

Owner Of Art Deco Auto Shop In Southampton Village Seeks Permission To Demolish The Building

Greg Wehner | September 27, 2017

Located in the heart of Southampton Village, where Windmill, Jobs and Pond lanes and Hill Street all come together, is an art deco-style automotive shop.

But, perhaps, not for long.

The 5,600-square-foot building, which is owned by the Hauquitz family, has been listed for \$4,195,000 for the past year. Linda Kabot, a real estate agent and former Southampton Town supervisor, said potential buyers want to know what they can do with the property. In particular, she said, potential buyers have asked whether they can expand—or even demolish—the building.

That's why, Ms. Kabot said, the owners are seeking a certificate of

appropriateness, asking whether the village's Building Department can issue a demolition permit. The request has been submitted to the Southampton Village Board of Architectural Review and Historic Preservation, referred to as the ARB.

The property, which is located at 1 Pond Lane, is in the village's historic district, yet it does not appear on a formal list of historic buildings in the village. Still, the location requires that any proposed demolition or alteration must go through the ARB, Ms. Kabot said.

Zachary Studenroth, the board's architectural consultant, said there is nothing in village code preventing the owner from obtaining a permit to demolish the structure.

What's odd, he said, is that the seller does not have a buyer, yet still is seeking approval for the potential demolition of the building. He said the ARB typically wants to know what an applicant has in mind for a property before approving demolition—though, he added, nothing in the village code requires that.

Ms. Kabot stressed that the application is a proactive measure: There is no plan to demolish the building, and no guarantee that the eventual buyer will follow through with a demolition.

According to Kurt Hauquitz, his grandfather built the structure in the early 1950s, and it has remained in the family for generations.

But the property dates back well before that.

Merritt and Caroline Marshall Culver owned a farm on the corner of Pond Lane and Culver Hill, and a house was on the property, which is now 1 Pond Lane, until the early 1900s, according to documents kept by the Southampton Historical Museum.



Maps created in 1927 and updated in 1932 show that an automotive sales shop and gas station had been built on the property in place of the home.

The same maps depict a Hill Street lined with car dealerships and automotive repair shops, along with a machine shop. That had been the case since the late 1800s, when the Culvers' son, George, opened up a carriage shop at 16 Hill Street, where he repaired, painted and built carriages. That business was handed down to his son, Arthur Culver, in 1913, documents show.

Town documents concur with Mr. Hauquitz that the current structure sitting on the property at 1 Pond Lane was put in place in 1950. Ms. Kabot said that for the past few decades, B&M Automotive has operated at that location—and the business doesn't plan on moving anytime soon.

That said, Mr. Studenroth said he doesn't expect any problems obtaining a demolition permit from the village. He explained that in order for a permit for a building in the historic district to be denied, that building either has to be on the list of historic structures—which it is not—or it has to be on a survey that was completed in 1927.

The list of historic sites, Mr. Studenroth said, was put together in 1979. At the time, the building would have only been 29 years old and would not have been historical in nature.

But another survey was done in the early 1990s, and again in 2004, according to Mr. Studenroth, and by that time the building was added to the list of historic properties. But no action was taken by the Village Board on either list—so they cannot be used as reference points for the ARB.

Mr. Studenroth said he put together the 2004 list, and what was originally 450 buildings had jumped up to nearly 900 buildings by the time he was done.

As far as the survey from 1927, any building documented before that day is automatically of interest in terms of historical nature, he said.

Anne Surchin, an architect based in Southold who is The Press's architecture columnist and is familiar with the architecture in Southampton Village, said the building sits within a Historic District recognized at the national level. She said she would like to see the building landmarked, and although it may not need to continue to operate as an automotive shop, she said there are "so many possibilities of doing something with it," rather than tearing it down.

Mary Cummings, the research center manager at the Southampton Historical Museum said she also wants to see the building saved. "It's our one example of that style of architecture," she said. "In my opinion, it's historic, and it's been there a long time."

For now, Mr. Studenroth is working on putting together an opinion for the ARB on the property at 1 Pond Lane so that it can be added to the record.

A second public hearing on the matter was held last Monday, where Kurt Hauquitz and Musette Cause spoke about their property.

Mr. Hauquitz, who is the president of 1 Pond Lane LLC, said he remembers going to the automotive shop when he was a kid.

"I don't think it's a very historical place," he said. "It is what use to be around quite a bit."

Board member Jeff Brodlieb said he didn't want to see the building demolished, but board member Susan Stevenson said there was really nothing they could do to prevent it. The only other option the board has—which the board members discussed—is to try to get the property landmarked, which the owners said they object to.

The ARB did not act on the application during the board's Monday meeting, and instead left it open to allow Mr. Studenroth time to research the property more, for historic value.