

## Town of Washington | Architectural Review Board

### Meeting Minutes | August 26, 2024

---

#### ***Present:***

Nanette Edwards (ARB Member, Secretary)  
Deb Harris (ARB Member, Chair)  
Wesley Kerr (ARB Member, Vice Chair)  
Drew Mitchell (ARB Member)  
Steve Gyurisin (Zoning Administrator)

#### ***Absent:***

Ryan Crabbe (ARB Member)

***Call to Order:*** D. Harris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

***Approval of Agenda:*** D. Harris made a motion to add two agenda items, a discussion on the ARB Annual Report and a Rush River Commons issue, to be discussed under new business. D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

***Approval of Minutes:*** No minutes from the May 2024 meeting were submitted, so the approval was postponed to the September 2024 meeting. D. Harris made a motion to approve the July 15, 2024, Minutes with an adjustment to clarify the motion regarding the Inn's barn demolition request; D. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### ***Zoning Administrator's Report:***

- Zoning Administrator Steve Gyurisin observed the need to coordinate the ARB and Planning Commission annual reports. He also noted that the Food Pantry is open and operating.

#### ***Old Business:***

##### **Item #1: Request by The Inn at Little Washington to Demolish a Barn, 218 Piedmont Avenue.**

- a) **Zoning Administrator Review:** S. Gyurisin noted the receipt of two letters from town residents since the last meeting.
- b) **Applicant Presentation:** None
- c) **Citizen Comments:** The ARB received two additional letters\* from town residents:

Wendy Murdoch, 152 Piedmont Avenue, in a letter dated July 31, 2024, stated she does not support the Inn's petition to demolish the barn since it is of historical significance to the town and in keeping with its character.

Kim Abraham, 537 Main Street, in a letter dated August 21, 2024, suggested that the ARB add a checkbox to its application form to indicate if a building is a contributing historic structure, along with information on where an applicant can find historic documentation for town buildings. He favors a more transparent permitting process for changing or demolition of historic buildings to help keep residents and applicants better informed.

Wendy Murdoch said the barn appeared intentionally neglected and added that not only is it an historic structure, but a barn would be needed to house feed for the Inn's planned addition of livestock. She also pointed out the six years of neglect since the 2018 ARB board's decision to deny demolition. Mary Anthony read her letter\* against demolition, describing the character and charm of the barn and indicating it as the last barn on Piedmont and razing it would be a loss to our history. Caroline Anstey spoke in favor of a clearer section on the application form to indicate a historic contributing building. She also said that while we should respect the town's rules to preserve history and contributing historic buildings, we should also respect the property owner's rights, and in the case of the barn she is in favor of demolition due to public safety concerns. Mayor Joe

Whited said he hoped the town would improve its efforts to identify at risk properties in the future but given the state of the barn he favored demolition due to health and safety issues. John Sullivan said that while he values and lives in an old building, the barn's current state of total disrepair adds nothing to the town, and that the town is better off without it.

- d) ARB Review and Member Discussion: D. Mitchell said he appreciated the public's comments but that given the barn's current state he supports demolition. He added the current condition of the barn differs from what was evaluated by the 2018 ARB board, which denied demolition. W. Kerr said the Inn's application has followed the appropriate notice for Demolition by Neglect procedures. N. Edwards reiterated the ARB's mission is to maintain and preserve the town's historic structures, as well as preserve the sense of place and properties that contribute to the broad pattern of history and provide an opportunity to educate about the local historic heritage. She mentioned the engineer's report cited that the barn appeared that it had been abandoned for a significant length of time and not had preventative maintenance undertaken for a significant length of time. She was concerned that approval of the demolition would set a new precedent, particularly that it is okay to neglect a structure until it deteriorates. She encouraged the Inn to remove the vermin and repair the barn. D. Harris was in favor of the demolition. She stated this is because: The ARB must review this current application based on the guidelines --13.7.2, which has criteria for demolition; it is up to ARB members, at the time, to interpret these criteria to determine if the application meets those criteria; the criteria leave room for interpretation from current ARB members; and that this is a new board, and the state of the building is not the same as it was in 2018. She added that the barn is not in the historic core of town and is not near major landmarks or heavily defining features of the town. Given the current state of the barn, if it were to be renovated, she believes there would be very little to save, if anything. Furthermore, she said there is precedent for approving this type of demolition in the past, such as with the Black Kettle Inn and the recent packing shed. Motion: W. Kerr made a motion to approve the application to demolish the barn, D. Mitchell seconded the motion. D. Mitchell, W. Kerr and D. Harris voted to approve the demolition; N. Edwards voted against it. The motion passed.

### *New Business:*

#### **Item #1: ARB Discussion on Annual Report**

Secretary N. Edwards discussed the status of the ARB Annual Report. S. Gyurisin suggested that both the ARB and Planning Commission consider creating a template or spreadsheet format for ease of use and to provide consistency in future reports, which are presented to town council.

