



# Kidorf Preservation Consulting

451 East Ferry Street Detroit, Michigan 48202

Phone: 313-300-9376

Fax: 313-872-5632

March 27, 2017

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Sara Roediger, Director, Planning and Economic Development, City of Rochester Hills

FR: Kristine M. Kidorf, Consultant

RE: Dunn Property, 1841 Crooks Road

Per your request below I am providing the available options for the house and barn on the property at 1841 Crooks Road which is a non-contiguous historic district designated by the City of Rochester Hills in 1978. The house was built sometime in the 1860s and 1870s, and is an example of the upright and wing house type popular in Avon Township and Oakland County in the nineteenth century. The house was originally part of the 230 acre A.C. Parker farm which also contained other buildings to the south near the stream. The 1908 Oakland County Atlas shows the house on 52 acres of property owned by E. Berry. The 1938 Rural Property Inventory shows the house belonging to E. J. Beattie, of Grosse Pointe Park. Per the inventory the house was remodeled in 1910, well within the period of significance for the district and during the time property was being used for agricultural purposes. Twenty-four acres of the property were “class A agricultural crop land.” It is rare to find a surviving house and barn in Rochester Hills. From the 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts* survey, “Relatively few farm buildings other than farmhouses survive to represent the agricultural landscape that once constituted nearly the whole of Avon Township. Therefore, most farm buildings that retain the greater part of their historic appearance are considered significant. Most common are barns: a total of twenty-five buildings historically used as barns are extant in the survey area. This is likely the total or very close to the total for Rochester Hills.” Removal of either the house or barn from the property would destroy one of the few remaining intact house/barn combinations left in the city.

The owner has the following options:

**Option 1)** Apply to the Historic District Commission (“Commission”) for a Certificate of Appropriateness to rehabilitate the house and barn in accordance with *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*. This rehabilitation at a minimum should include exterior work to ensure both buildings are weathertight including roof repair/replacement; siding repair/replacement; window and door repair/replacement; porch repairs if applicable; foundation repairs as required; and trimming back all overgrown landscaping. To review the application, the Commission will require the following supporting materials: photographs showing the current condition of the house, barn and yard; elevation drawings or photographs of the house and barn that are annotated to show exactly what work will be done where; a site plan that is annotated with proposed work; and information on the products and materials that will be used for the roofing, siding, windows, doors, foundations and porches as applicable.

**Option 2)** Apply to the Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness or Notice to Proceed to demolish the property – house and/or barn. As you know the Commission denied such an application in 2010 and the owner lost the appeal. In my opinion it will be difficult for the owner to receive an approval for demolition as the owner has created their own economic hardship by not doing any exterior work to the property since 2011. For the Commission to consider such an application they will require the following supporting materials: photographs showing the current condition of the house, barn, and yard; the price paid for the property; an estimate of value of the property after rehabilitation; an estimate of the value of the property if one or both

buildings are removed; a list of work items and dates completed of work on the property by the present owners; and a detailed report from an experienced architect or engineer who has specific experience in rehabilitating historic buildings. The report should include an analysis of the existing conditions, including structural integrity; a description or list of the work required to rehabilitate the structure; and the costs to rehabilitate the structure.

For the above options the Commission is willing to informally discuss the property with the owners at one of their regular monthly meetings. Without a formal application, no action will be taken by the Commission.

**Option 3)** Petition City Council for de-designation of the property. A request can be made to City Council to direct the Historic Districts Study Committee to investigate de-designating the property. Should Council direct the Committee to do so the investigation process will take six months to a year to complete. The Committee will then make a recommendation back to Council as to whether to de-designate the property. It is Council's discretion whether to direct the Committee to investigate de-designation and whether to accept or reject the Committee's recommendation at the end of the study. The City Code and State Law dictate specific conditions for the de-designation of historic districts.

Pursuant to Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances, Chapter 118, as amended in 2009, and PA 169 of 1970 as amended, if considering elimination of a historic district, the study committee shall follow the procedures set forth in this division for issuing a preliminary report, holding a public hearing and issuing a final report, but with the intent of showing one or more of the following:

- 1) Lost physical characteristics. The historic district has lost those physical characteristics that enabled establishment of the district;
- 2) Insignificance. The historic district was not significant in a way previously defined; or
- 3) Defective procedure. The historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures. (Section 118-34, Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances)

**Option 4)** The owner could sell the property to a new owner who will rehabilitate and maintain the property per City Code.

Additionally, the City can direct the city attorney to pursue legal action under the Demolition by Neglect portion of Chapter 118. If the courts agree that the property is being neglected the court can order repairs made to the property and/or give the City permission to enter the property, make the required repairs, and put a lien on the property for the cost of those repairs.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 313-300-9376 or at [kristine@kidorfpreservationconsulting.com](mailto:kristine@kidorfpreservationconsulting.com).