

March 12, 2025

MHRB_2024-0009

Mendocino Historical Review Board

Water Tower Demo Appeal - Raymond

Dear Supervisors Cline, Mulheren, Haschak, Norvell, and Williams,

The Mendocino Historical Review Board (MHRB) is thoughtful and reviews applications with care to preserve the historic character of the town. The Raymond application was discussed at length, and the board made the decision to deny this application to demolish a historic water tower on Main Street and replace it with stairs. The applicant requested replacing the water tower stairs with stairs, however this is not “like for like” as would be a repair. That would be an easy decision for the board, this appeal is to take down a dramatic looking historic water tower with stairs in it and replacing it with non-descript looking stairs on the side of the building.

I have been on the Mendocino Historical Review Board for over 6 years, and reviewed many applications over my time serving the community. Although I have not been on the board when anyone submitted an application to demolish a historic water tower, a local resident I spoke with said about 40 years ago there was a water tower on Main street that the MHRB board approved taking down with the contingency it would be moved to another location in town. The water tower was disassembled, and it went away never to be seen again. It did not get moved. It is **gone**. That is what the applicant is proposing here, not even to move the water tower, simply to get rid of it altogether.

The artists and residents who colonized Mendocino in the 1960's and 1970's started seeing buildings and structures being demolished for various reasons, and realized the importance of preservation and founded the Mendocino Historical Review Board. Over the many years the MHRB board has preserved many buildings and structures. The importance of keeping the remaining water towers that have become the icons and a trademark of Mendocino for locals and visitors is imperative to the character of the town.

The Mendocino Review Board Procedures Findings 1987 (Town Plan sec. 20-123) state that **“the Mendocino Historical Review Board may not approve, or conditionally approve, any application for proposed work unless it affirmatively finds among other items that if the proposed work or demolition of an existing structure, that such work will not necessarily damage or destroy a structure of historic, architectural or cultural significance.”**

The claim may be made by the applicant as it was at the MHRB meeting that this water tower is not historic. Although the subject water tower was moved from the original location, Planner Liam Crowley of the Planning & Building noted that due to the time and

documentation of the water tower being built (near the then Mendosa's Market), and moved to its present location, that this water tower **is** a historic structure.

Most water towers in Mendocino are both historic, and culturally significant. In Mendocino, water towers historically were the means for having water, and back in the day there were many of them. Now the village of Mendocino is down to just a few left which add to the picturesque skyline, and this particular one being front and center as the one of the only ones located on Main Street is especially significant. This is what tourists come to see, they come to Mendocino to see the historic buildings and water towers. In New Orleans they have street cars, in the Mendocino village we have water towers.

Artists have painted them, photographers have photographed them, water towers are a part of the Mendocino skyline and are significant for the town. Water towers are featured on postcards, bags, books and photographs and are the charm of the village.

Mendocino may be the only town in America with as many water towers preserved, which brings is a great draw for tourism to see all of the water towers. There are less than half left from over 100 years ago, these are important to be maintained and repaired.

The applicant had an argument that this water tower has reached the end of its life. If that were true, then almost every historic building, house, shed, and water tower in Mendocino has reached the end of its' life. As a resident and business owner in the village and it is my observation that Mendocino is thriving and structures maintained well, even though many of the buildings and structures are 150 years old.

Millions of visitors come to Mendocino to enjoy the town, and walk the headlands, this particular water tower is part of the skyline and character that makes Mendocino unique.

The applicant hired an engineer, however in his report there are no remedies offered, simply to take it down and get rid of it. It may be advisable for a second opinion to see if an engineer could come up with ways to keep this water tower. It has been done in the past to repair and fix other water towers. Engineer John Siminich suggested at the MHRB Board meeting regarding this application to add steel reinforcements and encase them in wood. Another idea was to jack up the base, as Architect Bob Schlosser did on a historic house in the village using jacks, cut off the bottoms and replace with new wood materials. There are options to keeping this water tower.

Some local concerned Mendocino coastal residents discussed hiring a lawyer to save the water tower, however it was decided that you on the Board of Supervisors do not need to hear from yet another lawyer to understand that this water tower is important to the town of Mendocino.

