

From: Linda Talman
Sent: Sunday, September 14, 2025 9:57 PM
To: Planner
Subject: Horizontal vs vertical.

Dear Planning Commission and Council:

The Historic Preservation District is celebrating its 52nd anniversary this September. The 1972 code states that a structure that was over 50 years old would earn points on the landmark scoring system described in that code. So fifty years was apparently the age a structure had to be to be historic and earn landmark points. By extrapolation, we can safely infer that the structures built in 1972 have now reached the status of being historic. Midcentury modern meets the criteria.

Fast forward to 2025 where a dilemma has been created by the Town Council.

The Planning Commission recently approved a new home in a spot previously occupied by a trailer. The house design is an interesting one and not a copy of an old house. Great. It doesn't have to be. The code states that horizontal siding is preferred in the historic district. The house plan in question has vertical siding - as does the Library across the street from it — and the house down the street and Balance Point and the house next to

the boat house on 2nd and a host of other properties in the Historic District. Since I arrived in 72 along with the code, I can remember the building of most things since then and I cannot recall the town ever giving a permit and then considering rescinding it.

Since “preferred” and “avoid” are not the same as “required” and “shall” and since the HPD has many fine examples of vertical siding and since generations of Planning Commissions read and understood the meaning of preferred, The current PC like so many Planning commissions before them, approved the plan. The homeowner went forward with her plans.

When the council got it forwarded to them, they tsk tsked and disapproved. It was said at the meeting that the Planning Commission had too many new members to fully understand, so they acted to remand it to the Planning Commission, asking them to reconsider the decision –once again undermining the PC and seeming to think that PC was unable to understand the meaning of the word preferred. But the PC read the same piece of code and considered the same evidence as all planning commissions since 1972.

It was one line of code. Surely the members were capable of reading a line of code. Generations of Planning Commissioners approved all of other existing vertically sided structures - adding to a wonderful mix of looks here.. They approved because they too were able to read and understand the difference between preferred and required. This is La Conner and this is the West. We are unique. And we are not frozen in time. And we are not always pretty.

People wonder why the Planning Commission has trouble keeping people. The council has the right to do what they did, but it was

not the right thing to do. This is not the first time the Council has undermined the PC. And why put a property owner through a month long delay.

The PC made a reasonable decision based on code. The PC should stand by their decision. I hope they do.

Linda Z Talman

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The only real job of a public official is to make their grandchildren proud. That's called vision.....

Linda

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