because the columns can be a little beefier. The client is fine with either. It was really a lot coverage issue.

#### Site Visits

Commissioners Clarkson, Lassen, Dawson, Smith and Weaver visited the site prior to the hearing. Commissioner Smith disclosed that Ms. Hansen was one of his son's teachers at Boise High in the past.

SHARON HANSEN (Applicant's Client): I originally lived in the North End and I have been in the Highlands for eleven years and have been looking forward to downsizing and in the North End again. I have been working with Belinda and Syringa Construction to come up with the house on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. I'm hoping for approval. I work and teach at Boise High. I don't like riding my bike up Highview and I'm really looking forward to being a lot closer to the school so I can ride my bike. I love the 7<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood.

#### PUBLIC TESTIMONY

SCOTT SUMMERS: This is a petition and statement of solidarity. I went around the neighborhood and collected this because this is a controversial house in our neighborhood. I'll read the statement, "We the undersigned believe the house and property at 1715 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street should be preserved historically as is or renovated using the rules and regulations as set by Boise City Historic Preservation Commission". The reason this statement is so specific is because a lot of the neighbors have worked with you in the past renovating their own homes and the concern is

that...I can't really tell in the comparison of pictures whether the door or the window facing the street are going to be preserved, but apparently this is a big issue. There is nothing condemnable about that house except that it would cost a whole lot of money to renovate. Their proposed rebuild is about four times the size of the existing structure. The economic feasibility is a subjective term. She is proposing a structure four times the size of what exists there and economically it is not going to be feasible to renovate the current property at four times its original size in an economical feasible way. Syringa has shown themselves to be dishonest in the past and they've made some mistakes that possibly might not have been mistakes, but proof is a burden so I'm not going to go there. However, I've witnessed their behavior over and over again and I've watched the general contractor of Syringa pull up the property marker stake when there was a dispute about the fence at 1708 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street just across the street and over one. There was a dispute about the fence and the fence was put one-foot over on the property line of the next door neighbor. He asked them to move it and they tried to enter into negotiations with him about putting in a ramp so they wouldn't have to move the fence. Also, the general contractor came at the end of that work day and was pulling up the stake and I was on my porch watching. Sean came out of his house and said, "Excuse me that is unethical and you shouldn't be doing that" because the home wasn't finished. The general contractor put the stake back in and left right away. Later I helped Sean measure that property to make sure that it was still the proper width and it was still with the property markers. Personally, I think Syringa is not necessarily the right contracting company to be demolishing and renovating. They are padding their stats a little bit to make it seem like it is not economically feasible to preserve this home. It is not a good idea to approve this and tear this home down. More effort should be made. There is a trend in homebuyers to buy smaller homes and live more simply. I've noticed this. That doesn't seem to be addressed here at all. There are five homes right there and they are the same size as the current home and they would be completely displaced because this would be the third to the largest house on the block if this renovation goes through.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: You said a bunch of names, but you didn't identify who you are talking about. Who had their stakes pulled up?

SCOTT SUMMERS: The property at 1708 N. 7<sup>th</sup> that is right across the street. Syringa developed that. I don't have any proof so I'm not going to go into it, but that's what I was talking about.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: But not at 1715?

SCOTT SUMMERS: That's correct. However, past behavior is a good indication of future behavior in case you haven't noticed.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Not necessarily.

SCOTT SUMMERS: Not necessarily, but most of the time.