Visitors come for the historic town, beaches, the headlands, and of course, the water towers. That is what makes the Mendocino village so unique, and unlike any other town in the world.

Mendocino Supervisors, I respectfully ask for your continued protection of this important and historic water tower by denying this appeal.

Thank you,

Deirdre Lamb

Mendocino, California





March 16, 2025

MHRB_2024-0009

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Water Tower Demo Appeal - Raymond

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The artists and residents who colonized Mendocino in the 1960's and 1970's started seeing buildings and structures being demolished for various reasons, and realized the importance of preservation and founded the Mendocino Historical Review Board. They worked very hard to protect the town, and have it saved for future generations and visitors to enjoy. The Mendocino Town is a Federal Historic District, that is the entire town is protected. This includes all buildings, sheds, water towers, and structures are to be preserved and maintained. In the beginning when Mendocino was first designated a Registered Historic District, a lady named Eleanor Sverko went around and documented most of the houses. However, she only got to 70% of the houses for the Town Plan and Historic Registrar due to lack of time. That left 30% of the houses that did not make the official list, or the water towers, due to lack of time. When funding becomes available, this is on the list of things for the Kelley House Museum to do, however it is a simple reason of why the water towers are not listed. Simply a lack of time on Eleanor's part, and lack of subsequent funding. Most of the property owners in the village understand and support preserving the town and their properties, over the many years the MHRB board has preserved many buildings and structures. The importance of keeping the remaining water

towers that have become the icons and a trademark of Mendocino for locals and visitors is imperative to the character of the town.

Every now and again, an outsider decides to come in and wants to demolish a historic structure. Due to the many rules in place, the MHRB has been instrumental in saving these structures and not being swayed by someone with the means to try and get their way. If this were to happen, Mendocino would not be the town it is today. The founders thought this through carefully.

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Visitors come for the historic town, beaches, the headlands, and of course, the water towers. That is what makes the Mendocino village so unique, and unlike any other town in the world.

Mendocino Supervisors, I respectfully ask for your continued protection of this important and historic water tower by denying this appeal.

Thank you,

Deirdre Lamb

Mendocino, California





May 11, 2025

To the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:
RE: Case Number 2024-0009

To the Board,

The matter before you is an Appeal of the Mendocino Historical Review Board's (MHRB) denial of applicant's submitted project to demolish/destroy the historic Landmark Category 1 waterpower located at 45040 Main Street in the Historic District in the unincorporated Town of Mendocino.

I am writing urging you to deny this appeal.

The subject structure — the water tower — is, according to the Mendocino Town Plan Inventory of Historic Structures — “Landmark: Construction dated, history substantiated, only minor alterations in character with original architecture”. It is, irrefutably, a Landmark Category 1 Historical Structure.

Some have argued that it is not a protected historic structure, because it is not listed in the Inventory of Historic Structures. This is patently balderdash. It is noted in the preamble to the Inventory that, “When working on the inventory it was noticeable that there are quite a number of sites not included here.” This watertower was obviously one of those missed, but this fact should in no way invalidate or diminish its historicity or protected status.

Appellant's application cites a structural engineer's report, asserting the water tower presents a ‘clear and present danger’ to public safety. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Yes, some portions need minor repair and rehabilitation — the structure is 120 years old, after all — but overall, the materials are sound. I've walked the staircase, prodded the pillars, and stomped on the landing. This structure is in very fine condition, and can only be made more so with some minor reinforcing and a liberal application of a marine sealant.

MHRB has denied appellant's application to destroy/demolish said Landmark Structure three (3) times. MHRB has done its job to protect and preserve an important element of the Town's history, character and architecture.

I urge you to fully support MHRB's efforts, and deny this appeal. I trust you will

do your duty.

Sincerely,

Lee Edmundson, Mendocino

Addendum: For over the past 50 years I have served as a theatre Technical Director, charged with supervising the building of stages, sets and sceneries for scores of theatrical productions. My principal axiom in all my endeavors has been — and remains — Safety First. If this subject structure were unsafe, and a threat to the public's health and safety, I would be among the first to say so. It is structurally sound, and with proper care and maintenance, will remain so. Opinions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Dear Board of Supervisors:

As a former chair and a member of the MHRB for 6 years, I am urging you to seriously consider the ramifications of allowing the removal of the iconic water tower on Main Street in Mendocino. This is an application that the MHRB has already repeatedly denied. I will confess that while on the board there were projects that were difficult to decide fairly after considering all sides. This is not one of those cases.

