November 2, 2026

Ms. Reagan Ruedig
Chairperson
Historic District Commission
1 Junkins Avenue,
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Dear Madam Chair:

We are writing to respectfully request that the Historic District Commission allow limited permit public comment during its upcoming November 4, 2026 work session concerning the proposed redevelopment of 129 State Street.

As the Commission is aware, this project has generated considerable controversy and concern among neighboring property owners and direct abutters. The scale and massing of the proposed redevelopment have been central to those concerns and remain fundamental issues for the Commission's consideration.

We recognize that work sessions are generally intended to provide applicants with an opportunity to discuss their proposals with the Commission and receive guidance as their designs evolve. However, it is precisely at this stage of design development that input from those most directly affected can be particularly valuable. Providing that opportunity before plans become more fully developed would serve both the applicant and the Commission by identifying concerns that might otherwise remain unresolved until later in the review process.

Neither New Hampshire law nor the City's zoning ordinance expressly prohibits public comment during a Historic District Commission work session. While these sessions are ordinarily intended to facilitate discussion between the Commission and an applicant, the Commission retains considerable discretion in conducting its proceedings and fulfilling its responsibilities. We respectfully suggest that the circumstances surrounding this application warrant the exercise of that discretion to permit meaningful public participation.

It is also worth recalling that the previous public hearing on this application was continued because of the late hour, leaving some neighborhood residents and abutters without the full opportunity to express their concerns. (Indeed, even some Commission members excused themselves) That

circumstance alone provides a compelling reason to afford the public a more meaningful opportunity to participate as the applicant presents its revised plans.

We are not suggesting that the work session be converted into a formal public hearing or that the Commission depart from its established review responsibilities. Rather, we are requesting that the Commission exercise its discretion to allow reasonable public comment, subject to whatever time limitations or procedures the Chair considers appropriate.

The Commission's responsibility to preserve Portsmouth's historic character is best served by considering the perspectives of those most directly affected by proposed development, particularly when significant changes to the surrounding neighborhood are contemplated.

We respectfully ask that the Commission provide an opportunity for public comment during the upcoming work session, allowing neighbors and direct abutters to contribute constructively to its deliberations while the proposed design remains under consideration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Barb Noyes & Jim Keene - State/Sheafe Street
Elizabeth (Teddie - don't know last name) State & Sheafe Street
Matt & Diane Ralph Sheafe Street
Mike & Stephanie Febonio - Sheafe Street
Erica Dodge - Sheafe Street
Olivia Bessemer - Chapel Street
Angelo Innaco Chapel Street
Michael Yates Penhallow Street Olivia Paul Langford - Sheafe Street
Valerie & Jonathan Sobel - Sheafe Street
Frank Heitker - Sheafe St
Ashley Busa - Sheafe Street
Julie Foster - Sheafe Street
Thomas Bertand - Sheafe Street
John & Tiffany Hammer – Sheafe Street
Ken Koczik - Sheafe Street
Doug - Pastor's Husband
Julie Cousins - State Street
Sandell Morse - Chapel Street
Tom & Lauren Irwin - Chapel Street

Outlook

UPDATED: lot 58 Humphreys Court Portsmouth

From Laura Gunning <lauragunning@comcast.net>
Date Fri 10/30/2026 10:16 AM
To Izak Gilbo <igilbo@portsmouthnh.gov>

Hi Izak,

I'm writing you to hopefully convey this message to the members of the HDC board as I don't have their emails.

Bob and I live at 43 Humphreys court and are part of the ongoing issue with lot 58 on our street. I attended an HDC meeting last week with some of our neighbors. When we all walked home past lot 58 I was thinking about the new plan that Whitney has proposed and I feel that the lot needs another walkabout. Granted it is a very unusual and steep lot. But now with some plans I think the HDC needs to really see how the house will "sit" up on a hill and the positioning of the driveway. No one mentioned "carving out" a driveway or a basement (to street level) or the use of retaining walls. All I'm suggesting really is another walk through to really grasp the steep slopes and what digging and blasting might do to the surrounding homes. No one has fully convinced us of the topography and how far down a basement or digging would go. Someone on the board suggested "taking off some topsoil", but I'm sure it's more than that.

I also need to note that the current renters are happy there even after signing a new extended lease (at an increased figure) I believe for another year. (Consider that the Snover's actually had renovated the house for rental purposes.) So, the house is quite habitable and comfortable according to the renters. The Snover's did not buy a teardown. They would just prefer to tear it down. So, I'm just asking you to perhaps come and visit the lot again with the new plans that are proposed.

Thank you,
Laura Gunning
43 Humphreys court