

March 3, 2024

City of Markham
Planning & Urban Design Department
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, ON L3R 9W3

Attn: Kimberley Kitteringham, City Clerk
Cc: MP Hon. H. Jaczek, MPP P. Calandra, Councillor J. Nathan

Re: Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act,
Reesor-Spears house, 7560 Ninth Line (current owners Hiscott-Bortolussi)

Dear Ms. Kitteringham;

Please consider this letter to provide a formal objection to the proposal before Council to designate our home under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. We do not feel it is appropriate to designate our home. We object to having restrictions on how we may enjoy our home in the future or how we may sell our home in the future. We do not understand the desire to designate a home which has never seemed remarkable in the past. The Statement of Significance and the documents we've located online in this regard seem to indicate that it "**may or possibly may**" be of cultural significance, which is not supported.

We first learned of the City's intentions when we received the "Intention to Designate" letter dated February 8, 2024, from the City Clerk on February 14th. I will start with saying that this isn't the best way to advise families of this process, and there certainly can't be an expectation that residents are following the notice of intention on the City's website, as suggested in the letter. Despite the representations in the Recommendation Report dated January 23, 2024, at no time did City staff make any attempt to contact us or provide educational material. Also, as stated in the Recommendation Report, "*Section 6 of the legislation requires that all properties listed be either designated or removed from the designation list within a 2 year period beginning January 1, 2023*". Why were property owners not informed at that time? Our initial request to Mr. Manning on February 22 requesting answers to some questions did not result in any responses to our questions, but only an offer to talk. It would have been terrific if an information package could have been made available to us. Despite extensive internet searches and our request to Mr. Manning, we have yet to find any guidance as to how to object to this Intention. Is there a form, a standard format that needs to be followed? At the very least, we would request additional time to properly research this and respond in a more fulsome manner.

We have lived on Ninth Line for nearly 30 years, and have been active in the community, and have an interest in the history of Box Grove. While we knew (and valued) that the **north** portion of our home was part of a 19th century structure, there has never been any indication that this was anything other than a regular farmhouse in the area.

The heritage attribute indicating that “the dwelling is a tangible reminder of the first schoolhouse at Sparta/Box Gove” is not supported in any of the documents nor other records we’ve seen. All documents indicate that it “*may be*” or “*could possibly be*”.

The further comment that the heritage attributes that convey the property’s contextual value as “the location of the building south of the core of the historic crossroads hamlet of Box Grove” is a bit of a stretch, as our home is located nearly a kilometre south of the crossroads, and is **surrounded** by modern homes.

We’d like to rebut some of the “value” items presented in the Statement of Significance:

1. The property (**north building only**) was purchased in 1949, as noted, and the addition of the south portion of the home occurred during the 1950’s to our knowledge. We are very surprised that an unremarkable and not very pretty building addition from the 1950’s is being considered for heritage designation.
2. The **north** portion of the building is definitely older, but it has never been suggested that it might have been a school house. The building is a story-and-a-half, with small rooms, which we feel wouldn’t have been a typical schoolhouse, but more likely a farmhouse. *The statement itself indicates that it “may be the **relocated** schoolhouse”, but has provided no substantiation for this. It also states that “Frederick K. Reesor, a school teacher at Box Grove School purchased the property and **built a modest frame residence to replace an old log house**”. This supports the fact that it was a residence **not** a schoolhouse or possible site of the original schoolhouse. It also states that the “**original schoolhouse was directly across from the new school house (Box Grove Community Centre)**”, we are not directly across from the community centre so how can this be the original site? The statement also indicates that the old schoolhouse “**was made redundant when a new brick school was constructed**”. That is currently 7651 Ninth Line, the Box Grove Community centre, which is already documented as being the first schoolhouse in Box Grove*
3. There have been many modifications to the original building over time – the south part of the existing home is an **addition** from the **1950’s**. The addition of the large dormer on the second floor of the **addition** is just that – **an addition**. **All** of the windows in the entire house (north, south and west) have been replaced. The entire house has been re-sided with cement board siding. There are **very few - if any** - original or unique elements to be protected at this time.
4. The house is not “one of a grouping of nineteenth century buildings”. In fact, the house is some ways south of the cross-roads, with a new subdivision directly across Ninth Line, and very large modern homes along both sides of Ninth Line. In fact, our home is an isolated anomaly in the area, where the large lots of privacy have led to redevelopment of significant high value homes.

We have cared for our home and property, and do not have any immediate plans to make huge changes. However, we would appreciate the freedom to make changes to our home, perhaps paint the siding, add dormers, raise the roof on the addition, and modify the home for our retirement needs (ie: ramps), without the restriction of a designation.

The more emotional issue is the impact on the value of our home. As we noted, we are in an area which has seen a lot of development, and have always felt that our home represented some significant equity which would help us when we are ready to retire. We feel that the designation will unfairly and substantially reduce the value of our home. It is very likely that a purchaser would want to take advantage of the large lot and privacy to build a home more in keeping with the current neighbourhood. If the designation prevented this from happening, we feel that there would be a significant financial impact to our family.

We're hopeful that the City may be able to address some of our concerns, if our objection cannot stand. What protections can the City offer to us to ensure that we are not unfairly financially penalized through this process? Is there a process where homeowners can be compensated for this future financial impairment? Would it be possible to provide documented confirmation that the City would take on the responsibility to relocate the home if a future purchaser wished to build another structure on the property? Could the City provide us with a severance of our property, so that the west portion of our property could be sold separately in future, if the designation proceeds?

It should also be noted here that the property map pictured in the Recommendation Report is not accurate. The property was severed in 1991.

In closing, we object to the proposed designation on two bases:

- The City has not demonstrated that our home has design, physical, historical value that would support the designation of a **true** heritage home, and
- The designation would represent a serious financial impairment to the value of our home.

We trust that the City will respect our objection to the proposed changes to our home, and withdraw the recommendation in the January 23, 2024 Recommendation Report.

We would be happy to discuss our concerns, but would appreciate a response in writing as early as possible. If the City wishes to extend the response deadline to provide more time to address our concerns, we would appreciate that advice before March 7.

Thank you for your consideration,

The Hiscott-Bortolussi Family

Rose Bortolussi