

GOVERNMENT
OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

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MEETING

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 IN THE MATTER OF: :
 : HPA #06-463
 3228 WALBRIDGE PLACE, N.W., :
 ALTERATIONS :
 -----+

Thursday, October 26, 2006

The meeting of the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board convened in Room 220 South of 441 4th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20001, pursuant to notice, at 3:45 p.m., Tersh Boasberg, Chairman, presiding.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS
PRESENT:

TERSHER BOASBERG	Chairman
DENISE JOHNSON	Member
JAMES S. KANE	Member
ANNE LEWIS	Member
GAIL S. LOWE	Member
JACQUE PATTERSON	Member
RONNIE W. MCGHEE	Architect
JOHN MICHAEL VLACH	Architectural Historian
ROBERT SONDERMAN	Archaeologist

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AMY WEINSTEIN

Architect

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (3:45 p.m.)

3 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: The next case
4 on the agenda is also Mount Pleasant Historic
5 District, 3228 Walbridge. We're a little
6 ahead of time. We're running a couple of
7 minutes ahead of time. So are you all ready
8 for us? Do you want a couple minutes?

9 PARTICIPANT: We'll take a couple
10 minutes.

11 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. We'll
12 give you two minutes. All right?

13 PARTICIPANT: All right.

14 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: And it's 3:45.
15 We're accurate.

16 PARTICIPANT: I see you are.

17 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes. I know
18 you're surprised by that, but --

19 (Laughter.)

20 (Whereupon, the proceedings in the forgoing
21 matter went off the record at 3:46

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1 p.m. and went back on the record
2 at 3:49 p.m.)

3 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. This
4 case is 3228 Walbridge Place, N.W., Mount
5 Pleasant Historic District.

6 Ms. Armstrong, are you here to
7 testify in this as well? Come on. You can
8 certainly sit up here. And we have Mr.
9 Sanders? Yes, Mr. Sanders. And Mr. and Mrs.
10 Lucas.

11 MS. EDWARDS: Actually, I'm
12 Clarissa Edwards. I'm the attorney for Mr.
13 Lucas.

14 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. We
15 rarely see attorneys up here, Ms. Edwards. We
16 don't want to do them out of business, but --

17 MS. EDWARDS: I understand.

18 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: -- we try to
19 make these things design rather than legal.

20 MS. EDWARDS: I know, Your Honor.
21 Actually --

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1 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: No problem.

2 MR. DENNEE: Folks need to talk on
3 the mike. Press the button down here. All
4 right.

5 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: You're always
6 welcome.

7 MS. EDWARDS: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Now,
9 this is an uphill road in the front, because
10 of our guidelines, which are pretty strict,
11 and because of the uniform frontage of that
12 property. So it's an uphill battle.

13 And Mr. Dennee is one of our
14 prized staffers that we value very highly and
15 works very hard and diligently on this, and we
16 generally urge the homeowners to -- and the
17 architects to work closely, you know, with our
18 staff, because they are so familiar with the
19 cases that have come along before.

20 And, of course, we have to treat
21 everybody, you know, equally as they come up.

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1 So what we do for one we have to do for the
2 other. And the converse is also true; what we
3 don't allow for one we don't allow for
4 another.

5 So, Mr. Dennee, we have some
6 issues here in the front, we have some issues
7 in the back, and I think you had no problems
8 with the stuff in the back.

9 MR. DENNEE: No, no, no.

10 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: If you want to
11 comment on that. And why don't you kind of
12 help us out on the front, and this seems to
13 fit into a pretty defined pattern as --

14 MR. DENNEE: Sure. I mean, as --

15 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Go ahead.

16 MR. DENNEE: -- as the Board is
17 certainly well aware, particularly with the
18 rise of real estate values in recent years,
19 folks have been trying to make use of every
20 square inch of potential enclosed space on
21 their property, you know, going up when

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1 possible, rearward, sideways, downward,
2 whatever.

3 And, among other things, it has
4 resulted in a proliferation of basement
5 apartments and such things, particularly --
6 not limited to presidential zones that allow
7 for basement apartments. But there has
8 certainly, consequently, been a lot of
9 applications for entrances, street entrances
10 in front yards, sometimes on public space and
11 sometimes simply in private front yards, to
12 enter the basement from the front.

