

Mary Lou Terrien

From: Scott Slagor <s.slagor@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 11:19 AM
To: Mary Lou Terrien
Subject: HB 5233

Dear Ms. Terrien,

I am unable to attend the Local Government House Committee meeting today, but would like to submit comment regarding the HB 5232.

As a historic preservation professional, and a concerned citizen of an urban area that has lost so many unprotected historic structures, I have several concerns.

The legislation places an unfair burden on a community by requiring a 2/3 majority consent of property owners to even study a historic district, making it nearly impossible to even determine a district to propose. Under the current legislation, the study committee, which studies the potential for a neighborhood historic district, regularly engages property owners through meetings and public hearings. The study committee works to break-down many historic district myths that would turn-off property owners, and foster support for the district before it goes to the local legislative body. The study committee is a crucial step in initiating the historic district process, and this proposed legislation would make it nearly impossible to get off the ground.

This consent requirement would make it impossible for local legislative bodies to quickly head off a sudden threat. Under current legislation, municipalities can study a threatened resources for up to six months before proposed development/demolition. The current legislation is necessary, not to prevent development, but to encourage smart development that incorporates or is sensitive to, existing urban fabric, and takes into account the desires of the surrounding neighborhood.

This proposed bill would reduce accepted, best-practice national Standards for historic district commission decision-making, introducing uncertainty into the process. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation that commissions currently use across the state would become optional, jeopardizing the potential for federal rehabilitation tax credit projects and potentially impacting the ability of Certified Local Government communities to receive state grant funds. Furthermore, it would make it difficult to manage the approval process in historic districts, as there would be no consistent standard to judge proposed building-modifications. The established Standards do not prohibit development or change, rather ensure that the historic fabric of a resource or community is retained. •

The proposed bill would change the appeals process for an aggrieved property owner within a local historic district. Instead of appealing to a neutral state board, which has appellate jurisdiction because of its expertise, appeals would be heard at the local level where political and development pressures could affect the outcome. This places a community's history against short-term development goals. Furthermore, these local appeals could also be costly to a municipality.

Finally, as a young professional, one of the reasons I choose to stay in Michigan is because of our unique communities and heritage. Most of our towns and rural areas have a strong sense of place, however more and more of the communities I love are diminishing; being placed with empty lots or modern structures. One of

Governor Snyder's initiatives to keep talent in the State of Michigan is Placemaking, and you cannot have Placemaking without local historic preservation. Without historic preservation, Placemaking efforts look synthetic, and lose the authenticity that residents crave.

Thank you,

Scott Slagor

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