



# Department of Planning and Development

## Staff Report to the Historic Districts Commission

February 1, 2021

<b>947 E. Tienken Road – Demolition and Reconstruction</b>	
<b>REQUEST</b>	Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the house and rebuild it further north from Tienken Road
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Ralph Putman
<b>FILE NO.</b>	HDC #19-009.2
<b>PARCEL NO.</b>	70-15-02-426-005
<b>ZONING</b>	R-1 One Family Residential
<b>HISTORIC DISTRICT</b>	Stoney Creek Historic District
<b>STAFF</b>	Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting

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### **Request**

This is a request for a certificate of appropriateness to demolish the house at 947 E. Tienken Road and reconstruct it further north on the property with a new addition. The property is in the Stoney Creek Historic District. The owner states the house is in unrepairable and an architect is recommending demolition. The owner has not provided details on how the house will be reconstructed or exactly where on the property it will be relocated or what the addition will look like. This owner came before the Commission in March 2019 for an informal discussion to remove the north wing of the house and construct a new addition.

The subject property is located on the north side of East Tienken Road and is a contributing property in the Stoney Creek Historic District. The property slopes to the west and contains an existing one-and-half story upright and wing house that faces east on the property. There are several outbuildings, including a barn, chicken coop, storage building and shed, to the west of the house. The existing house has a rectangular footprint, a one-story tall addition extends westward from the rear of the wing. The house is clad in wood clapboard siding and has double-hung windows, some with muntins, most are one-over-one.

## Historical Information

The subject property is contributing to the Stoney Creek Historic District. The 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* describes the district as containing the unincorporated village of Stony Creek and Van Hoosen Farm. The northern boundary generally follows Stony Creek and extends northward along Washington Road including Cornerstone, Mallon Court and Mill Race Roads. The district is almost wholly residential in character, with houses dating from the 1830s to the 1990s. In Stony Creek village, the site of the proposed project, recent construction is interspersed with houses built in the nineteenth century.

The Stony Creek settlement was established in 1823 and developed in the 1830s. The district has thirty-seven contributing resources, seventy-one non-contributing resources, and one that requires more research to determine its status. Some of the most significant properties in the district include the Van Hoosen Farm; the Greek revival house at 1046 East Tienken Road; the Stoney Creek School; and the Sign of the Black and White Cow.

According to the 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* and the Van Hoosen Farms publication, *Stony Creek Village*, the Elias Roberson family who owned the Stony Creek Mill, a flouring mill located east of the house, constructed the house about 1860 and lived in this house until 1910 when it was passed to his daughter Mrs. (Roberson) Price. The Price family owned the house until 1965. The collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings on this property is unmatched elsewhere in Rochester Hills. The house looks much as it did in photos from the early 1900s. The major changes are the new chimney on the south side, removal of the porch on the wing, and removal of the front door from the wing to the upright, all prior to 1978.

## Review Considerations

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The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing house due to concerns regarding the condition of the foundation and house walls. He then proposes to reconstruct the house further north on the property using some of the historic materials and also construct an addition. He has provided a letter from an architect that describes the condition of the existing house. The applicant has not provided a site plan or plans and elevations to show where and how the house would be reconstructed or what the addition looks like.

In order for the application to be complete the following information needs to be provided:

- A dimensioned and scaled site plan showing the existing outbuildings, existing house and proposed new location of house, including and new driveways, walkways, and other landscaping;
- Dimensioned and scaled floor plans of the reconstructed house and proposed addition;
- Dimensioned and scaled elevations of the reconstructed house with the proposed addition that includes notes regarding which elements will be reused and new materials proposed;
- List of all materials proposed for reconstruction and the addition, including catalog sheets for those materials

## Summary

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1. The property contributes to the Stoney Creek Historic District. The property contains five contributing resources, the one-and-a-half story house, barn, storage shed, chicken house, and privy.
2. The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the house and reconstruct part of the house with a new addition further north on the property. No plans or specific information is

- provided on the proposed relocation and addition. More information is required for a complete application.
3. The applicant states that the house is within the Tienken Road right-of way and provided an aerial map showing that the edge of the house and the entire barn to the west are within the right-of-way. The right-of-way is larger on this section of Tienken Road than other areas. Other houses on the south side of Tienken are within the right-of-way.
  4. Staff offers the following comments: the applicant has provided minimal information as to why the house is not repairable. The applicant has not provided a site plan showing where the house would be reconstructed and any new landscaping; or plans and elevations showing how the house would be reconstructed with an addition. In general, it does not meet *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* to demolish and reconstruct buildings that contribute to the historic district. The applicant indicates that the house would be reconstructed to modern code and standards which would seem to indicate that it would not be an accurate reconstruction. It is unknown whether it is practical or feasible to reconstruct the house with an addition further north on the property. For example, is there sufficient property to meet required setbacks, is the topography conducive to a new house location?
  5. In staff's opinion there is not enough evidence to consider issuing a Notice to Proceed for the demolition and reconstruction project. In addition to a lack of complete information on the specifics of the project, the applicant has not provided evidence that the house is a hazard to the safety of the public or occupants; or that the house is a deterrent to a major improvement project and that financing and necessary approvals are in place for the project; or that retaining the house would be an undue financial hardship that was caused by events beyond the owner's control.
  6. It does not appear that the applicant has submitted the proposed demolition and relocation to the City's Building Department for a formal review. Any work performed in connection with this project will be required to meet all zoning and building codes, rules and regulations.

## Potential Motion

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(Subject to adjustment based on Commission discussion)

**MOTION**, in the matter of File No. HDC 19-009.2, that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES/DENIES/POSTPONES** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the house, and reconstruction of the house with addition further north on the property at 947 E. Tienken Road in the Stoney Creek Historic District, Parcel Identification Number 70-15-02-426-005, with the following Findings and Conditions:

- 1) The property is in the Stoney Creek Historic District and **does/does not** contribute to the historic character of the district;
- 2) The proposed demolition of the house, and reconstruction of the house with an addition **is/is not** in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines, where it is recommended to repair deteriorated historic features and in particular standard numbers 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10 as follows:
  2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

**ALTERNATE MOTION: If the Commission finds the conditions to issue a Notice to Proceed have been met and the project will correct these conditions the following might be used:**

**MOTION**, in the matter of File No. HDC 19-009.2 that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES/DENIES/POSTPONES** the request for a Notice to Proceed for the demolition of the house at 947 E. Tienken Road in the Stoney Creek Historic District, Parcel Identification Number 70-15-02-426-005, with the following Findings and Conditions:

- 1) The proposed demolition and reconstruction with addition does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation but finds that the following condition prevails and the proposed demolition will correct the condition:
  - (a) The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or to the resource's occupants;
  - (b) The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community, and the applicant proposing the work has obtained all necessary planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental clearances;
  - (c) Retaining the resource will cause undue financial hardship to the owner when a governmental action, an act of God, or other event beyond the owner's control created the hardship, and all feasible alternatives to eliminate the financial hardship, which may include offering the resource for sale at its fair market value or moving the resource to a vacant site within the historic district, have been attempted and exhausted by the owner; or
  - (b) Retaining of the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community.

**Staff Photos taken January 29, 2021**



**Looking northwest at property**



**Looking west at front of house**



Looking northeast at rear of house



Detail of south elevation