13 While it's certainly
14 understandable, somebody likes to have --
15 particularly if you have a separate unit, it's
16 good to have your mailbox out there, and
17 perhaps it's nice to have direct access to the
18 street. If you don't have a basement unit,
19 you might want to bring your hedge clippers or
20 your lawnmower or whatever out the front
21 rather than going around the block or through

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1 a sideyard if it's available.

2 So certainly it's understandable.

3 The problem comes that most of the rowhouses,
4 certainly in Mount Pleasant, were not
5 constructed with a basement in mind. In fact,
6 I think Mount Pleasant is pretty remarkable
7 for having been mostly developed within, you
8 know, a couple of decades and had fairly
9 similar housing types, particularly rowhouses
10 with full front porches.

11 The problem with -- the problem,
12 if you put it that way, or the challenge with
13 a full front porch is that it is a full front
14 porch. It occupies the entire frontage of the
15 building, and it's difficult for sort of, as
16 they say, two bodies to occupy the same space
17 at the same time.

18 And traditionally porches were
19 grounded. They sit on piers. They usually
20 have an apron, and they sit right on the
21 ground. Whereas the more -- the older, in-

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1 town rowhouses frequently had tight staircases
2 twisting around a stoop that occupied a half
3 or a third or something of the frontage of the
4 building.

5 These were, you know, more
6 suburban houses that the -- the porch was an
7 amenity. The porch was a way to deal with the
8 lack of air conditioning. It was -- they were
9 not intended to, you know, have holes through
10 them. This project in particular is difficult
11 to accept not only for creating the paved void
12 beneath the porch, but actually proposing to
13 tear out the decking for nearly half the
14 porch.

15 In short, this is probably one of
16 the most problematic cases for a front
17 basement entrance proposal that I've seen. I
18 mean, it has all of the elements of failure or
19 problem or whatever, because it requires the
20 demolition of a portion of an original stone
21 retaining wall, because the -- the front yard,

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1 what there is of it, is immediately available,
2 accessible, totally visible to the passerby.

3 One can, in fact, look right down
4 into this excavation along this -- down onto
5 this ramp and see the -- you know, the wall
6 and the doorway that would be behind it. It
7 requires the removal of part of the porch,
8 because this is such a -- has such a short
9 run. And, ultimately, there is rear access to
10 this basement, as I've seen, and as I
11 understand.

12 Finally, while a ramp may be of
13 some functional uses, perhaps secondary
14 egress, it's not -- a ramp of this slope is
15 not very compelling as offering good egress,
16 because it seems to offer impossible egress
17 for somebody in a wheelchair unassisted to
18 exit the property.

19 So I guess I'll leave it there.
20 I'm happy to answer questions or elaborate.

21 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. This is

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1 not a case of necessity to make it wheelchair
2 accessible. There is a rear entrance to the
3 basement that's at a grade, correct?

4 MR. DENNEE: That's correct.

5 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes, okay.

6 Okay. Mr. Sanders, Mr. Lucas, I
7 guess one of the things we try to encourage is
8 the applicant both talking within the
9 neighborhood to the historic association and
10 the ANCs, and also to our staff, which is
11 available, you know, to help them, because a
12 lot of them are unfamiliar with what's been
13 going on in the neighborhood. And so that's
14 why our staff is available for that.

15 So I would urge you, you know, to
16 be able to consult with them at an early
17 stage, and you might be able to avoid, you
18 know, something like this. But why don't -- I
19 don't know who would like to present, whether
20 the architect or the owner or --

21 MS. EDWARDS: Well, actually, Your

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1 Honor, the architect is going to explain the
2 design --

3 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes.

4 MS. EDWARDS: -- in the project,
5 and with respect to any effect that it would
6 have on the historical preservation. But with
7 respect to the gentleman's earlier comment
8 regarding a lot of people wanting to get front
9 entrance/egress, because of, you know, the
10 market the way it is, I just wanted to make it
11 implicitly clear to this Board that that's not
12 the basis for Mr. Lucas doing it. His
13 parents, as you may well know, had to actually
14 be moved to the basement level because they're
15 both elderly and they're not able to get
16 around.

