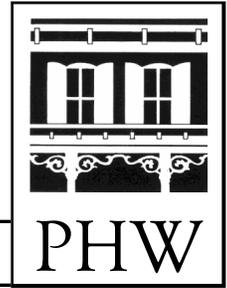


# of Preservation Historic Winchester, Inc.



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## THE STATE OF THE BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

### FRANKLIN E. WRIGHT

Several council members have been quoted in the press as being dissatisfied with the operation of the Board of Architectural Review, citing “arbitrary” decisions and “inflexible rules”. There has even been speculation this Council might abolish the BAR (see Star editorial, April 11, 2009).

A headline in the Winchester Star, referring to the BAR, asked, “Preservationists – or Pain in the neck?” (Star, April 10, 2009). We responded with an “Open Forum” piece published on April 14, 2009, defending the BAR as public servants (see the article reprinted on page two of this newsletter). We also offered to work with the City in improving the BAR, and the Design Guidelines, last revised in 1999.

At a meeting of the Planning and Development “Committee of the Whole”, Council appointed a Working Group to consider improvements to the Design Guidelines. The Working Group will consist of one representative from each of the following organizations:

- Preservation of Historic Winchester
- Board of Architectural Review
- City Planning Commission
- Economic Development Authority
- Old Town Development Board
- Department of Historic Resources
- City Council

The Group will be chaired by Vince Diem, Zoning Director, and is expected to have its first meeting in May. PHW looks forward to contributing to the improvement of the operation of the BAR and to the Design Guidelines. We believe a strong BAR administering understandable and reasonable guidelines will result in an even better preservation environment for Winchester. ♦

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## YES, WINCHESTER BAR DOES SERVE A NOBLE AND NEEDED PURPOSE

Guardians, unpaid public servants trying to faithfully execute the duties given them by City Council, yes – certainly the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) is *not*, as you suggest, a “pain in the neck.”

Thirty-five years ago our city fathers recognized the value a Historic District and a Board of Architectural Review would bring to Winchester – a viable, vibrant and prosperous downtown with unmatched architectural features for a city this size. The availability of tax credits within the Historic District has enabled the redevelopment of the Jones Knitting Mill, the George Washington Hotel, and most recently the Union Bank Building, among others.

In turn, these projects have provided many jobs for mostly local workers, an increased tax base, and often increased sales and other tax revenues. Rather than an “impediment” to development, historic districts are facilitators of development. Council President Buettner was correct in recognizing that additional districts would enable other property owners to take advantage of tax credits.

A related issue is the function and operation of a board of architectural review. A historic district alone does nothing but make tax credits available to qualified owners doing appropriate work. A historic district alone does not prevent the demolition of historic or contributing properties, nor does it prevent their alteration or modification, nor their replacement with inappropriate structures using inappropriate materials. *Only* a BAR can do these things.

Is the BAR process onerous or cumbersome. In my personal experience, and in my observation of scores of meetings, *no*. Literally, 99% of applications considered by the BAR were approved in the last three years. Would some people rather not go through the process? Probably the same number who would object to having to obtain variances from the building or Zoning Code – all of which are designed to serve the greater good of the community as a whole. For the one person who wishes the boundary line would be drawn around his/her property there are hundreds who recognize *their* interests are served by living in a historic district whose qualities are maintained by a properly functioning BAR.

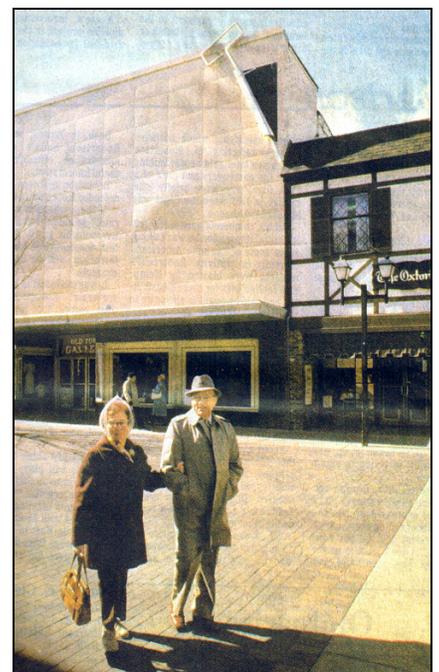
Any process can be improved upon. Preservation of Historic Winchester seeks the opportunity to work with the city to revise and modify the design guidelines, make alterations to the Historic District, and create new districts to further establish Winchester as the premier example of preservation at its best. ♦

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## THE WAY IT WAS



This image (left) of the Leggett store (15 North Loudoun Street) on the downtown walking mall was taken during the 1976 Architectural Survey. The building was once sheathed in aluminum to “modernize” the façade. Much like the Union Bank Building, the metal sheathing was removed, rather humorously in this instance. Scott Mason of the Winchester Star captured the image (right) of the aluminum being rolled back like a sardine tin in 1988.



