

**BY EMAIL**

January 19, 2021

Ms. Tamie Ehinger  
Chairperson  
City of Saratoga Springs  
Design Review Commission  
City Hall  
474 Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

**RE: Simpson Application for Demolition of 65 and 69 Phila Street**

Dear Chairperson Ehinger and Members of the Design Review Commission:

First, thank you all for serving on the DRC. Your service to this wonderful City is much appreciated and a testimony to its health. Currently when democracy is under enormous pressure, your commitment is part of the strong foundation that gives us all confidence that better days are ahead.

Since the end of my term as Commissioner of Public Safety in 2009 and my involvement with the Zoning Board of Appeals from 1996 to 2004, I have never commented on an application before any of our important land use boards. I feel compelled this time, because I believe these applications must be denied in full because the applicants have consistently shown a contempt for this City and the historic neighborhood around Phila Street, and such behavior should never be allowed or rewarded.

I was Chair of the ZBA in the early 2000's when the applicants came to apply for a zoning variance for one parcel in question. I vividly remember their application because they represented themselves as unsophisticated purchasers of a property, they now needed to demolish due to the exorbitant cost of restoration. I recall one applicant "tearing up" during the hearing while falsely stating they simply did not realize what they were getting into when they purchased these properties and now needed the ZBA to help them. The ZBA later heard counter testimony that the applicants have a long record of real estate purchasing throughout upstate New York. The ZBA properly voted to deny their variance.

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Upon becoming the Commissioner of Public Safety for Saratoga Springs in 2005, I watched as the applicants continued to thumb their nose at the City and their neighbors. At some point while I was on the City Council, I believe they “doubled down” on their purposeful blight of the Phila Street historic district. These alleged “unsophisticated applicants” bought the second deteriorating property now before you and came before the City Council to “rezone” and join the parcels so they could demolish the historically significant buildings and construct condominiums. Luckily, despite a very divisive City Council on most issues, we joined to deny their application. During my four years as Commissioner of Public Safety, in my oversight role of City Code Enforcement, it was clear to me that the applicants had no intention of being responsible property owners in a historic district.

Sadly, over the last 20 years the applicants have NEVER done the right thing for the City, its historic district, or the Phila Street neighborhood. Imagine living next to these two properties for 20 years! Imagine the inherent risks of collapse, fire, or injury these properties pose to the neighbors in their current condition—all because of purposeful neglect by the applicants for 20 years! Finally, imagine what these buildings could be if the applicants had done the right thing, and restored them to their past glory.

The applicants should not be rewarded now for their abusive, contumacious non-action that has allowed these properties to deteriorate in our historic district. Their calculating, dishonest “patience,” which has inflicted great harm on the City, its historic district and the Phila Street neighborhood is disingenuous and repulsive in the extreme.

I urge the DRC to deny in full these applications and the applicants.

Thank you again for honoring our City with your time and commitment as volunteers.

Sincerely,

  
Ronald J. Kim