17 While the back door exit would be
18 sufficient if they were in the back part of
19 the house, if there were a fire or anything of
20 that nature, an emergency, there would be no
21 way for them to get out the front. So that

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1 was the basis for the proposed changes to the
2 property.

3 And with that note, Your Honor,
4 I'd like for the architect to explain the
5 project in his model that he has brought for
6 you today.

7 One final thing. I also have some
8 -- a petition, I think an amended petition
9 that they -- the architect actually put
10 together for the Board, if the Court has no --
11 I'm sorry, I'm just used to being in front of
12 the Court.

13 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: No, no.

14 MS. EDWARDS: If the Board has no
15 objection.

16 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: What is it
17 about?

18 MS. EDWARDS: I believe it's the
19 same petition that you already have. They
20 just cleaned it up grammatically.

21 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: I wouldn't

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1 worry about grammar.

2 MS. EDWARDS: Okay. I know.

3 PARTICIPANT: They don't have
4 that.

5 MS. EDWARDS: You don't have that?
6 I'm sorry. I thought you had the petition.
7 Okay. I stand corrected, Board. Actually, he
8 tells me that this is the first time that you
9 guys have seen this. This isn't one that
10 they've submitted before.

11 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Well,
12 we -- you know, we haven't had a chance to --

13 MS. EDWARDS: I understand.

14 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: -- look at
15 this.

16 MS. EDWARDS: I understand.

17 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Go ahead.

18 MS. EDWARDS: So at that point,
19 you can bring it up again.

20 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: The purpose of
21 this was to try to provide some kind of

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1 emergency access to people who might be in the
2 front of the house.

3 MS. EDWARDS: Well, actually, for
4 the -- his parents, who -- they used to live
5 in the -- you know, use the whole entire
6 house.

7 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Right.

8 MS. EDWARDS: But since they've
9 become ill, they've been unable to -- they've
10 been moved to the basement, and they -- my
11 client has a caregiver there 12 hours a day
12 with both of them.

13 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay.

14 MS. EDWARDS: But our concern is
15 if the caregiver isn't there, and a fire or
16 something of that nature breaks out, there is
17 no front entrance for them to get out of,
18 because they're living in the basement.

19 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: But they could
20 get out the back end.

21 MS. EDWARDS: Well, they could get

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1 out the back, but they're not that mobile.
2 When I say -- it would be difficult, but they
3 could, yes.

4 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay.

5 MR. SANDERS: It also --

6 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes, sir.

7 MR. SANDERS: It also depends on
8 where an emergency would occur. If a fire
9 started -- the situation is that if an
10 emergency occurred, in case of a fire, for
11 example, if the Lucases were in the back -- in
12 the front of the house, they wouldn't be able
13 to get out if the fire occurred in the
14 kitchen, which is the most likely place for a
15 fire to occur.

16 And the back side of the house, as
17 Mr. Dennee mentioned earlier -- do you have a
18 volume control on here?

19 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: No. We're
20 lucky to have a mike at all. Go ahead.

21 (Laughter.)

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1 This is the District. Go ahead.

2 MR. SANDERS: Get a megaphone.

3 The purpose of this project was to make the
4 living quarters, the current living quarters
5 for the Lucases, more wholesome and more
6 conducive to a healthy lifestyle. So they are
7 living in the basement now, because as Ms.
8 Edwards mentioned, they can't navigate the
9 steps.

10 The project we did rearranged the
11 space, and because the mechanical equipment
12 that was there -- that's there now actually is
13 old, it's close to 50, 60 years old. It takes
14 up a lot of space. We put more efficient
15 space in in terms of heating and cooling
16 capacity. And also, more efficient in terms
17 of it being smaller. That freed up a lot of
18 space that enabled the basement to be more
19 useful.

20 Again, the critical element is to
21 put an interest from the front. Mr. Dennee

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1 mentioned something about the ramp being
2 difficult to maneuver. It's a little steeper
3 than the ordinary ramps, but the wheelchair
4 that they use could climb that hill, that
5 incline, that grade, ramp, without assistance.

