Proposed Historic Planning Commission Ordinance
Testimony to Planning Commission
6.23.16

My name is Ellen Lockert. I help Nina Jackson manage her historical building at 219 Madison, currently housing the Madrona School.

We are 33 year Bainbridge Island residents. We love this island and moved here for what it was in 1983: Friendly, rural, authentic and undeveloped. We have built and sold two businesses here that employed scores of island residents. I served on the Arts and Humanities Council. Nina served as a volunteer firefighter/EMT for some years.

We are deeply grateful to members of both the Historic Planning Commission and Planning Commission for making time to hear our concerns and integrate them in this new version of the proposed ordinance. We are especially grateful for the offer of zoning relief for the 219 Madison building if a new owner choses to register and maintain it as a historical residence rather than mixed use building. Thank you.

Despite the best efforts of Commission and staff to make changes to the proposed ordinance, our original concerns about this ordinance remain.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPENSE. This ordinance will create new requirements and expense for a *vast* new group of Bainbridge homeowners somewhere between the 200 in the current historical register and the 2000 who received the postcard mailing for the public meeting. Or more.

It appears that any home may be vulnerable to these new restrictions either because of age or "exceptional importance" and 12 other broad categories. (18.24.030)

Requirements on property owners could range from delay and expense associated with application to Historical Commission, attorney costs, remediation and/or, requirements to maintain an aging building. It could also limit owner ability to sell the building for highest and best use by discouraging potential buyers.

It appears that decisions about the status of these homes can be decided by a committee of as few as two people. (18.24.020.F.3)

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. We believe the burden of these requirements and expense will fall unequally on less affluent, older, long term Bainbridge residents who are counting on these older properties as "nest eggs". When this is the case, these are owners who can ill afford additional expense. If we are genuinely interested in maintaining an economically diverse population on Bainbridge, we must assure economic well being for older home owners, many of who are already struggling to meet growing tax bills.

A BETTER PATH. We encourage the City of Bainbridge Island to:

- Identify successful international models of historical preservation that are based on positive incentives.

- Begin a pro-active outreach to owners of those historical properties already identified outlining their opportunities to preserve, get tax breaks and recognition. Example: zoning change for 219 Madison Building

- Create an awareness campaign to excite and engage new historical building owners to preserve their buildings.

- Work with citizens who are committed to historical preservation to create a Building Trust that would work like a land trust to save significant buildings.

We are in agreement with your desire to preserve historical Bainbridge. But, if we do so at the cost of some of the most vulnerable among us, what have we gained?

Ellen Lockert
ealockert@gmail.com
206.650.6476