

From: Valerie Burke

Sent: Friday, July 5, 2024 4:21 PM

To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>; Councillor, Karen Rea - Markham <krea@markham.ca>; Councillor, Reid McAlpine - Markham <rmcalpine@markham.ca>; Gold, Laura <lgold@markham.ca>; Councillor, Keith Irish - Markham <kirish@markham.ca>; Manning, Evan <emanning@markham.ca>; Hutcheson, Regan <rhutcheson@markham.ca>; Wokral, Peter <pwokral@markham.ca>

Subject: Heritage Markham Item 6.1 - Munshaw House Demolition Permit Application

To the Members of Heritage Markham Committee

Re: Item 6.1 - 10 Ruggles Avenue, Thornhill (Langstaff) Munshaw House Demolition Permit Application

Please support the repair and restoration of the last heritage asset standing in Langstaff Gateway! Support staff recommendation that all options be explored by the owner to conserve and repair the Historic Munshaw House as opposed to pursuing demolition of this structure.

The Munshaw House is the very last heritage building within the Langstaff Gateway area! This significant building is approximately 170 years old. It deserves profound respect and should be repaired and restored. Over the years every heritage structure within Langstaff has been lost to demolition. The community was promised that the Munshaw House would be protected, preserved and restored. It will be a wonderful, unique addition to the Langstaff community when it is fully restored and surrounded by modern looking buildings.

It is entirely possible to repair and restore the significant Munshaw House! "Where there's a will there's a way."

Sincerely,

Valerie Burke

From: Brian Fischer

Sent: Monday, July 8, 2024 9:28 AM

To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>; Councillor, Karen Rea - Markham <krea@markham.ca>; Councillor, Reid McAlpine - Markham <rmcalpine@markham.ca>; Gold, Laura <lgold@markham.ca>; Councillor, Keith Irish - Markham <KIrish@markham.ca>; Manning, Evan <emanning@markham.ca>; Hutcheson, Regan <rhutcheson@markham.ca>; Wokral, Peter <pwokral@markham.ca>

Subject: Heritage Markham Item 6.1, July 10, 2024- Munshaw House Demolition Permit Application

CAUTION: This email originated from a source outside the City of Markham. DO NOT CLICK on any links or attachments, or reply unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To the Members of Heritage Markham Committee.

With regards to the noted subject matter, Ward One (South) Thornhill Residents Inc. (**WOSTRI**) fully supports the staff recommendation that all options be explored by the owner to conserve and repair the historic Munshaw House as opposed to pursuing its demolition. The home has significant historical, architectural and contextual value. Some aspects are noted briefly below.

Historical Value

The home was built in 1809 making it 215 years old. The Munshaws who built it were amongst the first European settlers in the area moving from Germany to Pennsylvania and to the property at 10 Ruggles Avenue in the late 1700's.

Architectural Value

Although Georgian style houses such as the Munshaw House typically have symmetrical facades, the Munshaw House has its openings (doors and windows) placed asymmetrically, indicating that the builder was more concerned with the interior, functional arrangement of rooms rather than the rigid format of external aesthetic symmetry. This is reflective of the Germanic background of the owner.

Contextual Value

The original building predates the crossroads community of Langstaff itself. Few local examples of hewn log construction, as incorporated in the Munshaw construction, remain. In Markham, the only other known example is the Eckhardt House north of Unionville.

This is an asset well worth repairing and retaining.

Sincerely,

Brian Fischer

V.P. WOSTRI

To: Members of Heritage Markham Committee

Re: Item 6.1 - 10 Ruggles Avenue, Thornhill (Langstaff) Munshaw House Demolition Permit Application

Yet another attempt at demolition by neglect. Unless the cause of the fire is found to be a lightning strike, the responsibility for the current condition of the house falls squarely on the owner, who failed to protect the property.

The owner should not be permitted to benefit from this failure to honour their previous agreements with the City to protect the property.

We would note that the website of the engineers employed by the owner to assess the state of the structure does not claim any expertise with heritage buildings. When assessed in comparison to their normal projects of office buildings, condos and monster homes, it's not surprising that the Munshaw house was not found worthy of preservation. An owner who was truly committed to living up to their promises to retain and restore the building would have employed an engineer who was a recognized expert in heritage buildings and asked them if, in spite of the damage, there was any possibility of restoration.

Please do not allow the developer to get away with this failure to abide by their agreements with the City to protect this house. Please do not permit demolition. Please insist that the house be restored.