6 A motorized wheelchair -- I'm not
7 sure if you're familiar with it, but it's --
8 the one we have in mind is a Hoveround. It
9 has a small turning radius, and so forth. The
10 design -- in order to get an entrance in the
11 front, basically, that -- the egress at the
12 front is also an entrance.

13 In case rescuers had to come to
14 tend to the Lucases, they could come in. As
15 the house is constructed now, there's only a
16 small window at the front, a very small
17 window, and from the outside it's down at
18 ground level. From the inside of the house
19 it's at the ceiling. So if a rescuer did get
20 in, he would be hard-pressed by make a rescue
21 by taking somebody out through the front.

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1 Our proposal deals with those
2 particular problems. And what we've done is
3 create, at the entrance that we talked about
4 before, that would be sensitive to and mindful
5 of the architectural and historic
6 characteristics of the area now.

7 By cutting a hole in the floor --
8 and I speak to all of this in the document
9 that was passed out to you -- by cutting a
10 hole in the floor, what we would propose to do
11 is maintain a spandrel beam across the front
12 with a full railing across the top of the
13 spandrel.

14 So from a person's sake, the front
15 of the house would look very much like it
16 looks now in terms of the ribbon, the
17 architectural character, and so forth, of the
18 Walbridge row of townhouses. The materials
19 that would be used in the alteration and
20 construction would also be commensurate with,
21 and similar to, the materials used in the

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1 original construction.

2 The landscaping, as you can see on
3 the model by the green, the landscaping would
4 also be -- should I hold this up?

5 MS. EDWARDS: Would it be easier
6 -- better if we held it up? Yes. Have you
7 put it up here. Yes. Would that help?

8 MR. SANDERS: The ramp was
9 designed with some features that take into
10 account the historic preservation issues --
11 for example, maintaining the green space of
12 Walbridge row. The ramp has a very limited
13 paved area. The ramp has a -- what I call a
14 step -- yard steps in the front -- in the
15 middle of the ramp, rather.

16 East side is fitted with -- I'm
17 sorry -- reinforced lawn. It's a system
18 whereby the substructure -- substrata of the
19 yard is enforced so that it can be traffic-
20 bearing, with openings big enough to allow
21 grass to grow between the traffic-bearing

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1 material. There are different types. The one
2 we would propose using is reconstituted
3 plastic, recycled plastic.

4 And that's pretty much the
5 proposal that we are presenting.

6 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Thank
7 you. Thanks very much, Mr. Sanders.

8 Let me ask you --

9 MR. SANDERS: Oh, may I make --

10 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Oh, I'm sorry.

11 MR. SANDERS: -- one last comment.

12 I would urge all of you to please read the
13 document, because in the short time we've had
14 to make this presentation today I couldn't
15 deal with all the issues that I wanted to
16 address. But the petition speaks to most of
17 the categories.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Thanks,
20 Mr. Sanders.

21 MS. EDWARDS: Your Honor, if I

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1 may, just one final note.

2 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes, Ms.
3 Edwards.

4 MS. EDWARDS: I wanted to make
5 certain that this Board had received a copy of
6 the documentation from Providence Hospital --
7 I believe it's in your package -- pertaining
8 to the medical condition of Mrs. Lucas.

9 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes. We
10 certainly understand the medical condition.

11 MS. EDWARDS: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Ms. Armstrong.

13 MS. ARMSTRONG: I regret to say
14 that this is the first time we are hearing of
15 the -- you know, the full implications of the
16 design. We are familiar with this case only
17 derivatively from receiving the staff report
18 and the things from Tim. We have not had any
19 direct contact with the Lucases or with Mr.
20 Sanders. We support the staff report based on
21 what we know at this time.

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1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Let's
3 open it up for Board comment, unless there is
4 anything else that you wanted to add.

5 MS. EDWARDS: I think there's one
6 other thing that Mr. Lucas wanted to add. He
7 said he'll defer, Your Honor.

8 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Okay.
9 We'll start with Ms. Johnson, and then we'll
10 go to the others. And thank you again for
11 coming. We understand the situation. Ms.
12 Johnson.

13 MS. JOHNSON: I'm going to start
14 out with a question to Mr. Dennee. As far as
15 you know, do we have any other instances in
16 the Mount Pleasant Historic District where
17 there is a handicapped ramp, where someone has
18 installed a handicapped ramp on the front?

