

Jonathan and Traci Block
91 Lincoln Street
Portland, Maine 04103
207-653-5811

April 9, 2012
Via Email and Regular Mail

Portland Fire Department
Attention John Martell
Fire Department Headquarters
380 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101

RE: 97 Lincoln Street; 96 Lincoln Street; Response to Reported Violations and Plan of Action

Dear Mr. Martell:

Thank you for talking to me on the phone several times over the last few weeks and for meeting with me at your office, following inspections of the above two properties. Traci and I greatly appreciate the work of the Portland Fire Department, which does an outstanding job for the people of this city. As you already know, we take safety issues seriously and are happy to work with the Portland Fire Department to make our two apartment buildings as safe as we can.

As I mentioned to you, a few months ago we spent more than \$20,000 removing antiquated furnaces from these buildings and replacing them with state of the art models that comply with all Code requirements, and re-lined and re-pointed the associated chimneys. I believe this project removed serious fire hazards from both of these buildings. We also had the Fire Escape at 97 Lincoln Street inspected and repaired just a couple of years ago.

Here is our response to the reported violations and our Plan of Action. As you can see from the descriptions below, we are working in good faith with the Fire Department to address the Fire Department's concerns.

97 Lincoln Street

Violation 1. This has been corrected. Unit numbers have been installed on each apartment door.

Violation 2. Fire doors. As I discussed with you, adding 60-minute, self-closing fire door assemblies would require destruction of the original, solid hardwood doors of this circa 1877 antique Victorian home. This would destroy the irreplaceable and historic interior character of the beautiful front hallway, which includes period stained glass, decorative cut glass in the entrance doors, lovely period staircase and chandeliers. As I mentioned, when we purchased the home in 2000, we were informed that the Fire Department had already waived this requirement, although there seems to be an issue of finding records concerning that. You suggested that I contact Deb Andrews, the Director of the City's Historic Preservation office to ask for her

opinion and support for obtaining a waiver, and you indicated that this would be the most productive way of obtaining a waiver. I attach a letter from Deborah Andrews of the City of Portland Historic Preservation Board dated April 2, 2012, which fully supports the waiver of this fire door requirement. Based on this letter, I sincerely request that the Fire Department waive this requirement.

Violation 3. Last week, I contracted with General Contracting Services, Inc. (GCS) to repair the fire escape. GCS is familiar with the fire escape as they repaired it approximately 2 years ago. GCS inspected the fire escape last week and has begun work today to repair all portions of the fire escape that show any need for repair. They are working on it as I write this letter. This work includes replacing several support beams and stringers that GCS believed show early signs of rot, and repairing the metal ladder that swings down to remove rust from the ladder and make the surfaces of the ladder smooth again so that someone using the metal ladder would not suffer cuts or abrasions. I expect this work, which began today, to be completed in a few days. As soon as I have it, I will provide you with a copy of the invoice from GCS that shows the results of their inspection and all work performed by GCS to repair the fire escape.

Violation 4. Excessive or disorderly storage. As I mentioned to you, in order to focus our efforts in the right places, it would be helpful to know which areas of the building the Department was concerned about. In any event, all tenants have been sent a letter requiring them to remove all excessive or disorderly storage no later than April 15, 2012, paying particular emphasis on combustible items. Only items that are absolutely essential to the tenants will remain. This past weekend, I removed two truckloads of wood and cardboard from the basement that had been left behind by previous tenants or owners. I have also asked tenants in writing to remove any items they may have placed on or near exit stairs. Therefore, I expect that this storage issue will be fully corrected by the end of April.

Violation 5. Exposed electrical connection. The Department did not specify where this was, but I found one exposed junction box in the basement and covered it with a junction box cover. Thus, I believe this violation has been corrected.

Violation 6. Extension cord used for permanent wiring. I found the extension cord at issue and removed it from the building. Thus, this violation has been corrected.

In summary, assuming the waiver of the fire doors is granted, all violations at 97 Lincoln Street have been addressed.

