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Date: February 7, 2021 at 12:48:47 PM EST
To: Mayor <mayor@scarsdale.com>
Subject: Preservation: 11 Dolma Road

CAUTION: External sender.

To the Scarsdale Board of Trustees

I am writing to urge you to uphold the decision of the Committee for Historic Preservation to deny the application to demolish the historic home at 11 Dolma Road. In considering this case I ask you to comply with Village Code, support the CHP and follow the advice of your attorney and historic preservation expert.

As stated by Attorney James Staudt at the February 4 hearing, "If ever credit should be given to the Committee for Historic Preservation it is in this case. There are 600 pages of documentation, the record demonstrates that both sides were afforded opportunities to supply evidence and the decision provides clear articulate reasons and thoughtful discussion of how (architect) Julius Gregory advanced architecture into the modern age. It is difficult to fathom a more thorough process."

Furthermore Staudt said, "There is more than enough evidence under any standard of proof. The words are clear and easy to understand. The facts and analysis are clear."

Professor Andrew Dolkhart, a renowned expert on historic preservation who was retained by the Village to offer testimony, could not have been more clear or direct, saying I, "feel very strongly that 11 Dolma Road meets three of the criteria for preservation."

He established the context for the place of the Dolma Road home in the history of Scarsdale saying, "There is no broad pattern more significant than the suburbanization of the Village – it created the Village as we know it today."

Responding to the applicant's claim that renovations to the windows and doors had caused the structure to lose its integrity and authenticity, Dolkhart stated what the plain eye can see. The renovations on the front are relatively minor and were sensitively done to blend in with the rest of the house. He added, "Buildings that have changed over time can be listed on the National Register -- in fact all the buildings for which I have written applications for the National Register have changed over time."

The lengthy record of buildings, articles, and publications clearly establishes architect Julius Gregory as a master and the home at 11 Dolma is a wonderful example of his work.

I need not remind you that as Trustees, you have taken an oath to uphold the laws of Scarsdale, and in this case, the law is clear. Furthermore, our own appointed Committee of Historic Preservation, the Village Attorney and a renowned expert in historic preservation all reached the same conclusion. It seems pointless and wasteful for the Board to appoint and retain all these of these experts if they do not follow their counsel.

In weighing this case, the Board must consider the right of the Scarsdale community at large who values the history, beauty and neighborhood character that our Village Code was written to preserve. As residents, we have the right to expect that the Village will follow the laws to protect a community we cherish. In my view, the role of the Trustees is to safeguard community values and norms, respect the unique history of the Village and leave Scarsdale a better place than you found it.

I fear that if you fail to heed the experts and the law and allow the demolition of this iconic home, you will open the door to further attempts to strip Scarsdale of what makes it special. The ruling would become a precedent to permit the destruction of more historic properties.

For all these reasons, I urge you to do what you were elected to do; uphold the 5-2 decision of the Committee for Historic Preservation, protect the character of our neighborhood and deny the application to demolish 11 Dolma Road.

Sincerely,

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