19 MR. DENNEE: I can't think of one.
20 I certainly can't think of any that go into
21 the ground. There may be --

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1 MR. MCGHEE: Any lifts or --

2 MR. DENNEE: There may be a ramp
3 above grade, a wood ramp, but it's nothing
4 that you would normally see in Mount Pleasant.

5 MS. JOHNSON: And were you able to
6 explore any other kinds of handicapped
7 solutions with the owner besides a ramp? Are
8 there any other suggestions that you might be
9 able to make to accommodate this particular
10 problem?

11 MR. DENNEE: Well, theoretically,
12 one might, if the Board were to entertain the
13 idea of removing a portion of the porch, which
14 we think to be a character-defining feature
15 and probably not subject to removal, but if
16 the Board were to entertain it it's possible
17 to consider a lift that comes from the
18 basement level through the porch deck.

19 It would require probably
20 additional railings and mechanisms that might
21 be visible above the porch deck. But it's --

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1 the only thing I could think of in the front.

2 I mean, you could do a lift, frankly --
3 theoretically, again -- from the front yard
4 grade up to the porch and through the door
5 entrance, although as is typical I think the
6 door threshold is a bit above the porch, so it
7 requires modification not only of the porch
8 itself but also the entrance.

9 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. And I'm
10 sorry, did you have something you wanted to
11 add about Mount Pleasant?

12 MS. ARMSTRONG: Yes. An
13 additional to your question -- the halfway
14 house, 1700 block of Park Road, directly
15 across the alley from me, put in a wheelchair
16 lift on the front of the house to the
17 horrification of most of the neighbors and us.

18 But it was done.

19 It was done by removing -- they
20 had a wooden -- I'm not sure if they had a
21 wooden porch on the front, but they actually

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1 raised the level of the whole front porch, so
2 that you could -- you would have a straight in
3 over the front threshold, and then put a
4 wheelchair lift -- they have a sideyard there.

5 And where they could have put the wheelchair
6 lift, I argued to the director of the house
7 the other day, he could have put it in the
8 backyard where it wasn't marring the front.

9 They put it out front I'm sure
10 without permits. This is -- but this was done
11 10 years ago or something. But this is on the
12 front of a rowhouse.

13 MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

14 MS. ARMSTRONG: Semi-detached.

15 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you. My
16 comment is this. I think it's a very
17 difficult situation. While I understand the
18 need, I think we need to reach a better level
19 of compromise than where we are at present.
20 And what I'd like you to do, at least from my
21 perspective, is to go back and try to explore

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1 other options.

2 We know we had one handicapped
3 entrance and exit on the rear of the property.

4 I know you're trying to get another one in on
5 the front for safety reasons. But if safety
6 is truly the concern, my question would be:
7 are there other ways you can address some of
8 that safety issue?

9 Again, none of these are
10 necessarily inexpensive, but neither is your
11 proposed solution. So, for example, whether
12 sprinklering the basement gives you an added
13 degree of safety and protection, so that you
14 have the time to get out of that rear
15 entrance, looking at other options of trying
16 to create that handicapped entrance on the
17 front that does not destroy the historic
18 aspects.

19 So I'd like to see if you can go
20 back and do a little bit more research, and
21 try to work with Mr. Dennee and see if you can

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1 come up with a better compromise.

2 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Or maybe there
3 is even a way inside the basement to make the
4 exit in the rear easier, if there is a wall
5 that these could come down or if there is some
6 -- enlarging the entrance in the rear. It
7 would certainly allow much more flexibility in
8 the rear of the building. But I think the
9 combination of sprinklers and making that exit
10 easier might be helpful, too.

11 Let's talk to Ms. Lewis. She's
12 one of our architects on the -- any
13 suggestions?

14 MS. LEWIS: Well, I just had a
15 question, and that is looking -- you have a
16 first floor plan, and it looks as though, if
17 I'm reading it right, there is an existing
18 stair to the basement from the first floor,
19 but that you're taking it out.

20 I'm wondering, if the issue is
21 having a caregiver -- and I have two 80-year

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1 old parents, too, so believe me I can relate
2 to your situation. But if the issue is the
3 caregiver getting down, wouldn't another
4 option be to leave that stair in place, so at
5 least the caregiver could get down? And then,
6 have the one handicapped rear access.

