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D. Menard:

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	275, 277 & 281 THAMES STREET STATUS UPDATE MEETING ON TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2013

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning & City Planner, this report **BE RECEIVED** for information with respect to matters related to the demolition requests for 275, 277 and 281 Thames Street.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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April 23, 2013: Report to Planning and Environment Committee –
Demolition Requests - Heritage Properties - 275, 277 & 281 Thames Street

BACKGROUND

The properties at 275, 277 and 281 Thames Street are each listed on the *Inventory of Heritage Resources*. The building at 275 Thames Street is better known as the former Fugitive Slave Chapel whose use dates to c.1848 to c. 1869. In February, requests were made by the owner, Aboutown Transportation Ltd., to remove the three buildings at the municipal addresses indicated noting the deteriorated condition of each. As listed properties, Council would be expected to allow the demolitions or to deny the demolitions within a 60 day period following the requests to demolish, unless the owner agreed to a deferment of the demolition request.

At its meeting on April 23, 2013, the owner indicated in writing that he was willing to defer the requests for demolition pending resolution of several matters related to the building at 275 Thames, the former Slave Chapel. At that meeting, community representatives came forward in support of a plan to relocate the building at 275 Thames Street to a new location at 432 Grey Street on a vacant lot owned by Beth Emanuel Church. The expressed intention was to use the relocated building to extend the outreach programs offered by Beth Emanuel to its community and for the former slave chapel to serve as a visible legacy related to the black community's experiences in an important period of local and provincial history.

At its meeting on April 30, 2013 Municipal Council resolved the following with respect to the demolition requests:

- a) That the Chief Building Official **BE ADVISED** that, subject to archaeological matters being addressed, the Municipal Council does not intend to designate the properties located at 277 and 281 Thames Street under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*; noting the London Advisory Committee on Heritage had been consulted on this matter;
- b) If the applicant concurs with a deferral of the demolition request for the property located at 275 Thames Street, Notice of Intent to Designate the property at 275 Thames Street, pursuant to Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* **BE DEFERRED** pending the possible relocation of the main building to another site;

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- c) If the relocation of the main building to a new site is not possible, the Municipal Council **BE ADVISED** to issue a Notice of Intent to Designate the property at 275 Thames Street for the reasons identified in the Statement of Cultural Heritage Interest or Value, as appended to the staff report dated April 23, 2013; noting that if the main building can be successfully relocated to another site, a revised Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest to refer to its new location shall be required;
- d) If the relocation of the building at 275 Thames Street requires a zoning amendment, the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to initiate a City initiated zoning amendment to expedite this process;
- e) The Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to assist with the historical interpretation of the Thames Street Neighbourhood through interpretive signage and a commemorative monument at 275 Thames, together with markers at the four corners of the existing building, in a place that is easily accessible to the public; it being noted that consultation among the Historic Sites Committee, the London Advisory Committee on Heritage and the Fugitive Slave Chapel Preservation Project is encouraged; and... it being further noted that the Civic Administration will report back on the progress prior to the 60 day referral; and
- f) The Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to establish a source of financing to support an archaeological assessment on all three properties (275, 277 and 281 Thames Street.)

Status Update

This status report was prepared to summarize actions taken within the first 30 days following the April 30 Council Resolutions. It will also anticipate actions expected within the next 20 days prior to the meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee on June 18 in order to respond to the direction to report back to Planning and Environment Committee within 60 days.

Archaeological Assessment

The importance of an archaeological assessment was emphasized by both the LACH and the community. Following the Council resolutions on April 30, the licenced firm of Timmons and Martelle with the assistance of the archaeological representative on the LACH, Darryl Dann, conducted a Stage 2 assessment of the three sites. (The information for Stage 1 had been amassed already. Funding was sourced by the City to finance the Stage 3 assessment. The services of Timmons and Martelle were retained because of their familiarity with the site, and their availability to proceed quickly. The Stage 3 assessment was completed in the week of May 21- 24 in terms of the physical work. This work was undertaken with the permission of the landowner.

Analysis of the extensive findings is currently underway as is consultation with archaeological staff from the Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Culture. It is anticipated by staff that the extent of artifacts discovered will likely lead to a recommendation for a Stage 4 assessment. To this point, no human remains have been found.

