



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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September 18, 2014

Ms. Kate Michaud  
Administrative Officer  
Tiverton Planning Board  
343 Highland Road  
Tiverton, RI 02878

Re: Tiverton Crossing Proposed Development Plan,  
Main Road, Route 24, Fish Road and Souza Road, Tiverton

Dear Ms. Michaud:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission staff has received your request for an assessment of the Carpionato Group's proposed mixed use development on 67 acres on Main Road with regard to its effect on the historic character of the Osborn-Bennett Historic District. As you know, this Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We have reviewed the materials submitted for the Master Plan review that the town has posted on its website and we have the following comments.

#### Affected Historic Resources

The Osborn-Bennett Historic District (Historic District) is a small, coherent collection of farmhouses along Main Road, three on the east side and one on the west. It is historically significant for its associations with the town's rural origins and for its architecture. Built up between c. 1790 to c. 1845, the farmhouses and their associated outbuildings and fields constitute a rare surviving concentration of the rural agricultural settlement that characterized much of Tiverton in that era. The buildings also reflect the varied architectural styles that were favored by local builders.

#### Project Effects

It is evident from the Master Plan submission that the proposed development would have a major effect on the Historic District and the effect would be overwhelmingly adverse. The single greatest cause of this potential adverse effect stems from the inclusion of Lots 220 and 221 within the proposed development parcel. This would result in the removal of the c. 1845 Osborn House at 1148 Main Road and building over 19 acres of historic farmland bounded by stone walls and remnant agricultural features, all of it contributing to the significance of the Historic District.

This would be a substantial loss to the Historic District; it would lose two-thirds of its acreage and one quarter of its buildings and they would be replaced by a modern commercial center with a four-lane drive. The Osborn House, which is prominently placed on a little knoll would be

replaced with a detention basin, which would require that the grade be lowered to collect the drainage. A right turn lane would be added to Main Road northbound, which would cut into the front yard of the Thomas Osborn House, 1168 Main Road. The loss of the house and introduction of intrusive site features at Main Road would also break the visual continuity of the District along West Main Road, isolating the Bennett-Hambly House, 1137 Main Road, from the remainder of the District to the south. All of these changes would severely compromise the compact nature, intimate scale and rural character of the Historic District and most likely destroy its eligibility for the National Register.

### Measures to Avoid or Mitigate

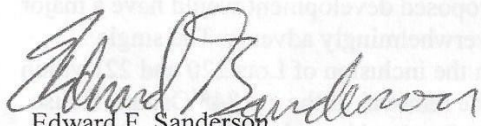
We understand the town is considering this new language for the Comprehensive Community Plan that would address the potential negative impacts to the Historic District caused by this development:

*Proposed Language for Section 3.3 of the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan  
Significant measures should be taken to mitigate any negative impacts to the historic character of the Osborn-Bennett Historic District.*

It is our conclusion that construction of this major development as proposed would have adverse effects that cannot be effectively mitigated. Too much historic fabric would be sacrificed and the Historic District would lose its integrity. What is needed is a modification of the plan to preserve the Osborn House in its historic location and to restrict new construction in the fields east of the house. The best way to avoid this is to eliminate or relocate the new construction of Phase IV. This could leave the Osborn House and its open fields intact and preserve the quality of the Historic District along Main Road. If a complete elimination of Phase IV is not possible, then the Osborn House should still be kept in its historic location and new construction restricted from the field immediately east of the house. In either case the width of the western entrance road should also be reduced to allow for an adequate landscape buffer along its southern border by the Osborn House.

In summary, the Osborn-Bennett Historic District is a valuable and irreplaceable resource for Tiverton and it deserves the full measure of protection and preservation that town can provide. If you have any questions, please contact Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director of this office.

Very truly yours,



Edward F. Sanderson  
Executive Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer