



October 18, 2023

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LETTER OF SUPPORT TO PREVENT THE DEMOLITION OF THE DETROIT BOAT CLUB  
BOATHOUSE ON BELLE ISLE

DEAR MS. GRAVES,

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network has only recently become aware of the Belle Isle Advisory Committee meeting tomorrow at 9:00 AM to discuss the DNR's plans to demolish the Belle Isle Boat Club Building on Belle Isle. We are opposed to the demolition of this historic resource. We have several questions about the decision-making process that has led to the proposed demolition. I apologize if some of this information is available elsewhere.

The DNR has a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers to justify demolition. However, as far as I know, they have not provided evidence of structural failure, hazardous materials abatement, or demolition costs. They also have not provided construction and maintenance costs for any project replacing the Boathouse.

The DNR has allowed the building to decay for decades and now argues any restoration is cost-prohibitive. The Detroit News reports today that Thomas Bissett, the urban district supervisor for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Division,

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is making "an educated guess" of the restoration costs. He also cites unspecified structural issues with the building.

The DNR should provide the following documents to guide the discussion of demolition vs. potential renovation.

1. A forensic structural analysis. If a report has not been provided within the last 12 months, the DNR needs to hire a forensic structural engineer for a complete evaluation.
2. Environmental reports. Given the building's age, there is a near certainty it contains lead paint and asbestos, among other hazardous materials. Pre-demolition work requires a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment with Pre-Renovation ACM Inspection and Lead Based Paint Testing, followed by a Phase II study and a quote to abate hazardous materials. The testing and abatement quote should include the soil outside the building.
3. Bids, if any, for the abatement of hazardous materials and the building demolition. Given the costs of demolishing the Boathouse, we suggest those funds be allocated toward renovations of the building by a public or private entity.
4. An appraisal of the building in its existing condition to determine fair market value and as renovated to its "best and highest" use. The appraisal will help attract developers.
5. Evidence of earnest attempts to sell the building to a developer or partner while leasing the site from the DNR. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation assists communities with obsolete buildings to develop a Request for Quotes from potential developers. It offers a variety of incentives to assist with renovation costs.
6. Plans for the cleared land. Is there a redevelopment project in place, and what are the associated construction and maintenance costs?

In summary, the community needs more information to weigh the costs of demolishing the Boathouse against the redevelopment of the land or adaptively reusing this historic building.

Please call me with other questions you may have. I plan on joining the Zoom meeting tomorrow.

Sincerely,



BREND RIGDON

Executive Director