
Re: Webform submission from: Historic District Commission > Body Blocks

From Dan Boyle <dan@preservationtimberframing.com>

Date Mon 8/31/2026 11:56 AM

To Izak Gilbo <igilbo@portsmouthnh.gov>

 3 attachments (1 MB)

D. Boyle Residence, Berwick, ME.pdf; Brick Bldg Install, Lynchburg, VA.jpeg; Brick Bldg Complete, Lynchburg, VA.jpeg;

Good Morning Izak,

I'm working this morning getting my ducks in a row for Wednesday night's HDC meeting. I'm not sure if I am following the right path to getting this information into the packet that goes to the committee members prior to the meeting. If this isn't the avenue, please let me know and I can send it to the proper office. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Dear Committee Members,
Greetings Portsmouth HDC members,

I want to thank you for taking the time to review this project for the Players Ring Building at 150 Marcy street in Portsmouth. The building stewards have been working over the years to make the building more resilient to weather. They have applied for and received a grant through the LCHIP program for the installation of storm windows on all of the building's window openings.

Attached you will find a couple of pictures of the Humphrey storm windows that we are planning to use on the Players Ring building. These windows were selected for multiple reasons. The first is that these are the lowest profile windows available that project the least distance from the window casing. The finished window should project no more than 3/16 of an inch when installed, and they will be color-matched to the existing window trim. The second reason they were selected is that they will preserve the trim profile present on the inner edge of the window casing. A face-mounted storm window would cover this architectural detail. The third reason is that these windows are secured using six small screws into the side of the window casing rather than the face of the casing. The final reason these windows were chosen is longevity. These windows have been manufactured for at least 40 years and we have seen them continue to perform very well in a harsh New England environment.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration of this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Sincerely,

Dan Boyle
Project Leader,
Preservation Timber Framing, inc.
Berwick, ME
dan@preservationtimberframing.com
(603)781-9907









MARK M. BODI

121 STATE STREET, PORTSMOUTH, NH, 03801, MBODI@ICLOUD.COM

Portsmouth Historic District Commission
Portsmouth City Hall
1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Re: Public Comment on Proposed Addition — 129 State Street

Dear Madam Chair and Commission Members:

I am writing to express concerns regarding the current application for the proposed addition at 129 State Street. Having reviewed both the present submittal and the proposal considered four years ago, it is our view—and one shared by the surrounding neighbors who have expressed their views—that the core issues of **massing, overall scale, and neighborhood context** require a more comprehensive review.

As currently drawn, the proposal **does not align** with the Portsmouth Historic District Commission's Design Guidelines and risks significantly affecting the visual character of this historic streetscape. Here is why:

1. Massing, scale, and subordination

Under **Chapter 10 of the Portsmouth HDC Design Guidelines**, an addition should remain visually subordinate and secondary to the principal historic structure.

The proposed addition is nearly twice the size of the former award-winning addition that was demolished. That earlier addition was distinguished by a series of cascading rooflines, skylights, setbacks, and varied architectural forms that reduced its perceived mass and allowed it to remain visually secondary to the principal historic structure.

By contrast, the proposed addition, by virtually any reasonable measure, **could not be considered visually secondary or subordinate** to the principal historic structure when viewed from either Sheafe Street or State Street. Its substantially increased volume, height, footprint, and visual presence cause the addition to compete with the historic building rather than remain subordinate to it.

Proportion and Footprint: In our estimation, the sheer volume and footprint of the proposed addition compete with, rather than complement, the principal historic building.

proposal creates a prominent, modernistic focal point that appears out of scale with the adjacent historic structures.

2. Reflections on the Prior Review and Unintended Consequences

We deeply appreciate the Commission’s work during the previous review four years ago, particularly the thoughtful stipulations it imposed concerning the commingling of the roof and deck structures. Those conditions demonstrated the Commission’s commitment to safeguarding adjoining historic properties.

Unfortunately, the applicant **did not satisfy those stipulations** before proceeding with demolition of the former rear addition. The applicant thereafter sought additional changes to the building design that were permitted—incorrectly, in our view—and which further complicated the regulatory, structural, design, and engineering issues associated with this project.

