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Subject: HDC 129 state st work session public hearing map 107 lot 47. HDC meeting may 4
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Historic district commission

my name is Jonathan Sobel and my wife and I and family have lived at 49 Sheafe St for over 19 years. We live directly across Sheafe Street from 129 state Street.

We have been before the historic District commission with proposals that have been termed major and minor and are well aware of the many proposals by our abutters for improvements and changes on Sheafe St, state st, as well as custom house Court.

The members of the historic District commission may recall that 20 years ago she Street was in shambles and the house is literally falling down and the neighborhood was home to biker bars and in fact Street fights and a stabbing - murder on the corner of Chapel and sheafe Street occurred.

So we have come a long way in the last two decades in this neighborhood and the historic District commission has been involved many times in this transition.

I would like to digress for a second

to state my opinion that Portsmouth is disappearing into two ways and the historic District commission does have an important role and oversight of how Portsmouth looks and visually feels to its residents as well as the many if not greater numbers of individuals who come to Portsmouth as tourists.

So Portsmouth is disappearing behind relatively giant hotels and commercial structures but also Portsmouth is disappearing because the residential and commercial owners of properties are continuously modifying and changing the appearance of the properties to such a degree that many of them do not even look like the original historic structures. It is difficult for a commission to appreciate the fact as it has been occurring over a period of decades and not just in a matter of weeks or months that is easily observable by the commission.

The Proposal before you for 129 State Street is case in point. if you look back at your own extensive records of the HDC it previously was extensively renovated and expanded and I must say that a really excellent job was done in terms of researching the original appearance of the of the building and achieving what was decided to be a very reasonable historic appearance. Small but important visual details were restored to the building and the previous owners were very cautious about the massing of the building relative to its rowhouse brick neighbors.

Now a proposal comes before you in which the massing is inappropriate and weighs heavily on the roofline expansions ...dormer...and it is my opinion that the proposal Creates massing on the upper stories of the building that is inconsistent with the historical appearance of the building.

At the street level there is a proposal to move the garage further east on the street and it should be noted that visually the street narrows down substantially at this exact point and therefore the expansion of the garage towards the street now will create a visual chokepoint and degrade and the Street view that so many out-of-towners enjoy and appreciate.

This will reduce the curb appeal of the residential properties as Sheafe Street will Look more like an alleyway than an important historic street and this could have a substantial effect on reducing the value of the adjacent And abutting properties.

So at virtually every elevation there is an increase in massing that is uncomfortable and visually inappropriate for the historical context of the building.

Finally elements such as the eyebrow Pediments over the windows are proposed to be removed yet these likely to be important historical markers that were previously restored by the previous owners. I can personally verify the shadows of the pediments that were representative of the original structure and the excellent job the previous owners did in a historical restoration that the previous Hdc was and should be quite proud of.

therefore I would object to the proposal in terms of the massing and degradation of the historic appearance of the building by removing elements that clearly are accurately restored and previously approved by the Hdc.

In short The proposal makes no sense whatsoever from a historic perspective and actually degrades the historic appearance of the building.

So I would not support the proposal on the technical criteria considered by the Hdc but also on a personal basis and opinion the proposal is just one more inadvertent action to make historic Portsmouth disappear.

Thank you

Jonathan Sobel Valérie Sobel

49 Sheafe St

Sent from JWSobel's iPad

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