

James Feenan

From: pbscommissions
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 2:56 PM
To: James Feenan; Jocelyn Gonzalez-Thies
Subject: FW: Public Expression for 10/2/23 MHRB Meeting

Mendocino County

SEP 29 2023

Planning & Building Services

From: John Cavanaugh <johncavanaugh@mac.com>
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 12:52 PM
To: pbscommissions <pbscommissions@mendocinocounty.gov>
Subject: Public Expression for 10/2/23 MHRB Meeting

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Dear Board Members,

My family and I are currently building a new home on the west end of Albion Street. Over the past two years, we've become very familiar with the Mendocino Town Plan, MHRB Design Guidelines, and the design approval process.

However, I wanted to speak because I am bit confused by general process procedures at recent MHRB meetings. As an example:

The board approved a request for new aluminum clad doors on The Mendocino Hotel. This approval was in spite of the design guidelines, which expressly state that imitation or synthetic material, such as aluminum "shall be deemed inappropriate", and that metal and plastic door or window frames "are not acceptable." (Section VII, #3 and #4).

Also, the board's justification for not enforcing these guidelines was unclear to me and other residents in town. For example:

- It was said that the applicants do not need the board's approval for replacing the old steel doors with brand new aluminum doors. But guidelines expressly state that only "...reconstruction of existing deteriorate building elements do not need approval." (Section IX)
- In favor of aluminum, it was argued that constructing with old-growth redwood is no longer practical in the modern world. But guidelines do not call for old-growth redwood. And the Marvin Historic Portfolio offers multiple species of durable woods, specifically selected and warrantied for exterior use.
- It was also reasoned that if doors are not visible from the street, applicants should be able to use Aluminum clad. However, these new aluminum doors will be seen by anyone walking east on Main Street.

I understand that each application is different, and that the board can use their discretion when making decisions. But when this discretion deviates too far from fundamental guidelines, it erodes a transparent and equitable approval process.

The existence of clearly written standards—and their enforcement—is the hallmark of the historical review process I was afforded as an applicant. However, I am concerned that this process gets undermined when fundamental guidelines are dismissed, and new unwritten standards are being formulated on the fly and doled out on a “case-by-case” basis.

Prior to granting the use of aluminum doors, more time should have been taken to gather information, invite public participation, and draft clearly written guidelines before implementing these changes into the review process.

Also, for these very same doors, the board did not enforce guidelines that require them to inspect “Exhibit B” photographs in order to ensure the hotel is “in general accord with the appearance of structures built in Mendocino prior to 1900” (Section VII). This will result in modern-style, single-lite patio doors that are sadly out of harmony with a Category I Historic landmark.

Thank you for listening. Being a board member is not an easy job, and I want you to know that I am grateful for your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,
John Cavanaugh