From the perspective of nearby residents, the earlier review process was also unable to fully explore how the overall massing and structural scope of the project would ultimately play out in practice. The four years following that approval have unfortunately produced a series of serious and unintended consequences for the immediate neighborhood, including:

Structural and Safety Concerns: Proposed construction plans raised significant concerns, with City staff identifying potential structural issues affecting not only 129 State Street, but also the adjoining approximately 200-year-old historic structure.

Consequences for Adjoining Properties: The scale and construction demands associated with the proposed project have also generated significant disputes concerning access to adjoining properties and the extent of construction easements claimed to be necessary to complete the work. Those issues have now resulted in litigation initiated by the applicant and have affected more than one direct abutter. While the underlying legal issues are for another forum, their existence demonstrates a practical consequence of attempting to construct a project of this size and complexity within such a constrained historic setting.

These developments demonstrate why getting the foundational elements of a project—particularly its scale, structural impact, footprint, and massing—right from the outset is so important to the surrounding community and to the preservation of the Historic District itself.

3. Value of Ongoing Public Engagement

We are grateful for the HDC’s commitment to facilitating meaningful public input throughout the application process, including at work sessions and formal public hearings. That public participation is an essential component of protecting Portsmouth’s unique historic built environment.

In a project presenting this degree of complexity, we believe public participation is particularly important because the architectural design, structural implications, permitting history, construction access issues, and effects upon adjoining historic properties are closely interconnected.

Conclusion

Given the history of this project and its continuing impact upon the immediate surroundings, we respectfully ask the Commission to undertake a more comprehensive review of the proposed massing and the other significant issues associated with this project.

Specifically, we request that the application be **tabled** and that the City convene a coordinated meeting involving the appropriate City officials, including representatives of the Historic District Commission, Planning Department, and Inspection/Building Department, to review in detail the unusual and interconnected architectural, structural, regulatory, and historic-preservation issues presented by this proposal.

The neighborhood has already endured approximately four years of an unfinished and visually disruptive condition at this property. Under these circumstances, taking additional time now for a careful and coordinated review is warranted. Such a review could help avoid further problems while, most importantly, allowing the HDC to fully carry out its responsibility to protect the historic character and architectural framework of Portsmouth.

Alternatively, if the Commission is not prepared to table the application for such a review, we respectfully ask that it **vote against the application in its present form** and request that the applicant return with a substantially revised proposal that:

- steps back the footprint;
- reduces the overall mass and apparent volume;
- better articulates the building planes and rooflines;
- softens the modernistic design elements; and
- achieves genuine visual subordination to the principal historic structure and compatibility with the surrounding historic neighborhood.

The question before the Commission is not whether some addition can appropriately be made to 129 State Street. The question is whether **this addition, at this scale and in this form, is appropriate for this historic site and its surrounding context**. We respectfully submit that it is not.

Thank you for your continued time, dedication, and service to our community.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark M. Bodi

Fwd: DRAFT

From Marie Bodi <mjbodi@icloud.com>

Date Wed 9/2/2026 12:10 PM

To Izak Gilbo <igilbo@portsmouthnh.gov>

Cc pbritz@portsmouthnh.gov <pbritz@portsmouthnh.gov>; Mark Bodi <mbodi@icloud.com>; Marie Bodi <mjbodi@icloud.com>

Dear IZAK & Peter,

Please be sure this is included in this evening packet. I have registered to participate as well via ZOOM to alap address specific material matters but do wish this to be ON RECORD. Thank you.

Dear Madam Chairwoman, Vice Chairwoman and Other Members of the Historic District Commission,

As a direct abutter of 129 State Street and representative of the Friends of Sheafe Street, I am writing to convey the opposition to the project as presented to the HDC and subsequently the entire planning department.

Sheafe Street is among the last truly historically intact residential quaint streets (often confused as an alley) within downtown Portsmouth proper. It retains a sense of scale and character that is increasingly rare and should be retained.

