

From: [Robert](#)
To: [Architectural Review Board](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: 10/13 meeting on demolition of 233 Pensacola
Date: Thursday, October 1, 2020 1:33:06 PM

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In regard to the request for permission to demolish the structure at 233 Pensacola, I formally request that the following letter be read aloud at the 10/13 council meeting:

23 September 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing in regard to the proposed demolition of 233 Pensacola.

I am 60 years old. I have lived in the same house on West Venice Avenue for 52 years. I have seen wonderful things happen in Venice, and I have seen thoughtless destruction.

As you all know, the remarkable success and unique qualities of Venice stem from its original John Nolen city plan, and the extent to which his plan was executed and preserved. People are drawn to Venice, whether new arrivals or long-time residents, because of its atmosphere. Atmosphere, as Nolen well knew, is created by many things: street plan; landscaping; parks; lot size and the size of the structures that sit on each lot; as well as architectural integrity.

It disturbs me to see how far we have strayed from those important elements—particularly in regard to dwelling size and the integrity and preservation of important architectural specimens.

While tax revenue is dictated by square footage, and thus creates concrete 'value,' atmosphere—the thing that has drawn us to this city—is more difficult to quantify monetarily, yet is just as important in terms of 'value.'

It's interesting to me that it's okay to demolish a house that has historical significance, but it's not okay, within a historic district, to paint that house a color that hasn't been approved. Our priorities don't seem to be in line with what is truly

important.

There are plenty of nondescript houses on the island that can happily be replaced. 233 Pensacola is not one of them. It is one of only a handful of original houses built in the 1920's that has survived and helped define what is unique about Venice.

Please bear with me for a short digression...641 West Venice Avenue was an unaltered mid-century masterpiece, within the historic district. It was allowed to be demolished by Mark Caithness so that he could carve up its lot and its neighboring lot into 3 lots, as originally platted, instead of 2. It was a substantial loss for preservationists and a substantial gain for Mark Caithness.

This builder, and he's just one of many, was also granted variances so that he could wedge an over-sized and undistinguished house onto a lot adjoining the Whittaker mansion on the other end of the same block. It destroyed the original ambience of one of Venice's most important historic homes. It also affected the overall 'feeling' of West Venice Avenue's only single-family block—a block that, quite literally, is the face of Venice. It should not have been allowed, and it can never be undone.

The point is that it seems there is no variance that won't be granted to anyone who has enough money or influence. These decisions, one by one, little by little, are forever altering the appearance and atmosphere of this place.

The people who are requesting permission to demolish 233 Pensacola know that they have a historic property. They also have the means to sell it and purchase any other property in the area—there are a plethora of ranch houses in that neighborhood that could come down. Instead, they have hired powerful attorneys to wield their substantial influence so that they can get their way.

They want to tear down one of Venice's original, if modest, homes that has stood for over 90 years, so they can build a townhouse to spend their remaining years in. It's like the 80 year old who buys a house, cuts down a hundred year old tree because it's 'messy,' and then leaves this world 3 years later. Even though they have a 'right' to do it, it's selfish and it's thoughtless.

If you grant the request to demolish this 1920's dwelling, what will you say to the next couple who wants to demolish the next one?

Which brings me to my final thought. The attorneys from Boone Law Firm, and their ilk, as well as wealthy property owners, always fall back on the notion of

‘property rights.’ There is a vast difference, often, and however, between what someone has the legal ‘right’ to do and what is the right thing to do.

There isn’t anything special about this lot—it adjoins a commercial parking lot. Let the owners of this property sell it and purchase a house whose demolition will not destroy yet another piece of this town’s history.

Denying a permit to demolish this historic home is the right thing to do--as guardians of this town, its history and its residents. We’ve lost too many significant structures already.

Respectfully,

Robert Farrell

640 West Venice Avenue

From: [John Haseltine](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Fw: Original Homes in Venice
Date: Saturday, October 3, 2020 2:07:26 PM

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From: John Haseltine <jbhaseltine@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 2, 2020 9:54 PM
To: citycouncil@venicegov.gov <citycouncil@venicegov.gov>
Subject: Original Homes in Venice

As owner of an original home in Venice I disapprove of the Architectural Review Board decision to allow demolition of the house at 233 Pensacola. It is particularly unfortunate that a structure with unique features so near the center of town would be destroyed. With the exception of the new library and the community center complex, these old houses are special contributions to Venice's attraction for visitors. Our business community would not survive without visitors attracted to a destination whose first structures date from nearly 100 years ago. As a result, this decision will set a precedent which if repeated will not help city finances and damage the image of this unique feature in Southwest Florida.

Please read this e-mail into the record of the Council's 10/13 meeting.

John Haseltine
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