Today, the building has been renovated by Marilyn Finnemore and Aldo Bello and renamed The Bright Center. The building houses office spaces and retail stores, such as MakeNest Interiors and Incredible Flying Objects, and also a conference center and desks for rent on a daily or monthly basis for start-up businesses. Visit them online at [www.brightcenter.biz](http://www.brightcenter.biz) or [www.flickr.com/photos/bright\\_center/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/bright_center/) ♦

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## SANDRA BOSLEY ACCEPTED TO SCAD

PHW's Office Administrator Sandra Bosley has been accepted to Savannah College of Art and Design for the Master of Arts program in Historic Preservation. The program covers preservation law and advocacy, economics and development, research and survey techniques, conservation technologies, building assessment strategies, and a final project. The majority of the coursework can be

completed in Winchester via online learning, so Sandra will be working at PHW simultaneous with her schooling. SCAD also awarded a substantial yearly scholarship to Sandra based on her academic record, resume, and portfolio of work, largely drawn from PHW activities. Congratulations and good luck! ♦

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## LIMESTONE, SYCAMORES, AND PRESERVATION

Thanks to board member Tim Winther, PHW has hosted two successful Limestone, Sycamores, and Preservation seminars. The first, on traditional lime mortar, was held March 10 with Jeff Price of Virginia Lime Works leading the discussion. Price's lecture highlighted how lime mortar is made, the grading system of natural hydraulic lime mortar (and what that means), why Portland cement is a poor substitute for buildings with existing lime mortar, different joint finishing techniques, and even a walkthrough of the construction of a church. For those unable to attend the event in person on March 10, or if the amount of information was overwhelming during the presentation, you may find the entire seminar, along with related informational videos about lime mortar, online at Youtube.com (<http://www.youtube.com/user/virginalimeworks>).

The second seminar, held March 25, focused on trees and streetscapes in the Historic District of Winchester. Patrick Farris (Chairman of the Tree Commission), Perry Eisenach (Public Services Director), Tom Hoy (Public Works Director), and Tim Stern (City Arborist) were on hand to explain their roles in monitoring the trees and sidewalks on public property in Winchester along with City Manager Brannon Godfrey. The impact of the upcoming changes to Cameron and Braddock Streets as part of the city infrastructure work was a large part of the discussion, particularly the impact on the large sycamore trees and historic brick sidewalks and limestone curbing.

Following the second seminar, City Council opted at the April 14 meeting to pursue the retention of limestone curbing and all brick sidewalks at the core downtown intersections as well as allowing homeowners to pay the difference for all brick sidewalks as opposed to the concrete and brick mix that is seen on Cork and Boscawen Streets.

A third seminar is scheduled for May 19 — see the event listing on page four of this newsletter for more details! ♦

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## TWO HISTORIC PLAQUES AWARDED

Two significant Winchester buildings have been honored with the Winchester Historic Plaque in 2009. The first is a building familiar to Holiday House Tour visitors in 2007: The City Meat Building (circa 1890), new home of Reader & Swartz Architects and Lefkowitz Design. The building's renovation was completed in 2006 and has received several awards for the innovative design and rehabilitation of this former butcher shop and grocery mart.

The second building is also well-known in Winchester —

the Old Jail at 317 South Cameron Street (built 1845), now the Division of Court Services. The building is the second oldest surviving jail in the Shenandoah Valley, and its architect, Thomas U. Walter, is nationally famous for the construction of the wing extensions and dome for the Capitol Building.

*If you are interested in a Winchester Historic Plaque for a building located inside Winchester's Historic District, PHW can assist with your research and application process. Contact the PPHW Office for more information. ♦*

Check each item that you are willing to volunteer your time and return to **PHW, 530 Amherst St. Winchester, VA 22601**

### PHW Activities

- Newsletter
- Education
- Community Relations
- Special Events
- Membership Campaign
- Revolving Fund

### Holiday House Tour

- Docents
- House Chairmen
- Decorators
- Publicity
- Bough and Dough Shop

Name:

Phone:

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