



CORNERSTONES
— of Maine —

June 12, 2017

Mr. Jason Grant
Life Safety CEO – Plan Reviewer
Permitting and Inspections Department
City of Portland, Maine

Re: 15 West Street Project: Grand Staircase Enclosure

Dear Mr. Grant,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with additional information on our project. We have also attached a Code Review done by our Fire Protection Engineer (FPE) as a response to the questions in your email dated May 9, 2017. We believe that you will find it complete.

Our proposed occupancy will provide a group living setting for young adults ages 18-28 who require assistance in transitioning into independent living. Many of our residents come to us with a history of adversity and struggles in a variety of areas: mood or anxiety disorders, substance abuse, academic challenges, or behavioral problems. And, as a condition of acceptance into our program, all residents have achieved a degree of control over their problems and are ready for a transitional program like ours to assist them in their final step toward independence. All residents will be capable of self-preservation in the manner that is necessary in an emergency, will have no physical limitations, and our house is staffed 24 hours a day with trained supervisors.

As described in the attached report, our property meets the height and area requirements of the IBC, including fire resistive separation from the adjacent residential units on either side. We will provide sprinkler protection to our unit based on NFPA 13R, per our FPE's guidance. Windows from sleeping and living areas are properly dimensioned to be secondary escape windows, even though not required by Code. The center grand staircase is very generously sized, exceeding the capacity requirements of the Code. Finally, there are no unprotected hazardous areas or vertically communicating spaces, other than the grand stair.

It is this grand staircase that brings this letter of consideration to you. We understand that, in order to have a single primary means of escape (our grand staircase) we need to provide a layer of protection that will prevent fire and smoke from impacting the main egress of our residents. We understand that the current walls and doors will provide an appropriate fire resistance per Code. Our FPE has instructed us:

- To provide automatic closers on all bedroom or living room doors entering into the grand staircase.
- To provide additional enclosure to the staircase by adding additional self-closing doors as shown in the attached document.
- That our existing handrail can remain, as long as you deem it graspable according to the intent of the Code.



The architectural beauty and significance of this grand staircase was certainly part of why we wanted to buy this property as a residence. Furthermore, the safety of our residents and staff are of primary importance. We would therefore like for you to consider the following:

Whereas the property is properly separated from its adjacent neighbors;

Whereas the property will have sprinkler protection, smoke/CO detection and manual activation of a building alarm as required;

Whereas the property has secondary escape windows in excess of Code requirements;

Whereas the exit stair is generously sized for the expected occupant load and has a graspable handrail at appropriate height; and

Whereas the occupants are all capable of self-preservation, and will not be required to exceed the maximum allowable travel to the exit;

- ❖ We ask that we be permitted to provide self-closing doors on all sleeping rooms and second floor work areas AND add a single additional self-closing door to provide protection from the kitchen/dining area (highest hazard area) as depicted by our FPE, and
- ❖ We ask that we be permitted to leave the passageway into the living room open (not provide the doors shown by our FPE), keep the current architectural handrail, and not provide the additional door on the second floor (since all other room doors are self-closing).

We understand that these allowances can be permitted by the AHJ in cases where the building is historical in nature, and the performance of the main stairwell (egress) is insured by other building characteristics that exceed Code requirements. We only ask that you consider this as an option to completely enclosing this beautiful architectural feature.

Please contact us if you have any additional questions regarding our project, and we appreciate your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Jacob Gelles
Founder & Co-Director
Cornerstones of Maine