LARRY MULLINS: I'd like to talk about preservation of history. By destroying this house it will never get a chance to live to tell its story. This house at 1715 belongs there. Next door at 1711 N. 7<sup>th</sup> is a similar home with probably smaller square footage. Next door to that at 709

Eastman is a small home. Across the street at 706 Eastman is another cabin. Several of these were probably brought down from the mines so they are very historically significant. Also, across the street at 1706 N. 7<sup>th</sup> is another small cabin. There are five of these small cabins right in a row. What would not fit in this neighborhood would be a modern 2,470 square foot structure. There is no precedence for this on this block. The only precedence is the picture I just handed to you which is what Syringa built a year ago. Also, a very similar dwelling a block away at 1823 N. 7<sup>th</sup> stood abandoned and dilapidated for over 15 years. It now has been renovated and sold without adding any significant square footage. There is a responsibility to homeowners when they buy in the historic district. Leaving it abandoned to get it extra dilapidated where it will be cheaper to demolish it than renovate it should not be an option for preserving history. Homeowners certainly should not be rewarded financially for doing this. We all have to upkeep our homes in this district. This home at 1715 needs a chance to find an owner who wants to retain its historical charm, live simply as it did 200 years ago under a canopy of 100-year old trees with a huge garden spot. That chance is not going to happen if you tear it down. The tree on this property, as Syringa mentioned, is the oldest and tallest in the neighborhood. I have a concern that with xeri-scaping tall trees don't work. You have to water your tall trees. Syringa also removed another tree when they were building the house across the street at 1708. In conclusion this house was deemed historical when the historic district was formed and a whole lot of neighbors, including myself, would love to see this history preserved. Please allow this house to tell its story for generations to come.

MOLLIE HECHE: My house is a cottage that is 113-years old. I'm really distraught about the taking down of the trees. I very carefully went over to the house and looked to see what we could do. There are two big trees in the very backyard that could stay there and one in the front yard that would not bother any kind of a house. I worry so much about the fact that the house being planned does not really fit in with the North End preservation. It doesn't have the same feeling. Most of them have porches, most are not compact and it bothers me.

MICHAEL STANBULIS: I do share some of the same concerns. I will try not to echo, but I will try to add to them. I would like to expand on the economic part of it. As I put in my letter submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission the applicant compares, and I don't know if this is standard practice...you compare the replacement value of something of equal square footage and the cost of rehabbing it and then in that case yes. The cost of rehabbing it is about twice as much according to the estimates as constructing a new 648 square foot home, but the proposal in front of us is for a 2,470 square foot home. Given that fact and the estimates included in the applicant's letter of \$80 - \$95 per square foot the minimum they are spending not including the garage comes out to be \$192,000. And that's the minimum. That dwarfs the \$125,000 estimate that they're saying to rehab the property. If economics are holding them up it sure isn't coming out in the information they are putting in their letter. I wanted to echo that I live four doors down from the house on the corner of Hill. That was vacant from the time I moved in and was in extreme disrepair. However, with the right owner it was rehabbed, repainted and sold just two months ago with no demolition necessary and they were able to preserve both the house and the garage on the corner. I'd also like to go through some of the points that I noted in the Design Guidelines for the Residential Historic Districts which is from what I understand to ensure that we make consistent decisions. According to the Design Guidelines the first and foremost best option is to repair than replace. This certainly fails that. It

replaces deteriorated historic features rather than repair them. It does not match the old feature in design. It is not congruous with the massing size and scale of the contributing structure currently on the lot. It significantly changes the nature of the lot coverage. The lot coverage of the two proposed buildings, as far as I can calculate, is greater than the 30 percent of the total lot area. It requires removal of at least one mature tree from the lot and it is not congruous with the single-family residences in the immediate vicinity of the lot as Larry Mullins pointed out and it does not fit in with the goal of promoting a more sustainable community. The developer mentioned the Energy Star rating and that is great. I hope for a lot of their construction that they'll do that, but the biggest determination of environmental impact is from square footage so if you're talking about going from 648 square feet to 2,470 square feet I don't care how great you build that house you'll still going to have a greater environmental impact with four times the square footage. Lastly, this does not propose new construction in the matter that if removed would leave the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment unimpaired. Those are all quotes directly out of the Design Guidelines that fall under, "*It is generally not appropriate to*". Given this information and the fact that I would contend that they do not meet the economic condition that it is not economically feasible on the rehabilitation of the site, I don't believe that they meet three of the five conditions for the demolition of a contributing structure. I would respectfully ask the Commission to deny the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Explain to me...you said they do not meet the economic requirements?