7 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. That's
8 a suggestion.

9 MS. EDWARDS: I'm sorry. Could
10 you say that again? I don't think he was --
11 at least I didn't -- did you hear everything
12 she said?

13 MS. LEWIS: There is -- it looks
14 as though in the house as it is now there is a
15 stairway that goes from the main level down to
16 the basement, which would be an access for a
17 caregiver to get down there.

18 But it looks as though that stair
19 is being removed, so I'm just asking, what if
20 you kept that stair and at least that would be
21 a way down for the caregiver?

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1 MS. EDWARDS: Would that make it
2 easier?

3 MR. SANDERS: No.

4 MS. EDWARDS: Okay. Respond.

5 MR. SANDERS: That, unfortunately,
6 would not solve the problems we're trying to
7 deal with. The house now is a single-family
8 residence. The upstairs is unoccupied because
9 the Lucases are unable to navigate the steps.

10 The proposal is to convert it to a
11 duplex, which is allowed by zoning. It's
12 zoned to accommodate flats, which is a two-
13 unit apartment. Consequently, we've taken a
14 stair route, which, again, frees up the space
15 in the basement. The --

16 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: So there's no
17 caregiver -- the caregiver is downstairs. In
18 other words, you want to create, in effect, a
19 unit -- two units in this house.

20 MR. SANDERS: That's correct.
21 That's correct.

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1 MR. KANE: And the Lucases would
2 live in the basement.

3 MR. SANDERS: Yes.

4 MR. KANE: That's the goal is that
5 you would move them from upstairs downstairs,
6 and then you would have a rental unit on the
7 second and third -- first and second floor.

8 MR. SANDERS: That's correct.

9 MR. KANE: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Are they on
11 the first floor now?

12 MS. EDWARDS: They're in the
13 basement now.

14 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: All the time?

15 MS. EDWARDS: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Nobody is on
17 the second floor?

18 MS. EDWARDS: No. The basement is
19 in the bottom level.

20 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: So nobody is
21 on the first or second floor.

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1 MS. EDWARDS: No, no one is in
2 their upstairs.

3 MR. SANDERS: The basement is
4 completely above grade on the rear. The front
5 is completely basement, completely
6 underground.

7 MR. KANE: So right now they're
8 using -- they're living in the basement, and
9 they're coming in and out of the back door.

10 MR. SANDERS: That's correct.

11 MR. KANE: So this is to create a
12 rental unit on the first and second floor.

13 MR. SANDERS: That's not the
14 primary purpose.

15 MR. KANE: And to -- and to
16 provide access in the front.

17 MS. EDWARDS: Well, primarily to
18 provide access to the front, because the
19 upstairs no one is there. It's just empty
20 right now. There's furniture there, but they
21 are actually physically in the basement, and

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1 they have been for some time.

2 MS. WEINSTEIN: We didn't get in
3 our packages a basement floor plan. Is it
4 essentially one room in front and one room in
5 back and a kitchen/bathroom in between?

6 MS. EDWARDS: I think he has it
7 here.

8 MR. SANDERS: Yes.

9 MS. WEINSTEIN: The reason I ask
10 is that I, too, have an elderly, late eighties
11 father, who lives in assisted living. And I'm
12 pretty familiar with the housing type, and any
13 kind of one-bedroom, you know, unit in
14 assisted living for people like this doesn't
15 have a means of egress from the bedroom and
16 the living room.

17 Almost everyone from -- if you're
18 in the bedroom, you have to pass through the
19 living room, pass through the kitchenette, to
20 get out to the egress. So I guess I'll -- I'm
21 curious to look at your basement plan, but I'm

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1 not quite understanding why in your case you
2 feel you need two emergency egresses.

3 MR. MCGHEE: Well, from looking at
4 your plan here, I mean, I think you have to
5 look at assisted living a little differently.

6 I mean, it looks like the plan here is set up
7 to be more akin to an ambulatory person's, you
8 know, layout. But I think that if you are
9 really worried about the kitchen preventing
10 egress, you could always move the kitchen to
11 the front of the house and have living and
12 dining, bathroom and bedroom, in the back.
13 And then, they'd be not obstructed by the
14 kitchen.