A stage 4 assessment would involve the excavation, by hand, of a block of units in the backyard and/or the mechanical removal of all topsoil to search for graves or buried archaeological features. This may require 5-6 days for the physical work to be accomplished. Funding for Stage 4 is not in place but an offer has been made to do this for the owner on a volunteer basis by licenced archaeologists working with archaeological students. This work is expected to be done over several weekends in June.

Building Relocation

Fundamental to what is becoming a widely supported community project is the relocation of the former Fugitive Slave Chapel to a new site adjacent to the successor church to the former chapel, Beth Emanuel. It is opportune that Beth Emanuel owns a vacant lot at 432 Grey Street, next to the church site. Plans have been focussed upon the relocation of the building to a new foundation that will be constructed at 432 Grey Street. Such relocation has caused several administrative actions:

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- i) Compliance Division will review a permit to allow for the removal of the building and its relocation to the new site. This involves coordination with London Hydro and utilities companies as well as with Traffic and Transportation.
- ii) Building Division will examine drawings for the new foundation to ensure they are in compliance with zoning matters including setbacks, servicing, etc. Initial concept plans have been submitted but formal drawings have not yet been provided for review with respect to issuing building permits..

Zoning

A present, the site at 432 Grey Street is zoned R2-3 and the building to be moved has a former residential use. Thus, the initial move will not require a rezoning. However, the end use(s) that have been proposed for church-related use will require a Zoning By-Law amendment to permit Neighbourhood Facility uses. Planning staff are preparing such an application as a City initiated rezoning. A rezoning application file has been opened. This will require a future public meeting. It should be noted that the SoHo community organization has been actively supporting the relocation and future uses proposed for the site.

Interpretive Signage

To the time of the preparation of this report, staff have held one internal meeting with the ward councillor and another councillor with respect to signage both on the site of the former chapel at 275 Thames and on the wider area occupied by the historic black community in the area. It is seen as desirable that the site be defined by markers at the four corners of the former chapel and a commemorative cairn there as well, perhaps on the city boulevard. In terms of the recognition of the wider area, staff are interested in creating interpretive signage closer to the main street and pathways. Such signage could establish links for a commemorative trail connecting the “Hollow” with Richard Berry Harrison Park to the east, to Beth Emanuel and the relocated Chapel in Soho and to the sign installed a few years ago in Victoria Park at the site of the Integrated Black school sign. No funds have yet been identified for such signage. The owner has indicated a willingness to support specific site recognition but details remain to be worked out.

The Historic Sites Committee of the London Public Library had installed a plaque on the former chapel at 275 Thames Street. This plaque later was removed by a former owner of the property. Historic Sites has indicated a willingness to provide a new plaque but details remain unclear as to the nature of this plaque and its contents.

General

At its Annual General Meeting in May, the SoHo community organization heard a presentation from the Fugitive Slave Chapel Preservation Committee as part of its agenda. The Association remains committed to the relocation of the former chapel to 432 Grey Street.

Recommendations

Archaeology

The concluding stage of the Stage 4 assessment will likely occur as the buildings are either demolished or relocated. On-site archaeological monitoring during demolition will be undertaken if required.

Demolition

- i) Upon completion of the archaeological assessment, it is recommended that the Chief Building Official be advised that a demolition permit can be issued for both the buildings at 277 Thames and 281 Thames Street and their respective out buildings. Archaeological monitoring as these buildings are removed should be undertaken as part

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- of the Stage 4 assessment.
- ii) Upon completion of the archaeological assessment, it is recommended that the owner be allowed to remove the later rear kitchen addition and the attached garage at 275 Thames Street to allow for the preparation and relocation of the remaining structure.
 - iii) Upon completion of the archaeological assessment, it is recommended that the Chief Building Official permit the removal of the main building at 275 Thames Street at such time preparations at 432 Grey Street allow for the reception of the building. At this time, it is not clear when that may take place although the owner has indicated that this should be done as quickly as possible.

Signage

- i) At the time of preparation of this report, a request has been made of the London Public Library’s Historic Sites Committee to clarify its intentions regarding plaquing. It may be useful to coordinate interpretive signage to some degree with this body.
- ii) Regarding interpretive signage for the Hollow, including links to related sites, funding opportunities have not been identified either privately or municipally. Council may choose to give direction to the Culture Office (public monuments) or to Parks Planning in terms of preparing a business case for the 2014 budget discussions.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
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RECOMMENDED BY:	
J.M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER	

May 31, 2013
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