



HUDSON HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

• ESTABLISHED 1962 •

October 24, 2023

RE: AHBR 23-973

To the Members of the Architectural & Historic Board of Review:

Hudson Heritage Association respectfully requests that AHBR deny the application for demolition of the barn located at 1221 Barlow Road.

This structure is a key remaining part of a farm dating back to 1825 and a companion structure to the Ellsworth-Kilbourne House, one of the oldest surviving homes in Hudson. It also is one of a dwindling number of barns and outbuildings located throughout Hudson that serve as tangible testaments to Hudson's agricultural past. It is a handsome and imposing structure that its current owners and city officials have allowed to decay for reasons that are beyond our speculation, but which we suspect fall into the growing and disturbing trend of "demolition by neglect" -- a phenomenon that allows property owners to ignore their obligations as stewards of Hudson's historical structures. It is a phenomenon, we are sorry to note, that is not only reflected in this property, but in numerous structures throughout the city that have either vanished in recent years or have deteriorated to the point where they are structurally unsound, risk the loss of historical fabric, or face condemnation.

If AHBR and the city allow this demolition to take place, it sends a strong signal to those who own historical buildings that it's okay to defer maintenance and upkeep on these important properties because eventually, the city will simply allow them to walk away from their responsibilities and take the convenient step of tearing them down. One by one, Hudson will become known less as a city that preserves and protects its cherished historical properties and more as a place where it's easy to ignore the rules when it's inconvenient and expensive to safeguard what makes Hudson unique.

Further, we hope AHBR will use this case as an opportunity to call on the city to reexamine its priorities when it comes to protecting Hudson's endangered historical building stock. The city's code includes clear guidelines for addressing the deterioration of any building located within its boundaries and also specifies the process city staff is empowered to employ if non-conforming properties require remediation. Sadly, those tools are not currently being deployed in a forceful manner and AHBR is witnessing the regrettable result: a steady drumbeat of requests to tear down irreplaceable buildings that, together, tell the story of Hudson's past. Yes, it's important to build sidewalks throughout our city, but it will be a sad legacy if those sidewalks lead the pedestrian past vacant lots where valuable parts of Hudson's history used to stand.

We know that restoring this barn will be challenging. But we believe this structure deserves saving and can find a new use that also speaks to the stewardship of its owners and the values our city leaders hold as a priority for Hudson's current residents and those who will come after us.

Thank you for giving this request your serious consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nora Jacobs".

Nora Jacobs
Co-President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diccon Ong".

Diccon Ong
Co-President