MICHAEL STANBULIS: That's my contention. That is a subjective nature. Staff reported that there are no metrics.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: You disagree that it is going to cost a significant amount of money to rehabilitate this 648 square foot home.

MICHAEL STANBULIS: No, I do not disagree with that.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Somebody's going to have to pay that money and as far as I can tell there is nobody standing in line to rehabilitate this property.

MICHAEL STANBULIS: That may be the case. As I mentioned that house on the corner stood vacant for 15 years until the right owner who wanted to preserve it came along and did it. It is part of owning a contributing structure in a historic district.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Right, but that is not exactly our charge here. What I want to know and you maybe you don't know the answer to this question, but is there...assuming it is going to cost \$115,000 - \$125,000 to rehabilitate this home to 648 square feet. Is there actually a market at that price for that small of square footage? You basically eliminate families. Do you have any knowledge whether or not there is actually a market at that price, at that square footage in that neighborhood so that the owner of the property could sell the house or live there?

MICHAEL STANBULIS: I would be unaware of the answer to that question. It is not my job to be a realtor.

LARRY MULLINS: Can I answer that?

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: Not right now.

LARRY MULLINS: Okay, but if you want an answer I've got one for you.

MICHAEL STANBULIS: I have a hard time in claiming hardship when you're planning on spending more than twice as much of the cost to rehab it. There are other options. You can add onto the structure or do something consistent with the Design Guidelines.

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: Mr. Mullins, we'll hold you until the end after everyone else has a chance to speak.

ROB LESSER (Property Owner). I am the owner of the property located at 1715 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. To give you a little bit of a background I moved in there in 1981 and rented for about three years. The property went into foreclosure and I made an arrangement with the owner at that time to purchase the property. I bought in 1984. I moved out in 1988 and rented it until 2009. It is correct to say that I'm not in a financial situation where I can go forward and renovate the existing structure. I haven't rented it since 2009. Part of that is my own disposition towards the condition that renters have left both that building and another that I have. I am in favor of the proposal. It does come down to what is going to be designed and put in the spot. It is almost less than 600 square feet in doing my figures. It comes in under 600 square feet from my calculations. I'm not sure other than by age the contribution. 600 square feet is generally fairly minimal. Of the 2,400 square feet proposed I would presume that one-third is in the basement if not more like 40-50 percent as a point of context. From the pictures and the floor plan I've seen that are proposed I think it would blend in. It certainly will be a single-family house in the future and Sharon would be a good neighbor for this area. I'm not at that stage in life where I know what the future would hold in terms of my ownership other than what has been happening which is to hold onto it. I'm retired and I need to simplify my life is what it comes down to. In addressing the other point about the trees I've struggled to keep them together. At least three of the trees on the lot are Locusts and over that period of time we have had locust bores particularly in the late 80's and early 90's. The condition of the backyard trees and the one in the front yard have been affected by locust bores. I totally understand the irreverence towards keeping good green-scape and what have you. I'm just saying they aren't in the best condition as well as the one in the far corner.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Have you ever had an architect do plans that keep the original house and expand on it?

ROB LESSER: I have not, no.

