

From: **Danae Peckler, HFFI Preservationist**

Date: Mon, Jun 22, 2026 at 9:20 AM

Subject: Re: 90% Draft - Renwick PPEA Solicitation

To: Kate S. Schwartz <ksschwartz@fredericksburgva.gov>

Cc: Kelly Penick <>, Eric Mink <>, Philip Pierce <>, Timothy J. Baroody

<tjbaroody@fredericksburgva.gov>, Jonathan Gerlach <>, Christine Henry <>, Melissa Colombo <>, Jon Van Zandt <>, Melanie Johnson <>, Matthew J. Kelly <>, Beth Black <>, Joshua A. Summits <jasummits@fredericksburgva.gov>, Kelly J. Lackey <kjlackey@fredericksburgva.gov>, Josh McCormack <ljmccormack@fredericksburgva.gov>

I appreciate your sharing this 90% draft with the RWG, Mrs. Schwartz. And I greatly look forward to hearing more about it at tomorrow's Council work session.

HFFI sincerely thanks you for keeping this important matter at attention to our community.

I'd like to offer a few suggestions to ensure that we are reeling in the kind of historically conscious developer(s) and sensitive reuse project(s) that are best for the buildings' long-term stewardship and preservation.

1) Something that stood out to a few preservationists at HFFI was the confusing message about the courthouse's level of historic significance, as it will impact the decisions for its treatment.

One of the RWG's recommendations was the completion of a National Register of Historic Places evaluation of the property's historical significance. The DHR has affirmed its state-level significance and did not deny the potential for it to be nationally important under Criterion C, as an important surviving work of master architect, James Renwick, Jr., and/or under A for its role during and immediately after the Civil War. (HFFI remains committed to its December 2019 offer to split the cost of such an investigation with the City.)

This intensive study of its history and historic fabric would greatly assist in the identification of physical architectural features determined to be of greatest historic value and worthy of greater sensitivity and preservation. But of equal importance for the rehab project would be the doors that open for grants beyond Historic Tax Credits.

HFFI thinks the Information discussing the property's level of historic significance should appear in the first pages of the PPEA, rather than page 13 of the document. We also think this information would help increase the likelihood of attracting a higher-caliber, historically conscious developer(s). The PPEA document should at least mention the City's intention to commission such a study in case developers want to identify supportive partners early on in the process.

2) Similarly, the first mention of the City's preference for the courthouse to remain publicly owned is on page 22. This seems to be at odds with the need for "occasional public access" or "some public use" of the courtroom on pages 5 and 12.

As early as the 2015 Preservation Plan, adopted as Chapter 8 of the City's comprehensive plan that same year, local leaders, commissions, City staff, and residents have articulated the need for the Courthouse to remain a publicly owned building (recent timeline including HFFI's efforts to raise awareness of its cultural historic significance).

Paid for with a special tax on the City's residents in the 1850s and immediately declared a meeting place for the public, the Renwick Courthouse was the heart of our City and is truly our most treasured gem. It should be preserved by the people and for the people of FXBG.

3) One last suggestion or question, actually: given the City's stated preference for the courthouse to remain publicly owned--should the PPEA not indicate that the City is willing to monetarily support the property's rehabilitation? At a minimum, some expanded tax abatement, but perhaps through the creation of the proposed Historic Resources Fund to regularly allocate some monies to maintain City-owned historic assets?

Thank you once again for sharing a copy of this draft document with the group. HFFI is glad to be a supportive partner in the City's efforts to preserve and rehabilitate this most significant property.

Sincerely,

Danae Peckler (& HFFI)

Enclosures (3):

1. Timeline of community support for a National Register nomination evaluation of the Renwick Courthouse complex (attached).
2. Notice printed 6 September 1852 in the *Fredericksburg News* regarding intended public use of the courthouse.
3. Excerpt (page 2.41) Commonwealth Architect's *Renwick Complex Historic Structures Report (2016)* noting City's intention to retain public ownership.