15 So there's lots of ways to look at
16 reorganizing things, so they can go out the
17 back without having to change the front. I
18 mean, I guess the biggest problem I have is
19 that any sort of liaison with Mr. Dennee or
20 the neighborhood historic folks would have
21 shown you that this is not a winning

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1 proposition.

2 So there's a lot of effort and
3 time that has been spent, and time where they
4 might be in jeopardy, when you could have
5 solved it or -- by looking at the overall plan
6 and how they get out the back and things like
7 that, and protecting them in that way rather
8 than trying to do a ramp, because, I mean, you
9 know, if there's an emergency and, you know,
10 getting to the scooter and getting on a
11 scooter, that's not a real player, I mean, if
12 there's really an emergency.

13 So, I mean, I think it's -- or
14 getting help to them. I mean, the best thing
15 is to make sure that people know how to access
16 them from the rear, and so on and so forth.

17 I guess I'm a little concerned
18 that if you make it a rental on the top floor,
19 with no access to the basement, you just have
20 to make sure that caregivers and people who
21 might be coming to take care of your parents

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1 know that you get in from the rear. I mean,
2 this -- I'm just not -- that ramp is not going
3 to be easy to get up and down for them alone.

4 I mean, that's sort of the problem there. So
5 --

6 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Do you have
7 the zoning permit to -- you know, you need
8 zoning permission.

9 MR. SANDERS: Well, the first step
10 in the process to get a building permit is
11 Historic Preservation.

12 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: What reason
13 are you going to give for the Zoning
14 Commission?

15 MR. SANDERS: Reason for what?

16 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: For an
17 additional unit.

18 MR. SANDERS: It's already zoned.

19 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Huh?

20 MR. SANDERS: It's already zoned.

21 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Yes,

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1 Ms. Lewis.

2 MS. LEWIS: Well, to clarify, I
3 think what's happening here is that when you
4 make the basement a rental unit, then it
5 requires two means of egress, right?

6 MR. SANDERS: Upper level.

7 PARTICIPANT: No, it's the upper
8 level.

9 MR. SANDERS: The upper level is
10 the rental unit.

11 MS. LEWIS: But doesn't the
12 basement unit require -- it's also a unit,
13 right?

14 MR. SANDERS: Yes.

15 MS. LEWIS: And doesn't it require
16 two means of egress? I'm pretty sure it does.

17 And that's what -- that's what is happening,
18 that in order to get two means of egress you
19 need the second egress directly outside from
20 the basement unit. But I'm suggesting that
21 for your parents' purposes that one

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1 handicapped means of egress is pretty much
2 standard. That's what most people have, and I
3 believe that's all that's required in a
4 handicapped unit.

5 And I think if you keep the main
6 stair, you solve your immediate problem. And
7 I -- my concern is that we don't want to
8 approve things that we would not ordinarily
9 approve for historic reasons in order to
10 enable rental units. That's where I'm coming
11 from.

12 So I would suggest that we support
13 the staff report. If you need a second means
14 of egress, maybe look to some other way to
15 find it. But you probably need to think of
16 your goals, you know, whether your goals are
17 really for the elderly or for the rental unit.

18 But it's hard for me to see a way to approve
19 what has been proposed, and so I would support
20 the staff report.

21 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: I think that's

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1 what you're going to find is it's impossible
2 to make that kind of correction in the front
3 of the house. It has never been done. We
4 just can't allow it, especially where there is
5 already an at-grade means of ingress and
6 egress.

7 So, but I think Mr. Dennee can be
8 helpful to you on alternatives, and I would
9 encourage you to explore those. I think some
10 of them have been mentioned -- sprinkling,
11 moving the kitchen from one part to the other
12 part, you know, maybe making the exit, you
13 know, easier, and so forth.

14 So is there a motion, then, to
15 approve the staff report?

16 PARTICIPANT: So moved.

17 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: And is there a
18 second?

19 PARTICIPANT: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes. Further
21 discussion?

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1 (No response.)

2 All in favor, signify by saying
3 aye.

4 (Chorus of ayes.)