Rewarding property owners who can afford to hire engineers and lawyers to go around the clear and repeated determination of the local review body would be a slap in the face to every home and business owner who dutifully cares for their historic property to enable the town to retain its unique character that enriches us all – visitors, residents, businesses, and county coffers. Owning a historic structure in Mendocino, including if one is fortunate enough to inherit one as is the present case, necessarily means that at times extraordinary measures are required to retain them. I have no doubt that the owners cherish the water tower as they profess. But that reverence must translate into action. In this case, that action may require some expense that is a fraction of the value that they themselves believe the property they are attempting to sell is worth.

I agree with many others that if simply hiring an engineer to testify that a water tower is at the end of its useful life, without detailing how to preserve it, then that prescription will be used to remove most of the water towers and other historic structures in town. And then we will be hearing from future Boards of Supervisors questions about why the town's visitor counts have dropped along with the funds that the county budget enjoys.

For the sake of the people who live and work here, for the sake of the tourists from all over the world who visit here, for the sake of retaining the integrity of the local review process, and for the sake of keeping Mendocino a strong and reliable source of county funds, please deny this appeal and encourage the owners to make the kind of investment that is commensurate with the iconic value of the water tower.

Respectfully, Dan Potash

May 12, 2025

From: [Kathleen Cameron](#)
To: [bos](#)
Subject: MHRB Appeal #2024-0009
Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 1:24:48 PM

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

RE:
MHRB Appeal #2024-0009

Dear Supervisors,

MHRB upheld its mandate to protect the architecture and character of the town of Mendocino when it denied the application to demolish an historic water tower that contributes to the integrity of the Historic District.

I urge you to support and uphold that decision by denying this appeal.

Please review my previous letter regarding this application and also those written by many other concerned community members (on record).

Thank you for your service to our County and the Mendocino Historic District.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Cameron
(Mendocino Resident, former MHRB Chair)

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ricia Araiza](#)
To: [bos](#)
Subject: Mendocino water towers
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025 2:50:33 PM

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Please protect the water tower on Main Street that is the stairway to Flow restaurant! It should be an historical landmark as these water towers are what make our town so unique and special!

Thank you for your consideration!

Ricia Araiza
50 year resident of the area

Ricia Araiza
raml@mcn.org
www.raml.design.com

When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.

Jimi Hendrix

From: [Scott Roat](#)
To: [bos](#)
Cc: [Madeline Cline](#); [Mo Mulheren](#); [John Haschak](#); [Bernie Norvell](#); [Ted Williams](#)
Subject: Mendocino to Run Out of Water Towers
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025 3:37:21 PM

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mendocino to Run Out of Water Towers

By Scott Roat

05.13.25

Imagine Paris without the Eiffel Tower, San Francisco without its cable cars – that’s Mendocino without its iconic water towers. These towering sentinels, woven into the very fabric of our coastal town, are now under threat. This is an urgent matter!

One of Mendocino’s iconic Main Street water towers is now at risk, as narrow planning codes clash with broader community goals. Despite the Mendocino Historical Review Board rejecting this proposal three times, it’s now heading to the Board of Supervisors for a final decision.

What’s at stake? The three/four story water tower that acts as the stairwell into the restaurant Flow has come under attack: it is alleged that this tower is at the end of its lifespan and has no historical value.

No historical value? This tower has such significance to the town that it was moved from another location. Nearby San Francisco has a long history of moving buildings exactly because of their historical significance, so such a move only supports its esteem - in fact, moving a building is a downright preservation strategy!

However, Planning points out that the tower was never registered on any historical register, and that it is too late to do so. I do not, and so cannot, explain why it’s too late - I would strongly think this can still be done.

In an effort to support their findings, the owner hired Duncan Engineering to look at the tower, and as such the report is likely to be biased, and it reads as such. Instead of remediation efforts, the report recommends that the tower should be “phased out”.

