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TO: City of Coral Gables – Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Department
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RE: **LETTER OF INTENT, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REQUIRED FOR (RV-20-11-5271) REVISION TO PERMIT BL-16-10-6607**
A Historic Single-Family Residence
6801 Granada Blvd
Coral Gables, Florida 33146-3823

Members of the Historic Preservation Board:

Subject property is an existing, approximately 14,060 sq.ft. residence under construction for interior and exterior renovations, an addition, plumbing, mechanical, electrical and life safety improvements. All designs were approved by the City of Coral Gables and the design meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, codified in 36 CFR 67A, even though the home is not receiving any tax benefits. Permits were issued for the work by the City of Coral Gables on June 14, 2017 as BL-16-10-6607. A portion of the structure was built in 1951 and designed by the great Alfred Browning Parker. Construction has been underway for more than 3-1/2 years.

There were several improvements to the home since original, with the most impactful in 1984, when a large 2-level addition was designed by Ferendino, Grafton, Spillis-Candela, connecting various structures on the property into one¹.

In 2015, the lot in which the home is located was dimensioned into two lots, and further improvements to the structure designed by Richard J. Heisenbottle, FAIA, including a large addition, having City of Coral Gables preliminary approval for the design AB-15-09-4822.

¹ See pages 123 of 134 of the plans provided by Building Records.

The “2015” improvements called for a larger, 2-level addition increasing the prominence and building-upon the 1984 improvements.²

It called for improvements to the interior and exterior of the original structure, including all-new doors and windows.

WHAA became involved in the project and proposed reductions in the prominence and size of the addition, increases to fenestration to achieve more of Parker’s vision for the site and obtained final approved BL-16-10-6607 in 2016 as architect-of-record.

The approved design saw reduced size of the addition, increased fenestrations and improved detailing. The approved WHAA design removed more of the 1984 addition(s) designed by Spillis-Candela, because those improvements were inconsistent with Parker’s original vision for the site.

In essence, WHAA increased ventilation, natural lighting, and versatility of the floor plan— which were significant characteristics of Parker during the period in which the home was built.

The original client for the home, in 1950 was Dr. Claude. He demanded large walls without fenestration, to separate and privatize the main living area from the waterway, which both Parker and Mrs. Claude disputed.

The WHAA plan, restored this view to Parker’s original intent.

The new design was approved June 14, 2017 under **BL-16-10-6607**.

On October 20, 2017, the owner applied for plan revision **RV-17-10-1973**, for minor exterior alterations, but later withdrew the application because approval from the Historical Resources Department could not be obtained. The project was delayed approximately eight months before the application was withdrawn.

On May 22, 2020, the owner applied for a new plan revision **AB-20-05-6827**, consisting of structural improvements to the attached cabana, because the roof attachments and column structure was found to be significantly defective and original design inadequate. There was also evidence the cabana had been significantly altered from the original Parker design. This application sought to make the required repairs and also restore the cabana to more-closely match the Parker plans. The project was delayed approximately six months because Historical Resources failed to make any written comments or responses before the application was withdrawn.

On November 4, 2020, the owner applied for a new plan revision, **RV-20-11-5271**. After eighty-seven 87-days, the revision was referred to the Historical Resources Board with the following remarks made January 29, 2021:

“ALL REVISIONS/ DEVIATIONS FROM PREVIOUSLY APPROVED PLANS WILL REQUIRE THE REVIEW OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD. SUBMIT COA APPLICATION, SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TO HISTORIC.”

² See pages on-file for AB-15-09-4822.

Although the applicant had not been provided with a formal or specific reason for the deferral until April 15, 2021, we have numerated the following based-on previous remarks, email and telephone remarks from Interim Historical Resources Director, Mrs. Kara Kautz:

REASONS FOR THE REFFERAL:

1. PREVIOUSLY-APPROVED DOOR, WINDOW & LOUVER SHOP DRAWINGS

On a January 29, 2020 conference call, Mrs. Kautz stated part reason for her denial of revision RV-20-11-5271 on November 20, 2020 was because “NO ELEVATIONS PROVIDED FOR WINDOW REPLACEMENT”, however, the doors and windows of the original structure were already replaced in conformance with the design intent, submitted to the City of Coral Gables 09/29/202, permitted under (SD-20-09-5928), approved and permit issued 10/18/2020.

The doors and windows have been installed and Inspected.

Mrs. Kautz states in her remarks “NO DETAILS PROVIDED FOR REINSTALLATION OF PERSIANAS” however, the detail was clearly depicted on pages 4-11 of the approved permits.

PLEASE REFER TO SHEETS 4-5 OF THE APPROVED SD-20-09-5928 SHOP DRAWINGS AND COMPARE WITH THE APPROVED SHEET A4 OF THE BL-16-10-6607 PERMIT.

Furthermore, a full-scale mock-up has been made on-site, and several email photos presented to Mrs. Kautz without response. As of February 21, 2021, the disapproval remark remains.

