

**The Reverend John Miles Evans  
17 Sheafe Street  
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July 1, 2025

Application to Historic District Commission  
for Rehearing  
in the Matter of Petition of Frank V. and Regina Azzolino, owners,  
for property located at 11 Sheafe Street to request ... new construction to  
an existing structure (construct a new rear garage and covered entry)  
as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is  
shown on Assessor Map 107 as Lot 14 and lies within the  
Character District 4 (CD4) and Historic Districts.

Dear Members of the Historic District Commission:

The undersigned, John Miles Evans, owner, residing at 17 Sheafe Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801, respectfully submits this Motion for Rehearing pursuant to RSA 677L2, in response to the Commission's June 4, 2025 decision to approve the construction of a garage next door at 11 Sheafe Street, located within Portsmouth's Historic District.

My residence at 17 Sheafe Street is one of four interconnected and virtually identical Federal row houses built in or about 1816, including Nos. 9, 11, 17, and 19. The rear facades of these houses facing Custom House Court share a harmonious and historically consistent configuration, each having a back extension paired with an equally sized open space. This alternating pattern is architecturally significant and contributes to the unified visual and spatial character of the block.

The newly approved garage would significantly intrude upon this established symmetry. It would extend a substantial portion of the way into the open space behind 11 Sheafe Street., leaving only a narrow five by twenty-one-foot maintenance trench adjacent to the back extension, rather than maintaining the full open area that mirrors the extension's width on the

other three row houses. The ugly resulting gash will materially disrupt the balance and consistency that define the historic form and function of this unique row.

Your petitioner contends:

*1. The Approved Garage Compromises Historic Integrity.*

The decision allows for the partial filling of an intentionally preserved void between structures, fundamentally undermining a rear elevation pattern that has existed, more or less unchanged, for more than 200 years. This shift not only weakens the individual integrity of 11 Sheafe Street but degrades the shared architectural heritage of all four connected houses.

*2. The Approved Design Is Incongruent with the Row's Historic Character.*

The proposed garage's design by appearance, scale, and materiality is incompatible with the surrounding historic context. It bears little resemblance to the craftsmanship, proportions, or aesthetic principles associated with early 19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture and appears more suited to a contemporary suburban setting than a protected historic downtown street scape. The Commissioners need no reminding that their focus is how the proposed structure suits its neighborhood, not whether or not a proposed garage, for example, suits a proponent's particular choice of vehicle.

*3. Flawed Rationale Based on Rear-Facing, "Alleyway" Orientation.*

The Commission's "reasoning" that the garage will open onto Custom House Court and is thus of diminished importance and lesser consideration conflicts with the City's own preservation goals. Custom House Court is a visible, pedestrian-accessible alleyway and part of Portsmouth's historic urban fabric. Rear facades, especially those forming a cohesive ensemble, merit the same degree of scrutiny as front-facing structures under the Historic District's design

guidelines.

*4. Inadequate Consideration of Public Opinion.*

Numerous parties, myself included, raised concerns about the project's impact on the historic and architectural integrity of the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the design submitted, without addressing or mitigating those objections in any substantive way.

**Relief Requested**

It is respectfully requested that the Historic District Commission grant a rehearing on this matter to reevaluate the impact of the proposed garage at 11 Sheafe Street in light of the concerns expressed. This should include the potential precedent it sets, its visual and architectural disruption to a unique historic grouping, and the need for greater conformity with established design standards.

Prior to such rehearing, if one is granted, it is respectfully requested that the Commission conduct a site visit pursuant to the provisions of Section 16.635.40 *et seq* to apprise itself more fully of the unique aesthetic, historical and architectural features of the Sheafe Street Row configuration of Federal townhouses comprising Numbers 9, 11, 17, and 19.

Respectfully submitted,

*s/John Miles Evans*

John Miles Evans

Immediate Abutter