Here’s why this letter is inappropriate, incomplete, and surface-level for supporting a

decision on removing the historical water tower.

- No measurements or critical core sampling were taken to assess the strength of the tower, relying upon visual assessments only.
- The report lacks quantitative data on the wood's internal condition.
- It omits critical information about the foundation, which is essential for evaluating the structure's stability.
- The tower's historical significance is barely mentioned, missing a vital context for preservation decisions.
- There's no analysis of repair or reinforcement alternatives, ignoring less invasive, historically sensitive options.
- The assessment fails to address potential building code requirements, making it incomplete for decision-making.
- Finally, it declares the tower "at the end of its useful life" without any solid evidence, relying on surface-level observations rather than thorough testing, quantitative calculations and modeling.
- The Duncan report tells us very little about the integrity of the structure.

Nevertheless, the flimsy words of David Duncan's report will become the basis for a Board of Supervisor's discussion and call to vote this May 20, 2025. They will have very little time to discuss a matter that may impact a sacred Mendocino landmark.

The Board of Supervisors has a unique problem - no matter their viewpoint, they cannot argue on historical, economic, or policy grounds, only judicial. So there are really only three possible outcomes, and here is the priority order that I believe best serves this Community:

1. Affirm the decision – Agree with the Review Board's original decision.
2. Send it back for reconsideration – Have the Review Board take another look at the project, including for CEQA purposes.
3. Modify the decision – Change the Review Board's decision as needed.

So it's a very narrow course left to the board, with only a single board meeting and an anemic engineering letter on which to base such an important and historical decision. If this hasty decision sets the wrong precedent, it's not just one tower at risk – other water towers are likely to follow.

Please act now, don't wait. Send an email helping them understand your concerns to BOS@MendocinoCounty.gov. Even better, I find calling them makes even more direct difference, and here are their numbers - insist that they at least do due diligence to protect this landmark. Perhaps even ask that it be designated a historic structure. Your voice is critical.

Here's who to contact:

Madeline Cline, 1st District
clinem@mendocinocounty.gov

Mo Mulheren, 2nd District
mulherenm@mendocinocounty.gov

John Haschak, 3rd District
haschakj@mendocinocounty.gov

Bernie Norvell, 4th District
norvellb@mendocinocounty.gov

Ted Williams, 5th District
williamst@mendocinocounty.gov

All emails should be CC'd to BOS@mendocinocounty.gov as well, as that makes it public record. Each of the Supervisors can be called during business hours at (707) 463-4221. Ted Williams is an exception in that he makes his cell number accessible to everyone, at (707) 937.3500.

Can you imagine if the key details that make Mendocino so charming were slowly whittled away because some short-minded policymakers weren't preserving our most valuable assets? What would Mendocino be without its water towers!

I rarely speak up like this - please act now. Preserve Mendocino charm for future generations!

Photo by: Martin Wattenburger

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BRE License #01493269

From: [chess on Tuesday](#)
To: [bos](#)
Subject: WATER TOWERS in Mendocino
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025 7:06:56 PM

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I stand with Realtor Scott Roat...PRESERVE them.

18 May, 2025

RE: Appeal # 2024-0009 of Mendocino Historical Review Board decision.

Dear Supervisors,

Attorney Brian Momsen in his remarks suggests his client's rights to due process may have been denied.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The fact is that appellant's proposed project — the heart of which is to raze/demolish/destroy the historic water tower located at 45040 Main Street in the Town of Mendocino — was heard three (3) times in its various incarnations by the Mendocino Historical Review Board (MHRB), and denied each and every time.

And for substantial reason: MHRB could not make the required finding establishing that (C) Where the proposed work consists of alteration or demolition of an existing structure, that such work will not unnecessarily damage or destroy a structure of historical, architectural, or cultural significance."

MHRB was unable — three (3) times unable — to make this finding, because destroying this historical structure is precisely what the project proposes to do. Applicant/Appellant has enjoyed more than modicum Due Process in this matter.

