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Judge rules in favor of Mifflin House, an Underground Railroad stop near Wrightsville

[Teresa Boeckel](#), York Daily Record Published 8:35 a.m. ET July 20, 2018

York County Court of Common Pleas Judge Michael Flannelly says the township board did not commit an error of law or abuse its discretion.

Preservationists scored a win in court this week in [an effort to save an Underground Railroad site from demolition](#) for a growing business park in Hellam Township.

York County Court of Common Pleas Judge Michael Flannelly has affirmed the Hellam Township Zoning Hearing Board's decision to sustain the zoning officer's denial for a demolition permit for the Mifflin House.

Kinsley Equities II, LP and members of the Blessing family filed an appeal last year after the zoning hearing board rendered its decision. The debate has been over whether a note on subdivision plans in the late 1990s – "existing farm complex to remain" -- means the house should remain standing.

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More: [Mini-casino could save Underground Railroad site in York County from demolition](#)

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Flannelly wrote in the decision the township board did not commit an error of law or abuse its discretion in making its decision.

"... there is sufficient evidence which supports (the zoning hearing board) sustaining the decision of the Hearing Officer," he wrote.

The hearing officer researched the plans filed for Wright's Crossing, just off the Wrightsville exit of Route 30, and found the condition restricting changes to the lot where the Mifflin House stands. She was not able to find -- and she was not presented with -- subsequent plans that changed the condition, Flannelly wrote.

Outside of the 1998 plans, which include "existing farm complex to remain," there have been no other plans approved that concern the lot where the Mifflin House stands, Flannelly wrote.

The zoning hearing board had argued that Kinsley should have asked for a modification, although whether the municipality would have granted it is uncertain, the ruling states.

The Mifflin House served as a stop on the Underground Railroad and has ties to the Civil War.

The house and the land it sits on are owned by Wayne and Susan Blessing and Robert and Agnes Blessing. Kinsley Equities is developing the land for the family.

Preservation Pennsylvania placed the Mifflin House on a list of the state's most endangered historic resources last year.

It is considered to be historically significant enough to be eligible for being included on the National Register of Historic Places, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office has determined.

Tim Kinsley, who recently discussed his family's preservation work, has said that every building of age has some significance, but a balance needs to be struck between what's preserved and what's developed for the benefit of the community. Although the Mifflin House has some history with its age, it now sits close to a highway and is surrounded by industrial buildings.

"The usefulness of it as a preserved property just isn't there, such as what we just looked at on the farm here," he said during an interview at the family's business.

Peer inside the Mifflin House: