

You may not be surprised that I went home last night and researched steeples and spires. The first description that I read stated that a spire symbolizes "the celestial" and "hopefulness."

In that spirit, I will be addressing each of the points of appeal:

1. It was stated that the Mississippi Department of Archives and History indicate the building is not a contributing structure to the historic nature of the neighborhood.

In fact, architectural elements over 50 years old are considered historic by the state. The steeple was erected in 1952. The church was not on the last compiled list because the list is out of date.

2. Stated "The decision of the Hattiesburg Conservation Commission is outside the mission of the commission."

Their mission is to conserve.

3. The building is not longer a church; it is a school.

This is a school sponsored and supported by a church and its congregation. In fact, your religion education materials used at the school include all as one Parish.

4. The current steeple does not reflect the identity of the building as an academic institution.

Wikipedia states that the spire is reminiscent of a spear point, giving the impression of strength. Sacred Heart uses The Crusaders to represent the school.

There seem to be two choices here:

A. Repair of the steeple.

B. A suitable plan for replacement of the steeple. This plan would have specific renderings and be time limited for completion. It would also include a plan for the spire to be repurposed vs. disposal.

Sacred Heart has always done the right thing. You can do the right thing now by continuing to sustain the life of a beautiful building as you continue to inspire hope and heavenly aspirations in the students who attend Sacred Heart School.

As a Council we all appreciate Sacred Heart School and respect its responsibilities for maintenance of the building. Certainly there is the possibility for compromise.

We could (1) send this appeal back to the Conservation Commission, which meets again in three weeks and allow you to present additional information; (2) vote to deny and leave it up to you to repeat the process of application; (3) table this item for two weeks.

This building is in a historic neighborhood. Homeowners and business owners in that district are required to present specific plans when the outside of a building is altered. It is important that we are consistent in the way we approach each situation.

You have had the opportunity to develop a specific plan for reconstruction, and the only plan you have presented to the Council is for removal. Showing photographs of possibilities is not sufficient.  
*We are not closing the door. You need a plan.*  
This is my recommendation for your success. Utilize the people resources available to you and get a plan for a suitable replacement that respects the building and all it represents and presents a similar height and presence in the skyline. Commit to a timeline that is reasonable and in the foreseeable future.