5 Opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 It's unanimous.

8 I'm sorry we couldn't do more for
9 you. We're sympathetic to this sort of thing,
10 but I just don't think it's going to work in
11 the front of the house.

12 MR. SANDERS: May I add another
13 comment?

14 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes, sir.

15 MR. SANDERS: We're concerned also
16 about the quality of life, the quality of the
17 habitable space that the Lucases have. They
18 have lived in that neighborhood -- in that
19 same house for about 50 or 60 years. And in
20 their twilight years, as we said before, they
21 have been forced to move to the basement. And

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1 the conditions in the basement are not
2 pleasant.

3 Consequently, the things that
4 we're seeking to do would make it a more
5 wholesome, a more healthful place, habitable
6 place, yes, by bringing not only another means
7 of egress and exit -- and entry, rather, but
8 also bringing natural light and ventilation
9 into the house.

10 If we move all of the parts of the
11 building -- the parts of the house that don't
12 necessarily need windows, like the kitchen and
13 the bathrooms, to the back of the house, then
14 you have a space that is enormously long that
15 doesn't work well.

16 In essence, you've created a long
17 shoebox-shaped one-bedroom -- one-room
18 apartment. So it's a difficult issue to deal
19 with. In the situation with regard to the
20 historic preservation regulations --

21 MR. MCGHEE: My take on that would

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1 be that, again, what Ms. Lewis said about,
2 what's your primary goal, you could make the
3 first and second floor their unit, and ramp
4 down from the front, potentially get a ramp
5 down from the rear -- ramp down from the front
6 as a temporary measure by getting a lift
7 inside the house or an elevator inside the
8 house. There's lots of ways to get that to
9 work, if renting upstairs is not the primary
10 goal.

11 MR. SANDERS: It's not the primary
12 goal.

13 MR. MCGHEE: Even if you made them
14 have the first floor as their unit, and the
15 basement or perhaps -- then there's ways to
16 get in and out. But by putting them in the
17 basement, you created this -- you still have
18 access from the rear, but you created that
19 problem. I think to me the first thing --
20 them up on the first floor, and maybe for the
21 short term, hopefully they live 100 more

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1 years, but for the short term that the
2 basement is not really used at this point.

3 There's ways to come in on the
4 front and put a stair down to the basement.
5 There's lots of ways, you know, to reconfigure
6 this house to make them have one or two
7 floors, depending on how you want to do it. I
8 mean, they have all kinds of residential
9 elevators now. They have chairlifts. They
10 have other things that go up and down to give
11 them two floors, to open up the floor.

12 But, again, that means
13 reconfiguring the house a little bit more and
14 putting it into their service. And it means
15 necessarily reducing -- maybe a stair comes
16 off the front lobby and goes up to -- maybe
17 the rental part is just the second floor unit.

18 You know, there's lot of ways to make it
19 work, and we can discuss that offline.

20 But, you know, by putting them in
21 the basement, the first decision putting them

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1 in the basement has created this problem,
2 really, so --

3 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Well,
4 thank you.

5 MR. MCGHEE: -- solve it, though.

6 MR. DENNEE: If I may, Mr.
7 Chairman?

8 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes.

9 MR. DENNEE: If I may just throw
10 out this idea.

11 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Yes.

12 MR. DENNEE: I mean, I did advise
13 the applicants that it was, you know,
14 essentially nearly impossible to get approval
15 of this. But mindful of the idea of
16 satisfying technically egress requirements,
17 and getting more light and air, I suggested
18 that we could look at the possibility of a
19 window whose opening would satisfy secondary
20 egress requirements in the front under the
21 porch, recessed a bit from the edge of the

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1 slab.

2 And, therefore, while -- to a
3 person who is not able-bodied, it would, you
4 know, probably be of little use as egress.
5 Certainly, if the apartment remained in
6 service, you know, in later years, it -- that
7 would work, and it would certainly introduce
8 light and air.

9 CHAIRMAN BOASBERG: Okay. Well, I
10 think there are lots of ideas that we can
11 discuss. I'm just encouraging your clients to
12 kind of talk with our people and with Fay.
13 Okay?

14 Thanks very much.

15 (Whereupon, at 4:24 p.m., the proceedings in
16 the foregoing matter were
17 concluded.)

18

19

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