

DEC 17, 2014 M-2
PROVIDED BY

December 17, 2014 City Commission STEVE GLASSMAN

Agenda Item M-2/Rivermont House

Good evening, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, and Staff,

I'm Steve Glassman, a resident of Fort Lauderdale and I'm speaking as president on behalf of the Broward Trust for Historic Preservation. We urge you to set a De Novo hearing to review the demolition application for the 1918 Rivermont House at 1016 Waverly Road. The City Manager's memo states in part that you may set a hearing if it is found that the proposed project is in an area which due to characteristics of the project and the surrounding area requires additional review. Well, if ever there was a poster child for those criteria, then this is it. This house and this site have been described by your consultant as one of the most significant in the entire City; both the house and the site, an Indian midden dating back to 400 - 700 AD and described as the last prehistoric site of its size, caliber, and importance along the New River, have been declared eligible by various entities for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places; the house is included in the Florida Master Site File; and the house is identified in the City's Architectural Resources Survey of Sailboat Bend Historic District as key contributing, distinguishing itself from those buildings in the historic district that are identified as merely "contributing."

A hearing is justified because there is no way that we can present all of the pertinent information on such an important property in just a few minutes tonight. Respect should be paid to the site before us. There is too much of a contradiction between what one reads in your consultant's report and the decision of the Historic Preservation Board. It is timely that earlier tonight you have honored Merrilyn Rathbun as the "guardian of our city's history." The Trust asks that you honor her in not only words, but in action. Heed what she says when she writes: "The historic Rivermont House is significant in the built history of the town; together the house and the archeological site are one of the most important historic resources of the City of Fort Lauderdale. Demolition of the house will cause the destruction of the site. At this point, no further incursion should be made on the site; the house should be stabilized and rehabilitated. The applicant's proposed demolition of the house is not appropriate. The application should be denied."

The Trust is concerned by the applicant stating that the house has no historic significance and the site has limited archeological significance. Stating, as criteria for demolition, that the structure no longer contributes to the historic district; that the structure no longer has significance as a historic

architectural landmark; and that the new project is a major benefit to the historic district are simply, in our opinion, not true representations of the facts. Again quoting Ms. Rathbun: "The historic house will be destroyed and its history lost to the community. There is no advantage to the historic district in demolishing an important historic house and replacing it with a modern copy of a historic house." Assertions that much of the house is not original are simply not true; and concerning any changes and additions to the original 1918 structure, it is important to remember that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards states that "most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved."

There are too many moving parts on this case not to have a hearing and especially not to issue a permit for demolition. I have submitted for the record a letter to the City from Broward County which states its concerns on the site, I have also been informed that the City requested that the County's archeological consultant review the management plan for the site submitted by the owner of the property to the Historic Preservation Board, and I have also been informed that the State archeologist has contacted the Seminole Tribe for its

input on the site. Lastly, just today a letter was sent to the Mayor from the Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources encouraging the preservation of the Rivermont House and reminding the City of its responsibility as a Florida Certified Local Government to historic preservation. Time must be given for all of this to occur before demolition can even be contemplated.

Thank you for your consideration this evening, and again, the Trust requests that you set a De Novo hearing.