



Loudoun County, Virginia

HERITAGE COMMISSION

1 Harrison Street, S.E., P.O. Box 7000

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March 31, 2020

Honorable Phyllis Randall
Chair, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
1 Harrison St., SE
Leesburg, VA 20177-7000

Dear Chair Randall and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

The Heritage Commission is responsible for advising the Board of Supervisors on heritage and history issues and policies and creating stewardship management plans for each of the county-owned historic properties. One of those properties is the **Lovettsville Community Center**, which is slated for demolition to make way for construction of a new building. The core of the current community center is historic, dating to the early 1900s when it first served as a high school and later as an elementary school. The relatively intact classrooms are from the 1927-1940 time period. Many local residents recall going to school there and have shared stories of their remembrances.

In 2014, the county finalized plans to demolish the current building and replace it with a new community center despite the concerns of citizens who advocated alternatives to demolition – renovation of the existing building or constructing a new building across the street on land owned by the county and designated for a park. The County's Heritage Commission was not included in the discussions about the historic building.

A contractor was hired, and some work has been done on the property but not to the building. Citing issues with the pace of demolition and construction, the County recently fired the contractor and will search for a replacement. With the project on hold, there is now an opportunity to rethink and better plan for a Community Center that both honors the history of Lovettsville and provides a facility that meets the needs of the community.

Members of the Lovettsville Historical Society met with the Heritage Commission and made us aware of their plans to ask for reconsideration of the Center's demolition. They have support from the town's mayor and others in the community.

Now that the Heritage Commission is aware of the importance of the Center to the Lovettsville community and of its historic significance, **we have concerns about moving forward with the 2014 plan to demolish the historic section of the Center** because of the: (1) violations of County policies in the proposed action and (2) poor precedent and example this action will set. The County, in its Heritage Preservation Plan (HPP), which is a part of its Comprehensive Plan, provides guidance on the County's responsibilities toward historic properties and sites as follows:

The HPP further states that regarding county owned properties, "the County will be a leader in the protection and preservation of heritage resources through exemplary stewardship of public properties" (HPP, Chapter 7, Stewardship Policies, Policy 1).

If the County does not choose to save its own historic buildings, we are very concerned about the poor precedent it will set. It sets a terrible example by holding historic sites and buildings as not worthy of the County's protection and respect and encourages private citizens and owners to do the same.

The Community Center is an important landmark in the Town of Lovettsville and is a part of the social fabric of the community. Many people remember attending school there and current residents, including children, are making their own memories as they use and benefit from the building today. The Heritage Commission supports the Lovettsville Historical Society and the Lovettsville Alumni Association in their desire to save the historic section of the current Community Center by renovating the existing building or finding another use for the building and constructing the new center across the street on county-owned park land. In either case, **we oppose demolition of the historic community center.**

Thank you for your consideration.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert A. Pollard". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert A. Pollard
Chairman, Loudoun County Heritage Commission

cc: Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator
Megan McCarthy, Project Manager
Alaina Ray, Director Planning & Zoning
Heritage Commission