

Elmer, Linda

From: Jeremy Ebersole <jebersole@milwaukeepreservation.org>
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2020 2:44 PM
To: Elmer, Linda; Askin, Tim; Hatala, Carlen; Historic Preservation Commission
Subject: Letter of opposition to elements of Resolution #200521
Attachments: LPF 60% Set Comments 8-6-2020 (2).xls

To the honorable chair and commissioners,

The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports the objection to the proposed COA submitted by the Lake Park Friends to the County (see #20 in the attached) regarding the inappropriateness of TexCote or other coatings as a preservation solution for the Lake Park Ravine Bridge. We believe the use of this material would have an adverse effect on the bridge's historic integrity by irreversibly altering the materials and workmanship of this important resource.

The National Park Service, which sets national preservation best practices, is abundantly clear that the use of coatings on historic structures that have not previously been painted is not a best practice. The Park Service's Preservation Brief 15: Preservation of Historic Concrete notes that: film-forming coatings are often inappropriate for use on a historic structure, unless the structure was coated historically. Film-forming coatings will often change the color and appearance of a surface, and higher build coatings can also mask architectural finishes and ornamental details." Instead, "careful mix formulation, placement, and finishing are required to ensure that replacement concrete units will match the historic concrete." Skilled concrete masons can match the color and natural variability of new concrete to that of the existing historic concrete. It is this order – new matching old – that is the baseline of all preservation practice, not unmatched new material combined with coated historic material that hides the character of the original material for which the historic resource is significant. In that same way that preservation practice would not endorse the reconstruction of part of a historic building façade and then covering the historic façade with vinyl siding, neither is the proposed TexCote solution appropriate.

In addition, Lake Park Friends have consulted extensively with preservation experts and State Historic Preservation Offices in the formulation of their position. We believe it is important for the Commission to make decisions based on guidelines and best practices, all of which make clear that the use of character-altering coatings are an inappropriate solution for unpainted concrete. To approve this element of the proposed plan would be an unfortunate alteration of Frederick Law Olmsted's park design and detract from the local and national significance of the district.

Win-win preservation solutions are always possible, and we believe part of the role of preservation is to nudge toward a solution that meets the needs of the current day while honoring the significance of places that are important to the community. This solution is possible by matching new concrete to the existing historic material and using an alternate sealant on the historic concrete. Knowing this win-win is both possible and in keeping with preservation best practice, we urge the Commission not to approve the proposed TexCote solution, which represents an unnecessary compromise. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and service to the city.

Regards,
Jeremy Ebersole

Jeremy T. Ebersole (he/him/his)