

Common Council, HPC Appeals Committee
Office of the City Clerk, Room 205
200 Wells St.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

January 28th, 2020

Committee Members,

I am writing to appeal the Historic Preservation Commission's (HPC) decision of January 6th, 2020 denying my application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). The application was for roofing work and lists two shingles. The Certainteed, Belmont is the shingle for the roof and the one I am requesting be considered by the Appeals Committee.

The reroof is a matter of urgency. There are several leaks, the most serious is along the south-facing side of the house. Water is coming into the walls and is damaging the decorative plaster work, and has spread to an area where there is electrical wiring and I have concerns about the safety hazard.

The reason I am bringing the matter to the Appeals Committee is that by the time the HPC Commission met, the shingle had already been purchased. If compelled to change shingles there will be a significant financial lose.

It was a mistake, my mistake, not to ensure the COA was finalized before any orders were placed. But I believe it will become clear that it was an understandable mistake.

I want to stress that I support historic preservation. I have an M.A. in Art History and during my career I have been the head curator for two historic house museums. Furthermore, A new roof is for me a serious financial decision; I've never owned a car that cost as much. Nevertheless, I made the financial commitment because I wanted to do what was necessary to protect my historic house. It was important to me that the work and material were in keeping with historic "Best Practice" and complied with HPC guidelines. I chose the Belmont shingle because it was on the list of asphalt/fiberglass shingles compiled by the HPC staff.

On December 9th, 2019 I submitted my application to Tim Askins, the HPC staff member in charge of COA applications. I was engaged with the process and made an effort to establish good communication with Mr. Askins. It was a learning opportunity; I asked questions, requested input and clarification; and offered information when I thought it might be helpful. Multiple daily emails were exchanged over a five period from Dec. 9th – Dec. 13th.

Regardless of my personal efforts, Mr. Askins disregarded HPC By-Laws and neglected the basic duties of his position in his handling my application. Shockingly and inexplicably, at NO time did Mr. Askins tell me that the Belmont shingle was unacceptable for my house. And Mr. Askins did NOT explain or give any indication that he was, in fact, rejecting my application nor that he intended to recommend that the Commission also deny my application. Even after I emailed Mr. Askins to say I had just learned the shingle had been ordered, he did not correct course and give me the necessary and appropriate information I

needed to make an informed decision about the material and my application; he didn't offer so much as a cautionary note. Consequentially, I believed there were no objections, that Mr. Askins supported my application and that Commission would vote accordingly. I was confident things would go smoothly until I received Mr. Askins's staff report more than three weeks later.

Section 7. of the HPC By-Laws outlines that "Certain applications for Certificate of Appropriateness may be reviewed and approved by staff without prior review of the Commission." Roofing is number-one the list. The section clearly states that applications be submitted for Commission review only after the staff member has tried to work with the applicant and find an acceptable solution:

"In any case where staff finds the proposed work to be inappropriate and no agreement can be reached with the applicant to modify the work to bring it into conformity with the design standards for the property, the applicant shall be submitted to the Commission for review."

Mr. Askins's immediate response to my application was "These products will have be (sic) reviewed by the Commission...They have not been convinced of the durability or appearance of the DaVinci products. Belmont is a 'maybe' and subject to the judgment of the Commission."

Mr. Askins made no effort to work with me towards a solution. As I already said, he did even bother explain that he considered the Belmont shingle an inappropriate material. I have included the complete email communications with my request.

The situation is personally distressing. But that doesn't change the current situation and water is still coming into the walls. What is important now is getting a new roof on my house.

If compelled to switch shingles the financial toll will be significant. My roofer, Randy Miller, informed me that 25% is the standard "restocking" fee, which amounts to just over \$2,000. The dollar amount is doubled when the cost of purchasing new materials is factored in.

However, the situation has gotten more complicated. On January 28th Randy let me know there would be "zero acceptance" from Certainteed; they will not accept any return of the material. He has been in the business for decades and has never come across a similar situation. Right now, the exact financial fall out is unclear. The minimum will be 25%.

The Belmont is a high-quality asphalt fiberglass shingle with a lifetime warranty. I chose the Belmont shingle because the larger size and flat profile are ideal for the large, hipped roof on the house. And the dark reddish brown will nicely compliment the brickwork. It will look great and most importantly it will provide long lasting protect for my home.

I respectfully request that the Appeals Commission vote to grant the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martha Monroe", written in a cursive style.

Martha Monroe