

James & Agnes Stearns
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Milwaukee Common Council
200 E Wells St Room 205
Milwaukee WI 53202

RE: Res. No. 230132

July 3, 2023

Dear Council Members,

We are writing to appeal the June 12, 2023 decision of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to require the use of flat clay tile for the roof replacement on our home at 2605 N Summit Ave. This house was built in 1912 and has clay tile roofing which is over 101 years old. It is broken in many places resulting in leaks in the attic. This leak has the potential to make its way to lower floors which would cause untold damage to the structure of the home. This clay tile was last made in 1910 and alternative tile is available only as special order at a cost estimate of \$241,138. Again, this is only an estimate as there can be overruns when the roofing is removed.

A member of the HPC suggested that because of how long we have owned the house that we have a large amount of equity in it which we feel should not be taken into account when dictating which roofing materials we should be able to use. This member also mistakenly stated that the property is assessed at \$750,000-800,000 due to its location, but the actual 2022 assessment is \$542,000.

As retirees in our 80's, we are not in the position to assume a 15-30-year mortgage – that is assuming financial institutions would even consider such a loan. We have spent several thousand dollars over the years to do band-aid repairs to the roof, but it now must be totally replaced. (We recently had to have a basement wall rebuilt requiring major excavation and installation of a sump pump at a cost of over \$41,000.)

The requirement by the HPC for the most expensive and least durable replacement of clay tile would impose a serious financial hardship on us. This is an owner-occupied, single-family home that we continue to live in.

There is an alternative material proposal from Community Roofing for a composite tile which is visually identical to the old tile and would be much more durable. This composite tile is also recyclable which is important when considering eco-friendly options. This alternative is estimated to be \$145,830. The estimates do include flashing and gutter work and copper as was originally installed on the home. The composite proposed would be much more durable than the clay tile. The aim of HPC is to preserve the appearance of the properties in the district and our proposal would meet that requirement. We have attempted to keep the house in good repair as it should be in an historic district, but to require an expenditure of almost 50% of the assessed value will impose undue hardship.

We request your favorable consideration of the use of an alternative approach that will keep the visual aesthetics of the original roof but not result in bankruptcy of long-time tax paying residents.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of James and Agnes Stearns, connected by a horizontal line.

James & Agnes Stearns