DEREK HURD (NENA Representative): I have a concern. We have finite amount of contributing homes in the North End. If we keep on tearing down homes that are contributing

we won't have any more contributing homes left. In fifty years these replacement homes with cardboard siding and vinyl windows are not going to be contributing and we won't have anything to protect. We have a unique neighborhood and part of that uniqueness is that we have a diversity of housing stock. This is true of the home sizes as well as architectural styles and the people that live in these homes. Every time we tear down a 600-800 square foot house and build 2,500 square foot house we're not only eliminating a unique housing stock, but a demographic. Belinda said that no family could live in this home of 650 square feet yet it has only been vacant for two years. Obviously it has had over a century of happy homeowners. There is a market for homeowners who are single and couples who don't need a 2,500 square foot home that we're entirely eliminating from the North End as we tear down these little gems one by one. No one is replacing 600 square foot homes with 600 square foot homes. If we keep making excuses and we keep making exceptions we won't have anything left that makes the North End what it is. I've talked to two developers in the last six months about small developments of micro housing at 600 to 1,000 square feet. This existing home is a fine example of what these progressive developers are trending towards, but this home has the added benefit of the historical neighborhood, a home with a rich history, it is walkable to downtown and has a great lot, not to mention it is already there. Tearing this historic home down and building a larger than average home with cheap siding and vinyl windows is not beneficial to our neighborhood. You have to meet three of five findings to tear down a house. I have trouble with the fact that the information in Condition d., the economics this applicant has generated with no critical eye. It is really easy to get an expensive bid and a low bid to show how one thing is more expensive than another. Both of the bids presented are from builders who are partial to new home construction. I'll go out on limb and assume that they'd rather build a new 2,500 square foot home than remodel a 650 square foot home. Because of that I would also have to assume that their numbers are going in favor of new construction. When you dangle the carrot of opportunity to build a new home that is four times as large you're going to have some bias in the bid preparation. I would like to see a fair proposal from a contractor that would look at the project with the mindset of working within a limited budget to remodel the existing home and to fix it up and make it livable. We don't have that. We just have builders discouraging a remodel because of the incentive of a quarter million dollar turn-key job. It is your job as Commissioners to determine if the owner has reasonably demonstrated that rehab would not be economically feasible. I don't believe there is any evidence and I do know that there is no bid showing how much it would cost to bring the home into the livable condition that it was in two years ago. All we see from the applicant are bids to remodel everything possible that would cost a lot of money thus skewing the numbers towards a justification to tear it down. Lead and asbestos are scary words, but can most often be encapsulated and abated with a not so scary coat of paint. This is the most common solution so we can't be influenced by an undue fear and potentially unnecessary cost. The cost of mold remediation shouldn't be considered a hardship in the cost of this remodel because it was caused by the owners own neglect. Even so, mold is just another scary word with pretty straight forward cleanup. The remodel bid confirmation that Belinda mentions in her cover letter are from top notch quality and reputable builders who do some of the nicest remodels in the North End. One of these builders also builds new homes and his typical construction costs for new homes is \$150 - \$175 a square foot compared to Belinda's remodel number from him at \$160 - \$200 a square foot. This is obviously not as big of a gap as has been presented. This does show you however that these confirmations are coming from premium builders yet our comparables for new construction are from builders coming in it at \$85 a square foot and built in less than 60

days. Clearly we are not comparing apples to apples with the typical end product. We're seeing a comparable of a premium product and an economy product so of course the numbers will say what you want them to say. Incidentally neither of the remodels had any solid recollection of talking with Belinda or knew of the project. Because of that I can imagine that there was no discussion of how you could give a neglected home some love and make it livable again on a smaller budget. This is the cost that needs to be presented if you are to determine if it is not economically feasible and we simply don't have that information. We only have a number of how much you could possibly put into a remodel and not how little. Two years ago when people were living in the home it may have just needed a coat of paint and a new roof. Of course through two years of intentional neglect it will take an additional investment, but that doesn't mean you have to tear it down. There are obvious commitments of time and money that homeowners take when purchasing a historic home. This comes with responsibility of care and upkeep. If you're not diligent with maintenance it will cost more to repair later on. This additional cost for a lack of care of a historic home should not be used as an excuse to tear it down later. This cost should be borne by the homeowner as continued maintenance throughout the life of the home and not left to build up into a justification for a tear down. I want to mention that wood windows are more in character within the North End than vinyl. That is supported in the historic guidelines. Also, if the applicant says the home is to be 24 inches above grade, but is not sure and it is not shown in the application there should be some clarification for the record so it doesn't turn into six feet. Also, on Condition e., it states, "*The replacement home has to have a positive effect on the district*". The charming home on the site has been around for 112 years and has been having a positive impact on the neighborhood for at least 110 of those years. I'm not sure that a home built in less than 60 days with materials and craftsmanship in line with \$85 a square foot is going to live up to over a century of positive impact.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Was what you just read adopted by the NENA board?

