

My Home owner response to the concerns of the Historical District Commission

My family and I moved into this house fifty four years ago. Years of neglect and lack of maintenance were evident everywhere you looked concerning this property. From the top of the chimney with bricks falling out to the basement there was not one square foot of this property interior and exterior that did not need some form of repairs. It had three boarded up windows and one boarded up den front door when we moved in.

Please Note: **Not all Historical homes were built without original and added design flaws.**

I wanted to address some of the problems we encountered, while living in this home that didn't make living here pleasant. Over time, we discovered the rear of the house had many problems with water damage issues. We tried in good faith to correct these problems for better long time preservation of the house and have better liveability.

My Goals

Provide Health and Safety and structural integrity to rear area of the home

- (1) Stop the water from coming into the basement and ground erosion from destroying the foundation of the house.
- (2) Stop the house addition from sinking that was added after the house was built, which had separated from the original house structure.
- (3) Stop the growth of black mold inside the house basement walls.
- (4) Get rid of the bats that had made a home in the inner walls of the second floor bed room where the room addition joints had separated from the main house and open up a large gap.
- (5) Stop the bats from getting into the interior rooms of the house. On occasion a bat would be flying around inside the house.
- (6) Stop rain and snow melt water from entering into the outside basement cellar door stairwell that created a damp moldy environment during most of the year. There is a floor drain at the entrance to the basement door however the area is always damp.

- (7) Address the rotting condition of the ground level basement horizontal flat cellar door entrance and its flimsy design. You could step on this door and cause it to collapse and possibly; a person could fall into the basement stairwell. I don't know what the original builder had planned for this trap door. It was made of wood, exposed to the weather, painted with no weather seal that would prevent water from entering the stairwell. Most of the time the door would be rot out because it was saturated with water. It did not have a latch to keep it open when you needed to enter this area. I had to use a broom stick to hold it open. I replaced this door three times. Even today, I have a small fan that I run 24/7 to keep the moisture down in this area.
- (8) Address the rotting condition of the back porch roof, frame and rotting vertical support column.
- (9) Address having to walk in small pools of water and ice that would gather at the bottom of the porch steps, because the cement patio at ground level that connected the porch to the house driveway had sunk; several inches below ground level and it would collect water that would flow into the outside wall foundation of the basement.

The idea of installing a deck, an arbor and a gazebo made it possible to address and correct all of the above unpleasant issues and to support the long time structural integrity and preservation of the house.

- (1) After the installation of the deck, I was able to reroute and extend the house rear gutter down spouts under the deck horizontally, to guide the rain water discharge twenty feet away from the house foundation. Now when leaving the house, we are able to walk across the deck, down three steps to the driveway with no trip hazard. The rear rain house down spouts are now running under the deck to the grass lawn. This helped keep the rain water away from the basement and house foundation. The basement became a lot dryer and I was able to clean up the moldy walls.
- (2) I also installed a layer of old bricks, sand, heavy duty plastic and pea gravel on top of the sunken patio at the bottom of the porch stairway to raise the level of this area under the deck. This stopped rain water puddles from accumulating under the deck next to the house foundation.
- (3) I added steps with removable deck sections to connect the three foot high deck to the old stairway at ground level to access the basement door. The deck sections were made so you could easily remove them to gain access to basement stairway area when you

needed access to the basement door. I also had to screen in the area so critters would not make a home in the stair well.

- (4) After the deck was installed, We no longer had to worry about kids playing on top of this basement trap door at ground level or anyone falling through this flimsy trap door. This was a very poor original design.
- (5) The Gazebo located on the east side of the deck provided sun cover and diverted the rain water away from the house addition foundation. This along with the gutter extensions running away from the house under the deck keeps the area nice and dry and the house addition from slowly sinking. If I turn the Gazebo around to match the roof lines of the house, the Gazebo roof line would cause rain water to flow towards the house foundation. It would not be good for the foundation of the addition.
- (6) The Gazebo that I was trying to install would have been **the final step** that I needed to replace the rotting out small overhead porch roof and finally stop any rain and snow melt from entering the basement stairwell. No more rotting out stairway and no more water problems and I could get protection from the sun and rain when sitting on the deck.

Summary:

I agree with a lot of the issues that you pointed out and for the first time in 54 years we were educated and made aware of the requirements you have to meet to live in a Historic District Commission zone. I truly want to thank you and work and input.

I would like to ask for your permission to alter the Arbor height to make it look less intrusive to better blend in with the style of the house. I would like to change the arbor to a flat roof with a small pitch like the house addition and garage. No shingles on the roof. Construction grade black roofing cover.

This would create **a larger porch replacement**. Same height as the old porch, however, covering a larger area to keep the water out of the basement cellar door area. The two 6" X 6" support columns for the arbor could be clad in wood, painted white to look just like the old porch support column. The exterior of the arbor would be painted white like the old porch and the trim color of the of the house. If this is allowed, for the first time in over 100 years, the basement stairwell would remain dry.

The deck Lights were installed for beauty and night lighting for entertaining when needed. I don't know how far you can go to make improvements to a home, or decorate a historical home to make it look better. Must the look of the home forever remain the same? Without these deck lamps, I would be seeking your approval and advice to have some sort of night deck lights.

I live in a high crime area. My house has been broken into on four different occasions. In this neighborhood having visible wireless cameras is a plus and acts like a deterrent to thieves. However, we will be more than willing to change the camera locations as long as the Wi Fi signal can get through this house that struggles with Wi Fi dead spots, because of the metal in the plaster walls. As long as I can record the faces of trespassers, I have no problem relocating the cameras per your recommendations.

I have no problem to change the paint color of the fence to become all black with no gold decorations.

Again, thanks for making me aware of the rules concerning houses in the HDC area. I can only hope that you will allow me to proceed. I hope the work we put into this house and the repairs we made will help the house survive a 100 more years.