Thank you.

Tony and Angela Farr
34 Colborne Street
Thornhill

From: DIANE BERWICK

Sent: Sunday, July 7, 2024 12:45 PM

To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>; Councillor, Keith Irish - Markham <kirish@markham.ca>; Hutcheson, Regan <rjh@markhamca.mail.onmicrosoft.com>; Wokral, Peter <pwokral@markham.ca>; Manning, Evan <emanning@markham.ca>

Subject: Heritage Markham Mtg. July 10, 2024: Item 6.1 - Munshaw House

CAUTION: This email originated from a source outside the City of Markham. DO NOT CLICK on any links or attachments, or reply unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Members of Heritage Markham Committee

I do not support demolition of this important heritage asset. All options should be explored by the owner to conserve and repair the Munshaw House as opposed to pursuing demolition of the structure.

Nothing is left of our heritage legacy in the Langstaff area except this historic house. As outlined in Markham's Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, it has a long and important history - important not only locally but I believe one all Canada should know about and be proud of. The "History Description" from the City of Markham's register reads:

"The Munshaw Homestead is of cultural heritage value or interest for its historical background and association with an early German-American pioneering family. and the agricultural development of the Langstaff community. Balsar and Katharine Munshaw were German-American immigrants from Pennsylvania who joined the Berczy group in the United States as they journeyed to Upper Canada. Balsar Munshaw received the Crown patent for Lot 35, Concession 1, Markham Township in 1802, after living on the land for eight years. The Munshaws arrived in the area in 1794, first living at Yonge Street and Elgin Mills Road. They are credited with being the first European settlers on Yonge Street in that area. Their stay at the first location was brief. By the fall of 1794, the Munshaws relocated to the place that would become known as Langstaff's Corners, to be close to the family of Nicholas Miller, another Pennsylvania German. After initially living in a primitive round log dwelling, c.1809 they constructed a hewn log house. In the mid-1850s, William M. Munshaw, the grandson of Balsar and Katharine Munshaw, replaced the old house with a new dwelling of timber frame construction that still stands at 10 Ruggles Avenue. Balsar and Katharine Munshaw's descendents farmed the homestead throughout the 19th century. Charles Munshaw, a great-grandson, sold the farm for a suburban subdivision called "Langstaff Gardens" in 1923."

Short excerpts from "The Statement of Significance - Reasons for Designation - Heritage Markham Extract of March 20, 2008" indicate that:

"the property is a rare and early example of both an architectural style and construction method."

"Contextual Value": "Few local examples of hewn log construction remain. In Markham, the only other known example is the Eckardt House north of Unionville."

It would be very helpful for Markham Heritage staff to provide committee members with a copy of the March 20, 2008 document. The house was also discussed for designation by Vaughn in an interesting 1987 article which further outlines its importance, found on the Ontario Heritage Trust website.

Please do everything possible to ensure that this rare, important historic house is saved.

Sincerely,

Ms. Diane Berwick
The Robert Jarrott House
Thornhill, Ontario

July 8, 2024

Heritage Committee Markham
City of Markham, 101 Town Centre Boulevard,
Markham, Ontario L3R 9W3

Re: Demolition Permit Application – 10 Ruggles Avenue

I am writing in support of the repair and restoration of the Munshaw House. I understand that the protection and restoration of this heritage asset was part of the Conditions of Draft Approval for the plan of subdivision for this development before the house was damaged by fire.

Conditions of Draft Approval for the plan of subdivision for this development contain heritage conditions to ensure the protection and conservation of the Munshaw House. In light of this and the fact that this asset is the last heritage building within the Langstaff Gateway, the staff recommendation that all options be explored by the owner to conserve and repair the Munshaw House seems reasonable and should be supported.

It seems to me that allowing demolition of this asset before exploring all avenues available for conservation is not advisable. I do agree that another opinion from a firm familiar with heritage structures might be a good option and that the house should be secured in the interim to ensure that no further damage occurs.

Let's take the time to ensure that we are doing everything possible to protect the Munshaw House.

Sincerely,

Elena Cesaroni

Elena Cesaroni
4 Leahill Drive, Thornhill, Ontario

To: Heritage Markham Committee,
Regan Hutcheson, Manager-Heritage Planning
City of Markham

Subject: Response to Demolition Permit Application for Munshaw House, 10 Ruggles Avenue,
Langstaff

Dear Heritage Markham Committee and City Staff,

The Thornhill Historical Society (THS) is writing to express our concern regarding the demolition permit application for the Munshaw House at 10 Ruggles Avenue, Langstaff. As active members of the community and advocates for heritage preservation, we believe it is imperative to address the issues at hand thoughtfully and strategically.