DEREK HURD: I'm speaking on behalf of NENA.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: So this is the neighborhood association's position?

DEREK HURD: I have that authority, correct.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: There have been a lot of discussions over the years that we have to balance the need to preserve a historic home like this with any objective standard. I understand there is some subjective disagreement with where I'm coming from, but we have a six person family that is interested in buying this or building a new house or using this property and that is simply not enough room. It just isn't. NENA understands that this is a problem we face all the time. A historic home with not enough room for a modern family.

DEREK HURD: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: How do we balance that in a situation like this assuming that there could be an addition like there were on the Ice Houses on Hays Street where we seem to find a balance between preserving the historic structure and providing enough space? What do we do?

DEREK HURD: The Ice House Lofts on Hays Street was a very sensitive remodel to the existing home that was there and then additions were put in the back. There needs to be a balance of remodel and new construction if at all, but the tendency for “let it go into disrepair intentionally or otherwise and then tear it down” is a disturbing trend. That needs to be addressed and looked at. Also, the point that I was making that we haven’t seen...you’re basing a finding off of economic considerations when we really haven’t seen how much it would take a remodeler to go in and make that house livable like it was two years ago. We’ve just seen how much could you possibly spend on this remodel not how can we make this house livable again for a single person or a young couple starting out and that kind of thing. We’re removing that stock from the North End.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Let’s talk about reality and not what might be. You keep bringing up that it could work for a single person or a couple, but right now we don’t have any of those people before us. We have a six person family that wants to move in there. Maybe they should and maybe we’ll make them consider a remodel that solves keeping the structure in place, but how do we balance that? We have this historic home, but we have to provide for people that actually exist. We have a very clear mandate from our elected Council that we are to provide for families. I don’t see how we can do either of those by simply saying we’ll leave it at 600 square feet and hope somebody comes along.

DEREK HURD: There is a large quantity of housing stock in the North End that can accommodate families.

VICE-CHAIRMAN DAWSON: We have one individual who wished to re-speak.

LARRY MULLINS: You asked the question, “Is there a market for small homes”? Yes, there is. There is a national trend of 600 - 1,000 square feet being what people are looking for now close to downtown. It is a simple lifestyle. To specifically answer your question the home on Sherman is maybe 800 – 900 square feet. Again, they probably renovated for \$125,000 and probably sold it for \$200,000. It sold within two weeks.

JUSTINE LEGRUE: I have been on 7<sup>th</sup> Street for 22 years. I want to say that from the perspective of the new houses coming in and the existing neighborhood there have been mistakes made on both sides along the way. There are two houses right behind my house that come off an alley because nobody thought when it was platted 100 years ago that anybody would build there. Preservation only goes to the middle of the alley because it was thought that these houses wouldn’t be built 100 years ago. I want to say give some consideration to the character of the neighborhood and the people who are now third generations of people living there. If somebody wants to raise six children in that small of a spot more power to them, but there are so many other places they could put six people and keep this as a small house and in character with the 7<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood.