WHAA learned from Robin Parker that the louvers were made in Havana, Cuba. For the restoration work, the Owner employed a specialty engineer to design a louver where the original 1951 mahogany louvers could be re-sourced from the original material and re-purposed into the fenestrations of the new glazing. The completed, labor-intensive assembly cleverly utilizes the original louver material, shape, order, color and arrangement but still meets HVHZ-standards through the engineering performed by Al-Farooq and approved by the city of Coral Gables. The design meets The Standards for Rehabilitation, preserves the distinctive features and craftsmanship of the original louvers and is beautiful.

The Standards for Rehabilitation encourages improvements to Life safety and preservation of structure. Should the approved windows now become “un-approved” the structure would be unprotected and placed at unnecessary risk. Impact windows are necessary for property Insurance, life safety, quality of life and the owner’s enjoyment of their home. It was never imagined by the owner that after spending more than \$800,000 for custom and quality windows, customized mahogany louvers and waiting nearly a year for approvals, obtaining those approvals, that one assistant director, Mrs. Kautz, could appear on the construction site without authorization and “unapprove” the windows after they were installed and state,

“they must all be removed.” WHAA finds no legitimate reason to deny the revision based-on what conforms with the design intent, was already approved by the City of Coral Gables, and already installed.

2. MAINTAIN EXISTING OOLITE “WALKWAY”

Mrs. Kautz noted in her November 20, 2020 disapproval *“EXISTING OOLITE WALKWAY TO ORIGINAL FRONT DOOR TO REMAIN.”* potentially referring to an oolite path that was disassembled during construction to prevent damage during site grading and deliveries. It is assumed the oolite is original, however, neither the original approval **BL-16-10-6607**, or revision application **RV-20-11-5271** describe this area to be removed. The walkway was temporarily disassembled during construction of the septic tank systems and was reinstalled. WHAA finds no legitimate reason to deny the revision for this reason since that change is not being performed.

3. REMOVAL OF EXISTING PLANTER WALL

Mrs. Kautz notes in her November 20, 2020 disapproval *“PROVIDE PHOTOS OF EXISTING WALL PERPENDICULAR TO FRONT DOOR.”* Mrs. Kautz refers to the 1984 Spillis-Candela modifications, which included a partial installation of a white masonry wall, approximately 42” above grade. The wall was irrelevant to the Parker design, and was not fully realized. Intended to be part of a larger planter system, the wall was not fully constructed in the 1984 improvements. The wall is notated in sheet A-3 of the Spillis-Candela drawings, substantiated in the microfilm provided by Building records, page 125 of 134.

A smaller planter wall, approximately 14” in height was removed by the plumbing subcontractor to accommodate an on-site sanitary treatment plant. On a conference call January 29, 2021, Mrs. Kautz demanded the wall be replaced in full. Although most of the wall can be replaced, a portion cannot be due to underground structures. The planter wall is invisible from the public right-of-way, and barely visible from inside the property. Refer to page 20 of 20 for a photograph of the wall in it’s original condition. If a portion of wall must be replaced, it can during the course of construction.

We do not believe removal of the wall is a legitimate reason for denial of the applicant’s revision that is related to the already approved exterior doors and windows.

PLEASE REFER TO SHEETS A3, A8 & P1 OF THE 1984 PLANS.

4. MECHANICAL DUCT TERMINAL

Mrs. Kautz states in her disapproval remarks *“MECHANICAL EXHAUST AT FRONT ELEVATION NOT TO PENTRATE ANY DECORATIVE AND BE LOW ENOUGH TO SCREEN WITH LANDSCAPING.”* Mrs. Kautz refers to the through-wall penetration of the kitchen exhaust terminal leading to the outdoors. Several email photos of the installation have been presented to Mrs. Kautz without response. As of February 21, 2021, the disapproval remark remains.

PLEASE REFER TO SHEET M1.2 OF THE "REVISION 4" APPLICATION.

5. LOCATION OF HVAC EQUIPMENT

Mrs. Kautz states in her disapproval remarks "HOW ARE A/C UNITS ADJACENT TO ORIGINAL FRONT DOOR BEING SCREENED FROM VIEW? As of February 21, 2021, the site contained temporary locations for HVAC equipment to keep the interior dehumidified. The locations are temporary to keep the interior millwork within acceptable humidity and temperature range. The installations were clearly temporary as part of the on-going construction and at no time has the applicant applied to make temporary air condition part of a permanent approval.

In essence, since the revision that contains Mechanical, Plumbing and Electrical plans for the project have not been approved by Historic, the plans cannot be routed to other disciplines. The trade permits cannot be closed, and the home has been placed in a unnecessary delay and financial peril.

Foregoing remarks 1-5, we respectfully request the board approve the revision application so we may proceed with construction which has been delayed a cumulative sixteen 16-months in attempts to make room for construction, correct structural deficiencies, and address deviations from the original Parker drawings.

Respectfully submitted,

Wm. H. Arthur IV, AIA, NCARB