Furthermore, the proposed Resolution before you today proposes that you adopt the finding that MHRB could not, and can not. Nor can you make such a finding in good faith. Point three (3) of the proposed Resolution asks you to affirm, "Pursuant to (Mendocino County Code) MCC Section 20.760.065(C), such work will not unnecessarily damage or destroy a structure of historical, architectural or cultural significance. The existing water tower staircase is not historically, architecturally, or culturally significant because it does not meet the definition of "Landmark Structure". The water tower structure structure is not listed in the inventory of Historic Structures."

Please note that Item Three (3) makes two separate and distinct references: the first is that the "existing water tower **staircase** is not protected because it lacks Landmark status— which can be granted — but then in the next sentence only implies that the water tower itself is not protected because it is not specifically listed in the Inventory of Historic Structures.

I've addressed this omission in my previous remarks: the Historic Structures Inventory is known and conceded to be an incomplete document from which the water tower was inadvertently omitted. That doesn't detract from its meeting all the necessary

criteria for being protected as a Landmark Category 1 Historical Structure.

Finally, it's been said that the water tower lost any protections it had because it was moved from its original location. Poppycock. If such a condition were true, then the MacCallum House and the Masonic Temple (The Savings Bank building) would be similarly bereft of historic protection, for each of these structures has been moved from their original locations.

I leave you with one quote, from one of the persons who preserved the water tower by moving it to its current location fifty (50) years ago. Barry Cusack has stated, "The water tower is 98% original."

It deserves your respect and protection. Deny this appeal.

From: [bonnie adair](#)
To: [John Haschak](#); [bos](#)
Subject: Mendocino's water towers
Date: Sunday, May 18, 2025 6:24:16 AM

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am writing to you to ask you to preserve the Mendocino water towers. They really represent the rustic beauty of the City of Mendocino. Please designate them as a historic structure. Once they are torn down they will never be replaced. Tearing them down will be remembered as a bad and hasty decision by ignorant people.

Thank you,
Bonnie Adair

From: [Atlas Pearson](#)
To: [bos](#)
Cc: [Matthew Kiedrowski](#); [Julia Krog](#); [Liam Crowley](#)
Subject: Fw: MHRB Appeal - Removal of Water Tower - 4g
Date: Monday, May 19, 2025 12:01:18 PM

From: Dan Potash <danvpotash@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 11:58 AM
To: COBSupport <cobsupport@mendocinocounty.org>
Subject: MHRB Appeal - Removal of Water Tower - 4g

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Rewarding property owners who can afford to hire engineers and lawyers to go around the clear and repeated determination of the local review body would be a slap in the face to every home and business owner who dutifully cares for their historic property to enable the town to retain its unique character that enriches us all – visitors, residents, businesses, and county coffers. Owning a historic structure in Mendocino, including if one is fortunate enough to inherit one as is the present case, necessarily means that at times extraordinary measures are required to retain them. I have no doubt that the owners cherish the water tower as they profess. But that reverence must translate into action. In this case, that action may require some expense that is a fraction of the value that they themselves believe the property they are attempting to sell is worth.

I agree with many others that if simply hiring an engineer to testify that a water tower is at the end of its useful life, without detailing how to preserve it, then that prescription will be used to remove most of the water towers and other historic structures in town. And then we will be hearing from future Boards of Supervisors questions about why the town's visitor counts have dropped along with the funds that the county budget enjoys.

As for the scare tactic of the appellant's attorney that somehow deciding that an historically important water tower that is universally recognized in the historic district of Mendocino should not be demolished is somehow arbitrary and capricious or an abuse of discretion is contrary to the common sense of the public, not to mention the Board of Supervisors. And notwithstanding the condescension, the tone-deaf statement that "many locals may be sorry to see it (the "existing stairway") replaced" is not only a gross understatement but is a lazy attempt to misdirect the issue from the water tower structure to the stairs built to access the second story of the building. Perhaps time could be better spent designing an alternative means of accessing the second story.

For the sake of the people who live and work here, for the sake of the tourists from all over the world who visit here, for the sake of retaining the integrity of the local review process, and for the sake of keeping Mendocino a strong and reliable source of county funds, please deny this appeal and encourage the owners to make the kind of investment that is commensurate with the iconic value of the water tower.

Respectfully, Dan Potash