PUBLIC PORTION CLOSED

APPLICANT REBUTTAL

BELINDA ISLEY: I will start by clarifying that the main level of this house is 1,372 square feet so the figures that have been thrown around of this huge 2,400 square foot home...what you see is 1,372 square feet on the main level which is a fairly modest size home for what everyone is going to see at street level. The other thing that I would really like to clarify is that it seems that Mr. Stanbulis and his neighbors are thinking that I have magically come up with some kind of smoke and mirrors way of pulling the wool over your eyes by getting bids to renovate this house and also getting bids to build this same structure new when this is a requirement that was given to me by the City. Anyone that proposes to demo a house has the same requirement. I am only following your guidelines and requirements when I do that. It makes no sense and I agree with you that it is very confusing as to why Matt would want me to get a bid to construct this exact house and also get a bid to renovate it. Then it dawned on that the Commission and staff needs to be able to compare apples to apples before they make a decision. It would be impossible to compare renovating this building to me building a new home there. The fact remains that six people cannot live in 600 – 648 square feet so maybe we should send these six people to Meridian and then maybe they should get in their car everyday and drive to work in Boise. One gallon of gas puts 20 pounds of carbon dioxide into the air so we can have them drive 20 or 30 miles a day...let's do that. We're not asking for hardship. We are simply trying to take a dilapidated, abandoned, falling apart house and put a wonderful teacher and her family close to where she works so she can ride her bike and she can enjoy the North End. Although now I'm not sure she really wants to move here. Scott had said that he believed that this house should be renovated and that it would cost a whole lot of money to renovate. It is going to cost four times as much money to build a new house there. If we are talking about hardship why are we going to spend all that money? Because that money gets us a livable house for a family versus the money that we would spend to get us a house that cannot be lived in by this family who would like to live here. There may be a trend for smaller houses, but that is not what is on the table. What is on the table is a home for six people. The application is about 1715 N. 7<sup>th</sup> and it is not about any other house that has been built in that area. I would like to note that yes the fence was put on our neighbor's property when we built the house across the street and when that came to our attention it was immediately moved. I have no idea what he is talking about with the property stakes so I'll let that go. We are not owners of this property, but if we have a chance to look at the surrounding neighborhood it is very eclectic. There are large homes in this area. The four-plex right across from this proposed house is 65 percent lot coverage. There is 39 percent, 41, 33, 45 and 36 percent. They are all over the board as far as lot coverage. Mr. Hurd also brought up reputable renovators that I had give bids. Well, of course I did because we are going to build a really nice house so I wanted to compare that. Let's say your construction has a bid of an estimated price per square foot to build a new house at \$95 a square foot. I hardly think that I'm getting high end renovators and low end builders. I don't know if you had a chance to read HCI3's bid, but he says that in order to repair the foundation and level this house, which would require it to be lifted up for this to happen...you should read this because it is not a simple renovation. The foundation is trashed and the floor joists are 2 by 4. It is not a house that I would personally want to renovate. As far as adding to this home when I first looked at this project and before Sharon decided she would like to move forward with this I talked to Sarah about adding to this and the place that you'd have to add to this house would be on the side and behind this which in effect would take out any backyard area and if you put a garage in you

would have no backyard area. You would have a side yard which just doesn't work. We have met three of the five requirements and as much as the neighbors would like to maybe not see this happen we have met the requirements and there is going to be a really nice person in this house should this project go forward. Mayor Bieter said the last time I was before him on an appeal that he was very concerned that what we're doing is driving people to Meridian. This is a prime example of that.

#### STAFF REBUTTAL

MATT HALITSKY: Since the drawings submitted don't accurately reflect what is being proposed regarding the elevation I would recommend an additional condition of approval that a limit be placed on the height of the foundation. It sounds like a maximum of two feet would work with what is being proposed, but we should get that down.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Somewhere early in the discussion there was a suggestion that this was a mining house that was moved here. Do you have any historical evidence this is in fact true?

MATT HALITSKY: That may be true, but I have no information one way or the other on that.