We trust Commission Members have visited the site (particularly from Sheafe Street) particularly in light of the Vice Chair's comments from the August meeting, and that you too acknowledge the unique collection of historic homes and buildings presently feel harmonious and human in scale and sadly, as presently proposed, the 129 State Street project would not contribute to this harmony.

1.) The **existing conditions** include a row house from the 1800's clearly attached to our structure (121-123 State Street) and ***does not*** include any additional structures. See page [184 (right hand photo) of 201] and please also look to page 174 of 201 [Please also there is not one depiction reflecting an east to west view of the 121/123 State Street direct abutters to the subject property].

Additional questions before you tonight include:

Does the applicant's request honor the spirit of its historic surroundings?

For one, the applicants summary of approvals state ...“wherein permission is requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (the removal of the shutters and ornamental trim, the addition of dormers and skylights, and exterior material changes), and **“the new construction of a rear garage addition”**. **Clearly, an understatement of the overall scope.**

The MASSING (as proposed) for the addition (a 3 and 4 story above ground structure as well as an **12’ - 18’ depth cellar not depicted anywhere**) represents a **significant increase** in mass that, in my view, overwhelms the scale of its surroundings and most assuredly negatively affects the quaintness of Sheafe Street.

Further, as designed the garage structure will create a significant pinch point for pedestrians, automobiles and any and all emergency support vehicles while permanently altering the historic ambiance of this important City Street.

The historic original building (all sides of an 1800’s brick row house) will be blemished by a tremendous reduction of historically significant materials, including the removal of and/or masking in wood, metal and glass (non historic) products of approximately 50-75% of the original brick structure (constructed between 1815-1817 following the Great Fire of 1813).

The Historic District Commission's role includes protecting not only individual historic structures, but also the character and essence of place that make Portsmouth's historic neighborhoods special. While additions to historic properties can certainly be appropriate, I am concerned that this proposal introduces a substantial new building presence on Sheafe Street and is not in keeping with such a historic street.

While the interior improvements are not under the purview of the HDC, it might come as a surprise to some members to learn the entirety of the historical features of this home have been destroyed/gutted including the most significantly constructed center circular staircase once a spectacular feature of this home.

The issue is not whether the addition is architecturally attractive, but whether its size is compatible with the setting into which it is being placed. Once a building of this scale is constructed, the change to the streetscape cannot be undone and an irresponsible precedent set.

Fortunately you have a chance to consider this and insure what could be lost is not only a view, but a measure of the historic character that defines the street itself.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask the Commission to carefully consider the FOREVER impact and whether the proposed scale is at all appropriate for this location or whether further reductions in massing could achieve the applicant's goals while better preserving the unique character of Sheafe Street.

Our summation Relative to Findings of Fact:

- 1.) Most INCONSISTENT with special and defining character of surrounding properties.
- 2.) Most INCOMPATIBLE with design of surrounding properties
- 3.) NO relation to historic and architectural value of existing structures
- 4.) UNCLEAR as to Innovation of Technology

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the preservation of Portsmouth's historic character.

Marie J. Bodi, 121 State Street (direct access to Sheafe Street)

And Friends of Sheafe Street including:

Sandell Morse, Chapel Street

Tom & Lauren Irwin, Chapel Street

Julie Foster, 43B Sheafe Street

Ashley Busa, 43A Sheafe Street

Frank Heitker, 37 Sheafe Street

Jonathan & Valerie Sobel, Customs House Court

Thomas Bertrand, 43 Sheafe Street

Conflicts/Concerns in reviewing the packet as submitted:

The entire package as submitted is difficult to follow along — some pages do not have a page # other than those embedded by the Planning Dept. E.g. page 174 references the architects (3 of 30); however, there are few pages cited for a series of 30

Page 185 should depict the width of Sheafe Street and denote the public parking on the north side of the street

Pages 186 & 187 are essentially blank

Page 189 of 201 (18 of 30) demonstrate parapet detail but should also clearly address the integration of the roof of 121/123 which is one roof.

Page 193 (22 of 30) - no reference to 121/123 Abutters Roof or application of any gutters or downspouts

Sent from my iPad