96 Lincoln Street

Violation 1. This violation has been corrected. Unit numbers have been installed on all front and rear apartment doors.

Violation 2. Non-exit floor openings. I am not sure what this refers to and I have asked General Contracting Services, Inc. (GCS) for guidance. If we find anything, we will work to correct it as soon as cash flow permits.

Violation 3. Floor-ceiling assemblies must be smoke tight. Again, I do not know exactly what this refers to and have asked GCS for guidance. If we find anything, we will work to correct it as soon as cash flow permits.

Violation 4. This is the same issue discussed above in violation #2 for 97 Lincoln. You suggested that I contact Deb Andrews, the Director of the City's Historic Preservation office to ask for her opinion and support for obtaining a waiver, and you indicated that this would be the most productive way of obtaining a waiver. I attach a letter from Deborah Andrews of the City of Portland Historic Preservation Board dated April 2, 2012, which fully supports the waiver of this fire door requirement for both 97 and 96 Lincoln Street. Based on this letter, I sincerely request and urge that the Fire Department waive this requirement.

Violation 5. "Stairs Require Repair." The report from the Fire Department does not specify which stairs it was referring to, so I contracted last week with General Contracting Services, Inc. (GCS) to inspect the exit stairs in the rear of the building, as there appears to be nothing wrong with the front stairs. GCS inspected the rear stairs and found several areas where the railings along the exterior were somewhat loose or starting to rot. GCS will repair the railings to make sure they are no longer loose or rotting. In addition, I have engaged GCS to rebuild a portion of the interior section of the back stair case that provides egress to Apartment 3 to insure that the emergency egress from Apartment 3 is solid and as safe as possible.

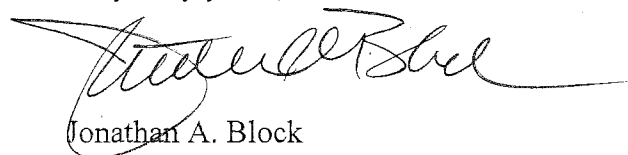
Violation 6. Carbon monoxide alarms. Three additional carbon monoxide alarms with battery backup have been purchased and placed in apartments 2 and 3, so that there is one for each bedroom. Apartment 1 already had a carbon monoxide alarm.

Violation 7. "Interior finish in Exits, lobbies and corridors shall Class A or B". I do not know what this refers to. More specific information from the Department is needed. However, I have asked GCS and an engineer to look into this and provide guidance.

As you can see, we take these matters seriously and are working in good faith to correct them.

I would also like to tell you that we strictly prohibit smoking anywhere on the premises of these properties and do not allow any other risky behaviors to occur on our properties. We strictly enforce these rules as we live adjacent to both of these buildings and monitor them closely. I believe these rules also greatly lessen the risk of a fire.

Very truly yours,



Jonathan A. Block

Enclosure: 4/2/12 Letter from Historic Preservation Board

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

Rick Romano, Chair
Martha Burke, Vice Chair
Scott Benson
Rebecca Ermlich
Michael Hammen
Ted Oldham
Susan Wroth

April 2, 2012

Jonathan Block
91 Lincoln Street
Portland, Maine 04103

Re: 96, 97 Lincoln Street

Dear Mr. Block:

At your request, I have reviewed current photographs of 96 and 97 Lincoln Street and also compared them with 1924 tax photographs of the properties from the City of Portland's archives. Based on my review, I have confirmed that both structures were constructed circa 1875 and are good examples of the Italianate style. It also appears from the photographs that the buildings are well preserved, as they have lost little of their original detail. I understand from our conversation that the interiors are also well preserved.

Although the buildings are not located within one of Portland's designated historic districts, they are nonetheless of historical significance and worthy of preservation. I am in full support of your request for a waiver of applicable fire codes that would require removal of the original hardwood doors off the main hallways. Just as the exteriors of these buildings warrant preservation, so too do their interiors.

Sincerely,



Deborah Andrews
Historic Preservation Program Manager