#### PUBLIC PORTION CLOSED

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: I'm torn on this particular application. One of our previous hearings on another project elsewhere said, "When it is gone it is gone". I'm having issues with the foundation. I don't like the fact that we're told it will be elevated two feet and maybe have one, two or three steps up there. We have no drawings to indicate this. I'm not entirely content with the exterior of the home. Meridian seems to be the majority of a word right now, but this home looks like it belongs in Meridian rather than the North End. I would certainly like to see more research about the history of the home. Perhaps NENA could bring us some information as to if these were in fact houses that were moved into Boise from mining camps.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: I tend to agree with you. One thing I dislike is people coming in and making broad statements without offering any evidence. If in fact it is a mining house that should be brought before us. That is a very important historical fact. Secondly, with due respect to NENA, I know the previous representative was here a number of times and his name has escaped me...

VICE-CHAIR DAWSON: Dan Everhart.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Yes. We have to deal with the fact that our political council has told us that we need to make the historic districts friendly for families. It is not good enough to say, "Move to Meridian". It is not good enough to say, "There might be some other houses somewhere else in the North End". It is tough that these folks want to live in this particular house. However, I can't adopt what the developer said that adding onto this house is impossible or not feasible. That is pretty hard to say when we have absolutely nothing in front of us on the record that indicates anybody has tried at all to design such a project. I'd like to see that. I'm not going to support this particular demolition. At some point I might absent a showing that this was indeed a mining house, historic or a project that could actually house a six person family. I

am not sympathetic whatsoever to the argument made by several people that we just have to have houses that are 600 square feet. I don't buy that at all.

COMMISSIONER LASSEN: I'm also struggling with this application in that I don't like to see a contributing structure demolished even though it has met the three findings. Finding d., which has to do with demonstrating rehabilitation cost versus new construction, I struggle with this because a 100-year old home plus is not going to be up to code. The foundation is not going to be solid and anyone who buys this buys the house knowing that. In my experience remodeling is always more expensive than new construction. When I see these numbers that yes it is more expensive or it is not feasible to remodel...yes it is more expensive, but what makes it not feasible. For me, this is the question. I would like to see the applicant try to add onto this house. There is enough lot to do that and preserve the front façade and that the roof structure and the general simple massing of this house with some small additions to get...you want more than 600 square feet and maybe we can't get it up to 1,372, but you could certainly make a nice 1,000-1,200 square foot home and try to preserve some of the historic character of the house.

COMMISSIONER CLARKSON: I have some of the same concerns that my fellow Commissioners have expressed so I'm not going to expand on them. Along with what Commissioner Lassen just said about questioning how well condition d. is being met. Also, in hearing the testimony tonight, I am not confident that condition e. is met either that it would be a benefit to the neighborhood given how many neighbors are not comfortable with it. It is something that we need to take into account. Unfortunately people can't always get along, but I don't feel comfortable approving this application with the amount of descent and the amount of uncertainty we have considering the foundation height and the front porch façade. I would not support a motion to approve this application.

COMMISSIONER WEAVER: I would have to agree with my fellow Commissioners on most parts and would like to see something proposed to try and save this house. It can be done and I don't know if Condition d. has been met, but I'd have to agree with Condition e. in the fact that the new proposed house will only be 1,300 above ground so I do agree that the massing potentially might not be appropriate for the block considering the size of the other houses on the street. I'd also like to see that tree potentially saved it's getting removed with no proposal to replace it with another Class II or III tree which we clearly state in our guidelines. There are a few things on this site that are worth saving and will not approve this application.

**COMMISSIONER CLARKSON MOVED TO DENY DRH12-00053. THREE OF FIVE FINDINGS HAVE NOT BEEN MET AND THE APPLICANT HAS NOT REASONABLY DEMONSTRATED THAT REHABILITATION OF THE BUILDING, SITE OR STRUCTURE WOULD NOT BE ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE AND THE COMMISSION DOES NOT BELIEVE THE PLANS TO REDEVELOP THE PROPERTY WILL HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE DISTRICT AND/OR ADJACENT PROPERTIES IF DEMOLITION PROCEEDS.**

**COMMISSIONER SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**ROLL CALL 5:0. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**