#### **Item #2: Rush River Commons Modification**

S. Gyurisin reported the architect for Rush River Commons reported an issue with a supporting beam that prevents transom installations on the commercial building. D. Harris suggested S. Gyurisin have Rush River Commons submit alternate design options for ARB approval.

### *Closing Comments and Adjournment:*

D. Harris made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., D. Mitchell seconded, which passed unanimously. The next scheduled meeting is September 16, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nanette Edwards, ARB Secretary

\*Attachments: Letter, Wendy Murdoch; Letter, Kim Abraham; Letter, Mary Anthony.

July 31, 2024

Re: Application by the Inn at Little Washington for the demolition of the the circa 1900 barn at 218 Piedmont Ave Washington VA

The historical barn is directly in my viewshed from my home at 152 Piedmont Ave Washington VA. This barn is of historical significance to the Town of Washington. In keeping with the historical nature and preservation of historical structures, in which outbuildings are part of the very character, I respectfully request that any attempt to raze or demolish the barn be denied.

Sincerely,

Wendy Murdoch  
152 Piedmont Ave  
Washington VA 22747

I will try to attend the August 26 meeting, but wanted to submit something in writing also so you may please pass it along.

I believe the town should consider including a check box or some way on an ARB application for owners and others to acknowledge when a structure is also a contributing or historic structure in town. I also think we should insure that the property or structure has been very well documented.

If an owner is unaware of a historic designation they should be informed of a responsibility to review Town documents including the historic survey that should be easily available. I believe this is the proper way to proceed that does not happen now unless I am mistaken on the process that we have observed in our 20+ years as town residents.

The demolition application for the barn at 218 Piedmont describes the structure only as a dilapidated, unsafe and vermin ridden eyesore with no mention or concern that this building is also listed as a contributing town historic structure. The Town email notice of "a barn" demolition and the applicant's description is an unfair and subjective property description for anyone reviewing or researching a permit.

Residents and visitors value the unique history of our town and its buildings along with its well known hospitality establishments, and it is significant when a building is listed as a historic or contributing structure and mapped as such in the Town's DHS historic survey project. The Town worked hard to achieve its historic designation which offers an accolade and clear snapshot of our town that we can archive for our future. Our historic nature is a community benefit and is not meant to be burdensome for a property owner. I understand that a historic designation rightly does not prevent changes or demolition of a resident's property, but people that appreciate the history of Washington wish to enjoy the presence of old buildings and hope to stay informed.

I visited the old barn on Piedmont and it is easy to see that it has been neglected, is now in poor condition and that it was not a well built or very early structure. It is unfortunate when properties and buildings deteriorate and I hope property owners can intervene before a building declines too far as this old barn has. I have no plan to oppose the apparent wishes of Piedmont neighbors to bring this particular structure down, but my concern is for a transparent permitting process for changing or demolition of the next historic building in town that may be a much more important or substantial structure.

Given the amount of current and future changes and new building happening in town, I am concerned that we may too easily disregard some of our town history for the sake of progress. Washington is the real deal historically and as our old buildings are reimaged, disappear or are

encased, we risk looking like just another make-believe community.

Thank you,  
Kim Abraham  
537 Main St.

I'd like to speak in favor of the old barn next to the pond on Piedmont Avenue. I love the pond by the way. It's beautiful and makes for a lovely stroll. My house is just up the bend on Piedmont.

To me, the old barn has so much character. Once it goes, only residential houses remain. That will be a loss for a bit of charm in the country, here. The barn is reminiscent of another era – it looks like it could be 100 years old, which would make it an antique and I would very much like to see it revered as such. I come back to the word, character. It adds a certain quaint accent and charm to the street and to the pond.

The idea of rebuilding it and using some of the same wood is apparently under consideration. But the idea of building a new, perfect barn, misses the point. If everything is just so perfect, then the architecture begins to feel contrived.

*For example*

*recently*

When the darling herb garden was completely annihilated, and reduced to a 30x60 patch of bare dirt, I felt like I had lost a treasured friend. It's not my property, I have no right to voice an opinion, but I feel there's a parallel. Instead of the beautiful, bucolic herb garden, which was already perfect in its brilliant simplicity, what appears to be replacing it is a very French walled, parterre garden with symmetrical pathways. I already resent the new garden for stealing my friend, the simple, sublime predecessor.

And that's how I feel about the old barn. It deserves to stay because it has witnessed much history and it is the last one to survive. Once it's gone.....well, bye, bye.

I've heard that there are numerous grants out here in Rappahannock and it would be so nice to explore that. The barn clearly needs a lot of help if it is to be saved. I think razing it to the ground would be a loss for the history and the aesthetic of our sweet town.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the humble barn and to defend her from the relentless march of time. Thank you very much.

Mary Anthony  
293 Piedmont Ave.