

From: Hilary Neary

Sent: Monday, July 18, 2022 12:39 PM

To: PEC <pec@london.ca>

Cc:

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Heritage Alteration Permit for "Fugitive Slave Chapel"

Dear members of London's Planning and Environment Committee:

I write in support of the application of the Fanshawe Pioneer Village for a Heritage Alteration Permit for the "Fugitive Slave Chapel" now at 432 Grey Street. Granting that permit will enable the moving of that historic building to the village where it will be restored, preserved and become the means of interpreting the Black history of this area to Londoners and visitors alike.

My involvement with this building goes back several decades. I am a member of the Historic Sites Committee of the London Public Library Board, the body that erected a plaque to commemorate the African Methodist Episcopal Church at 275 Thames Street, the first identity of the chapel that became the British Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856, and which has been locally known as the Fugitive Slave Chapel for many years.

When the owner of the property sought a demolition permit from the City of London in 2013 I researched the land-use history of the chapel for Don Menard, then the heritage planner for London. The chapel was moved to the Beth Emanuel property in 2014 and the following year I joined the steering committee of the Fugitive Slave Chapel Preservation Project and was involved in the tear-down of layers inside and out. I also expanded my earlier research on the history of the building, its church and people to lay a foundation for its eventual role as an interpretive centre for the Black history of the area. My membership continued when the FSCPP became simply the Chapel Project and as we worked with the church to build community support and devise a governance structure that would enable fundraising for the chapel restoration. Now that the project is in the capable hands of the board of the Fanshawe Pioneer Village I am continuing my advocacy for the preservation of this building and its future educational role.

For many years and in the face of many challenges, the citizens and municipal council of London have shown strong support for the preservation of this historic and beloved chapel. Its survival is extraordinary considering how few structures built c.1848 have survived our climate and the propensity for demolishing and building anew. The Fanshawe Pioneer Village has a valued reputation for restoration and preservation of historic structures and much experience in interpreting the heritage of this region through its living museum. I believe that moving the AME/BME church/Fugitive Slave Chapel to the village is the best possible outcome for its future. I urge the Planning and Environment Committee to recommend that a Heritage Alteration Permit be granted to the board of the Fanshawe Pioneer Village.

Sincerely

Hilary Bates Neary

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