

Oak Bluffs Planning Board

From: Fred Rick Huss <frdhuss@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 1, 2022 3:01 PM
To: Oak Bluffs Planning Board
Subject: Letter against the Tabernacle Project as submitted

Dear Mr. Hopkins,

My family has been in the campground for over a century and I am writing you as a third generation board member of the MVCMA. I am against the Tabernacle addition. Most every cottage owner is for the roof repair portion of the project. The addition should not be approved since it modifies the historical structure of the Tabernacle which is the heart of our community. I attended the April 28th Planning Board session where Ashley Khattach announced that the restrooms will be built without a wastewater permit. This should not be allowed.

Cottage owners have no say as legally we are just land tenants and the Board of Directors serves as our landlord. However, this addition will require a loan. The leaseholders are the loan collateral and the bank may require a leaseholder assessment and if you can't pay, you could lose your cottage. We have been given no budget and no plans are posted on the MVCMA website. The information on the Oak Bluff Planning Board site at <https://www.oakbluffsma.gov/480/Tabernacle> was the first time these documents have been available to leaseholders.

Worse, leaseholders were told the addition would ONLY PROCEED IF THE COST WAS FUNDED BY THIRD PARTY DONATIONS. Copied below are materials from the MVCMA website that are no longer available but remain on Facebook. Board of Director member Frank Gould's Facebook posting of July 30th 2016 states that leaseholders will not pay for this addition. It's ironic that the addition we were told was to be funded by "donations and grants" is now set to become the largest debt the MVCMA will ever take on in its 185 year history and that as a cottage owner, I will be forced to pay for it. I ask that the Planning Board not approve the project and direct the MVCMA Board of Directors back to the drawing board to just move forward with the roof replacement that has the full support of the campground and the Oak Bluffs community.

Regards,

Fred Rick Huss

Copied from Frank Gould's posting: "The addition would proceed only if the cost could be funded by third party donations and grants....This addition will provide MVCMA with new sources of funding....with a Tabernacle that could energize the Arts on the island, more donors and foundations would, as we have have been repeatedly told, look more favorably upon the funding needs of the MVCMA.

Frank Gould's Posting - Proposed Tabernacle Addition posted to Campground Virtual Town Square Facebook Page Post of July 30, 2016

Frank Gould Below is the text of a document (without the photographs) that has been prepared in connection with this proposal:

Proposed Tabernacle Addition

Green Room/Dressing Room/Staging Area/Public Toilets

MVCMA is considering a proposal to add a staging area, green/dressing room, storage area and public toilets to the rear of the Tabernacle where what has become the porta potty village is today. This proposal is at an early stage of discussion by the Board of Directors. If erected, this addition would be the most significant change to the Tabernacle since 1901 but the addition would be similar to the original 1879 design. **The addition would proceed only if the cost could be funded by third party donations and grants.**

Will the Tabernacle remain a historic structure?

Certainly the proposed addition represents a change. However, it is not in substance much different than the many changes that have already occurred to the Tabernacle, including the concrete floor, audio and visual enhancements, the chairs purchased from Sears & Roebuck in the late 1800s and so on. The proposed structural change does represent something new but is designed to copy the rear exterior of the Tabernacle that originally existed behind the stage in 1879 but was torn down in the 1901 because of rot. The MVCMA apparently lacked the funds to restore the rear of the stage at that time. Quite simply, the proposed exterior structure would not surprise a Campgrounders from 1879. It would substantially be the same exterior structure, with some modifications, that existed in 1879. The US Department of Interior has reviewed this proposal and has concluded that "the project meets the Secretary of Interior's "Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures."

What will the expansion not do?

It will not affect the interior space of the Tabernacle. The stage and the seating areas will remain unchanged. Indeed, from the seating areas, you will not see any change. Only from the exterior rear of the Tabernacle, which is unattractive today, will be changed in a way that is more pleasing and consistent with the overall design of the Tabernacle.

What will change?

The Tabernacle will simply be more functional. The stage will now have a backstage area whereby actors, musicians, lecturers, dancers and even brides can enter the stage from the rear of the stage. Today, they need to climb the steps in plain sight of the audience. As one foundation observed, the MVCMA stage is nothing more than an elementary stage that will not support many of the performing Arts and makes all productions more difficult. The existing stage makes certain stage productions, as we have discovered, challenging and unattractive to performing groups particularly theatre and dance groups. The addition will make the stage a fully functional stage.

The backstage, which will be added to the exterior rear wall of the stage, will house a so-called green room which will be space that performers can wait and dress. Further, the backstage will possess a heated room to store our Steinway piano and audio/visual equipment. Today, we send the piano away for winter storage and house our audio/visual equipment in the Association Building. In addition, the new wing of the Tabernacle--the West Wing--will house public toilets including toilets for handicapped persons. Today, we employ expensive and unsightly porta potties that require frequent and noisy servicing. The potties cost MVCMA approximately \$10,000 a summer season.

Why make this change?

One answer is that the Tabernacle needs an updated staging area. The stage is inadequate today. While this answer is compelling enough, the more compelling **answer is simply financial. This addition will provide MVCMA with new sources of funding.**

The MVCMA faces an aging physical plant that it has attempted to remedy through successive restoration efforts. Despite those successful efforts involving many Campgrounders, we face a growing capital shortfall, including a need to replace the Tabernacle roof (at an estimated cost of \$2 million and the cost is escalating every year) and restore the the Association Building which requires a new roof and foundation as well as replace the aging

audio/visual equipment and restore the stage and benches. Simply put, there is a huge and growing gap between the revenues of the MVCMA and its capital needs.

Now, the only compelling reason for donations and grants is historic preservation. This reason is persuasive but will not provide sufficient donations and grants. However, with a Tabernacle that could energize the Arts on the island, more donors and foundations would, as we have have been repeatedly told, look more favorably upon the funding needs of the MVCMA.

Inquiries regarding this proposed addition should be made to the Executive Director of the MVCMA, CJ Rivard, or to members of the MVCMA Board of Directors