

Town Council hopes to save old home from demolition

By ANA VALLE
Manassas Bureau

HAYMARKET — Town Council members were stunned by a request Monday to demolish a home that town historians say dates to 1895.

Council members and town residents groaned when Mayor Jack Kapp read the request to grant a demolition permit for the building at Washington and Fayette streets.

The home of a former mayor and a well-known doctor in town was targeted for destruction by Saturday, but council members voted Monday to table the request for 30 days.

Councilwoman Dottie Watts Leonard, a staunch supporter of the town's historic preservation, said the building was not in bad shape and should not be allowed to be destroyed.

"We have so very few attractive older homes. I would just hate to see that go," she said. "That's worth holding on to."

"There's got to be some applicable situation not to allow this to be done," Councilman Ron Hancock said.

Councilman Steve Bean said he believed there were structural problems in the building.

Town officials may have leverage to stop the demolition if the home is found to be historic.

A historic district overlay, formed in January, encompasses the whole 1-mile town and would protect the home. Specifically mentioned in the district ordinance are buildings erected before 1900.

But before a building can be

considered historic, an architectural review board must issue a certificate of appropriateness. But such a board has not been formed yet because the council has not found the five to seven people needed to fill it.

If the council does not set up a board in the next 30 days, it may not have grounds to stop demolition, warned Town Attorney Turner Smith.

Councilman Fred Price asked Smith if the council could act as an architectural board, but Smith did not OK that idea.

Sarah Turner, the chairwoman of the town's Historical Commission, said the house was built in 1895 as a resort home, one of several summer homes built in the town after the Civil War.

For most of this century, the house was home to Dr. Wade Payne, who died in the 1960s, Turner said. Miriam Gilbertson, mayor in the late 1970s and early 1980s, also lived there.

If the property owners win approval to raze the building, they plan to leave the property undeveloped for about two years, Kapp said.



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