Integrity of the Building Envelope

1. Structural Concerns

- The recent fire damage has compromised some parts of the Munshaw House, but not all of the asset.
- The photographs, which are limited to the most significantly damaged areas, and the structural review by LMS Engineering Inc. highlight the immediate need for action to stabilize the unsafe sections of the building and preserve this vital asset.
- It is crucial to commission a peer review or a second assessment by a firm experienced with damaged “heritage” structures to ensure all potential for repair and conservation is thoroughly explored. Additionally, the increased costs of repair within “heritage” structures are often validated by authorities and owners.



Photo Source: Barry Nelson 07/10/24

2. Unsafe Building Order

- The issuance of the Unsafe Building Order for any heritage structure that has been fully validated as such, necessitates immediate measures to prevent further deterioration.
- Temporary measures such as fencing the property have been taken, but immediate boarding up and then medium-term solutions are required to save the heritage asset.

Historical Context and Previous Commitments

1. Honouring Agreements

- The owner has previously committed to protecting the Munshaw House and should continue to honor these agreements with the City vs. the pursuit of demolition as a problem resolution.

- The owner's decision to provide an engineering report should now continue by employing engineers with expertise beyond the restoration of existing buildings and possess a portfolio of analysis/remediation of “heritage” buildings, thus demonstrating a genuine commitment to preserving this historic asset. A truly committed owner will engage engineering and remediation experts with a gallery of demonstrated best-in-class evidence of built heritage experience, to provide a method of restoration that will prevail within this remediation project.

2. Historical Significance

- Munshaw House, built circa 1854, stands as the last heritage building within the Langstaff community. It is not just a structure but a cornerstone of Langstaff’s historical and cultural identity.
- According to Markham's Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, the Munshaw House has a significant history tied to an early German-American pioneering family and the agricultural development of the Langstaff community. Balsar and Katharine Munshaw, early settlers, contributed to the development of the area.
- The demolition of Munshaw House would mean erasing a tangible connection to Langstaff’s past, leaving future generations with no physical link to the name and history of the area.

3. Cultural and Architectural Value

- The Munshaw House is a rare and early example of both an architectural style and construction method. Few local examples of hewn log construction remain, making this building even more valuable.
- The contextual value of the Munshaw House, as one of the last examples of its kind in Markham, underscores the need for its preservation.

Strategic Considerations for Langstaff Community

Community Identity and Place Making

- The essence of the Langstaff community is deeply intertwined with its historical landmarks. If Munshaw House is demolished and there are no residual “Placemaking” remnants of those who embraced its presence and history, the very identity of what is Langstaff is at risk.
- The building itself represents Langstaff; thus, preserving it, even at significant cost, is essential to maintain the community's heritage and identity.

Recommendations

1. Explore All Options for Conservation

- Heritage Markham should recommend that all options be thoroughly explored within any review to stabilize, conserve, and repair the Munshaw House.
- This includes a detailed peer review of the structural assessment and consideration of innovative conservation techniques.

2. Community Engagement and Support

- Take actions to engage the heritage community in understanding the significance of Munshaw House and to garner continued support for its preservation.

- Consider forming a task force dedicated to heritage resource management and advocating for the building's restoration and the Langstaff Community conservation.

3. Interim Measures

- While long-term solutions are being explored, ensure that interim measures are in place to protect the building from further damage.
- This includes ongoing structural monitoring, protective measures to stabilize the structure, and protection against the elements.

Conclusion

The Munshaw House is more than just a building; it is a cornerstone of Langstaff's historical and cultural identity. Demolishing it would mean losing a vital part of our heritage. We urge the Heritage Markham Committee and City Staff to prioritize a peer review first and then preservation, recommending that the city explore all avenues for its repair and conservation, and uphold the legacy of Langstaff for future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to our teams working together to preserve the rich history of our Langstaff community.



Photo Source: Barry Nelson 07/10/24

Sincerely,

Barry Nelson
Heritage Advocate and Treasurer
Thornhill Historical Society

treasurer@thornhillhistoric.org
thornhillhistoric.org

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Local history resources: thornhillhistoric.org/index.php/local-history-resources