

Permission to level heritage farmhouse costs developer \$40,000

By David Lea
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Only a matter of days after the Town received the 2009 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award, Oakville council has signed off on a deal that will see the nearly 200-year-old Emily Biggar Farmhouse, 3079 Neyagawa Blvd., destroyed.

Town council ruled, at Monday's Planning and Development Council meeting, the 19th century frame farmhouse will be removed from the Oakville Register of

Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, so the structure can be demolished by the developer Davis-Minardi Home Corporation to make way for a new subdivision.

Council's permission for the demolition comes in exchange for a \$40,000 contribution, from the developer, to the Town's heritage fund.

A report presented to council by Oakville's Manager of Heritage Planning Michael Seaman indicated the historic home appeared to be in poor condition.

The report also pointed out that various

conservation options had been considered and exhausted.

"Due to the location of the house within the North Oakville East Secondary Plan area relative to the proposed street network, the relatively dense nature of the development proposed for the site and the amount of restoration work required to bring the house to a habitable condition, all options for on-site preservation of the Emily Biggar Farmhouse were exhausted," wrote Seaman in the report.

For Gordon Kaitting, of the Trafalgar Township Historical Society, a \$40,000 contribution from the developer is not nearly enough to warrant the destruction of a piece of Oakville's history.

"Yes, we need a trust fund to help people restore their heritage homes, but it should be coming from the building department fines and a government fund. It should not come from demolition of significant heritage buildings. Not to mention, there is nothing in place now for a trust fund, so there are no parameters on it. Will the \$40,000 stay in North Oakville to preserve some of our amazing old homes that have been completely ignored over the years for designation," asked Kaitting.

"This building could have been fully restored and sold at a profit within this new development to preserve a significant part of our heritage. The staff report for

the Cline (Biggar) home said it was significant — what happened that someone decided \$40,000 was enough to deem it insignificant and even more disgraceful on our town's Heritage week."

During the meeting, Ward 5 Councillor Jeff Knoll attempted to secure a commitment that the \$40,000 would be used for heritage projects in north Oakville. He said the situation for historic buildings in North Oakville grows worse every year.

"We have a heritage landscape that is disappearing rapidly in north Oakville. There is very little left now. We have a heritage report coming out soon that is going to itemize it, but even in the interim, waiting for that report to come that could potentially give us some ammunition to protect that heritage, we are seeing one property after another disappearing forever," said Knoll. "In order to achieve something good in the future we are going to need some money to put on the table we can use when it comes to moving another property or another home. I would like to have that earmarked in homage to the losses of heritage property in that landscape."

Council adopted an amendment stating that in creating the heritage fund Town staff would explore options that would include heritage projects in North Oakville.

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