

Mayor & Council

Oral Comments from Steven R. Mitchell, P.E.
to the Chestertown Historic District Commission
October 4, 2023

OCT 04 2023

Per SM

Hi, I am Steve Mitchell, resident of 112 N. Water Street; Chestertown. I am a licensed professional engineer with over 40 years' experience in the environmental/safety and facility management disciplines

I support the college's effort to utilize the Armory property as a boutique hotel. I think it would be very beneficial to the economy of Chestertown and the upper Eastern Shore.

My disagreement is with the proposal of the college to tear down this historic property – one that is currently listed on National Register of Historic Places – to build this hotel. Their justification for tearing the building down is that the mold in the building is so extensive that they cannot clean it up or if they could there is no guarantee that it wouldn't come back. This was based on the statement of one asbestos and lead-paint testing laboratory that wasn't qualified to make that statement and didn't back that up with any sort of technical study.

In response to a letter to the editor in the Spy that I wrote after the initial approval to demolish the Armory, Dr. Sosulski, agreed in his own letter to the editor dated October 28, 2022 that “**...community members have noted that the lead and asbestos in the building can be addressed, and they are right...**” So, let's eliminate asbestos and lead-based paint from the equation, since Dr. Sosulski said they could be managed.

The college has not proven that mold remediation is not technically possible or economically feasible. Their application package includes a report from a laboratory that did some testing that concluded that there was mold in the building. There is no discussion about the extent

of the mold or the process to clean it up and what it would cost. Their only cost estimate in the application is for demolition.

The basis for the college's assertions is in the Sussex Environmental Corporation's lab report (Exhibit K), which was focused on asbestos and lead-based paint sampling, and mold and moisture observations. They did no mold sampling at the time, because they were not qualified to do that sampling, however, they made unsupported statements that the mold that was there was so pervasive that it may never be able to be remediated. The person making that statement had no data to back that up and did not appear to be qualified to make it as well.

I made a comment in a Spy letter to the editor that the college had no data on the types and extent of the mold in the building and the college dutifully hired a mold sampling company, MMTS, to conduct this sampling (Exhibit M). However, MMTS' conclusion to the college was **"Upon review of the lab results and visual observations, the building needs to be addressed by a Certified Mold Remediation company."** MMTS did not say that the mold was so pervasive that it could not be cleaned up. They said that it would need to be assessed by a Certified Mold Remediation company. The college has not done this.

Last week there was a community meeting here in town at which we heard presentations from two Certified Mold Remediation companies. The bottom line of these presentations was that the Armory, because of its brick and block and concrete construction, **would be a likely candidate for mold remediation.** Their presentation has been sent to members of the HDC and is available on the website: **savethearmory.org**. I encourage you to view it. Their conclusion was that **the Armory's materials of construction provides the best opportunity for success for mold remediation of any type of construction.**

I'm Lynn Mitchell of 112 N. Water Street and I'm here to wrap up Steve Mitchell's suggestions for this very important HDC decision. For the record, I fully support them.

We recommend that the HDC undertake an independent survey of the mold contamination in the Armory by a Certified Mold Remediation company. This would be paid for by the applicant, but the company would be selected by the HDC and managed by them to maintain an unbiased survey. This report would describe the extent of the mold contamination and what methods could be employed to remediate the mold and what the estimated costs would be. **The current estimates that these two companies had was \$275K for mold remediation. The college estimates that demolition would be over \$600K.**

The college developed a very nice plan in 2017 for an adaptive re-use of the Armory to make it into a hotel. What changed? We do not know why they are abandoning it, but we would advocate for that design or similar to be considered by the College.

To state again, Steve and I are all in favor of the college building a hotel at that site, but believe they should preserve this historic building. Chestertown is rightly proud of preserving its historical past. Had our predecessors demolished all of the 18th and 19th century houses in town because it was just easier to build new buildings, there would be no historic district and Chestertown would just be another town on the Eastern Shore. The HDC was created to preserve this legacy of this town and only allow demolition in extreme circumstances. We do not believe that the Armory meets this criterion.

In summary:

1. We're all for a hotel at the Armory site that incorporates portions of the current historic building.
2. We question Washington College when it says that mold is the reason the building cannot be saved – not even parts that don't have mold.

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Per LM

3. Washington College has not implemented the recommendation of their mold sampling laboratory, which is to hire a Certified Mold Remediation company to determine the technical and economic feasibility of removing the mold.
4. To resolve the difference of opinions, we propose that the HDC hire an independent Certified Mold Remediation company, to be paid for by the applicant – Washington College. If they decline that, then the Town should pay for it. In the worst case, Steve and I will personally pay for it. If Washington College truly believes the only barrier to them preserving another Chestertown landmark and making it commercially viable, this should settle the question.

Thanks for listening. Lynn



CHESTERTOWN

Lynda Thomas <lynda@chestertown.com>

Fwd: Oral Comments Made at 4 October 2023 HDC Meeting

2 messages

Town Manager <townmanager@chestertown.com>
To: Lynda Thomas <lynda@chestertown.com>

Thu, Oct 5, 2023 at 12:17 PM

FYI.

Lawrence DiRe, MPA
Town Manager
Town of Chestertown
118 N. Cross Street
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(410) 778-0500

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Steven Mitchell** <steve@lasershark.com>
Date: Thu, Oct 5, 2023 at 11:50 AM
Subject: Oral Comments Made at 4 October 2023 HDC Meeting
To: Vicky Smith <victoriawsmith@gmail.com>
Cc: Barbara Brown <barbarajune223@gmail.com>, Kees de Mooy <kees@chestertown.com>, Michael McDowell <mhcmcdowell@aol.com>, <david@holman-building.com>, <msella364@gmail.com>, <rcmstrategicconsulting@gmail.com>, Samantha Hollomon <shollomon@me.com>, <townmanager@chestertown.com>


Attached for the record, are my comments from last night's HDC meeting.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this submission.

Regards,

Steve

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112 N. Water Street
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 **Oral Comments for Oct 4 meeting_v3.pdf**
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Town Manager <townmanager@chestertown.com>
To: Lynda Thomas <lynda@chestertown.com>

Thu, Oct 5, 2023 at 12:18 PM

FYI.

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lynn Mitchell** <lynn@lasershark.com>
Date: Thu, Oct 5, 2023 at 12:16 PM
Subject: Re: Oral Comments Made at 4 October 2023 HDC Meeting
To: Steven Mitchell <steve@lasershark.com>, Vicky Smith <victoriawsmith@gmail.com>
Cc: Barbara Brown <barbarajune223@gmail.com>, Kees de Mooy <kees@chestertown.com>, Michael McDowell

<mhcmcdowell@aol.com>, <david@holman-building.com>, <msella364@gmail.com>, <rcmstrategicconsulting@gmail.com>, Samantha Hollomon <shollomon@me.com>, <townmanager@chestertown.com>

Vicky and HDC Board,

Attached are my comments from the HDC meeting last night. Thank you for the opportunity to share them, and thank you for all the hard work you all do to make Chestertown better.

Best

Lynn Mitchell

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