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HEADLINE: SCHOOL LANDMARK VOTE DELAYED;
CALVERT ASKS TIME TO CHECK IMPACT OF LISTING CASTALIA AS A HISTORIC SITE

BYLINE: Edward Gunts, Sun architecture critic

BODY:

Baltimore's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation voted yesterday to delay a decision on whether to designate Calvert School's Castalia property a local landmark after the school asked for more time to learn how the designation would affect its plans for expansion.

School leaders agreed not to seek a demolition permit or make changes to the exterior of the former headmaster's residence until a March 11 hearing.

A local preservation group known as Baltimore Heritage nominated Castalia for landmark listing last fall after the private school sought permission to tear down the house, possibly to make way for an amphitheater.

Although school leaders said they were unsure whether they would actually raze the building at 200 Tuscany Road, they sought permission from the community to keep their options open.

Word of possible demolition sparked concern from members of the surrounding community, who said Castalia was worth preserving because it was built in 1928 by the first headmaster of Calvert School, Virgil Hillyer, and was designed by the noted architect Laurence Hall Fowler.

More than 100 residents have signed a petition asking the preservation panel to add Castalia to the landmark list to protect it from demolition, according to community representative Kevin Lowery.

The school's plan was particularly disheartening to two doctors who sold the house to the school in 2005, after living in it for 27 years. James Harris and Cathy DeAngelis said they would not have sold the house to Calvert School had they known the school would seek permission to tear it down.

Yesterday, Harris offered at the hearing to buy the house back from Calvert School if the school didn't want it.

Andrew Matire, headmaster of the private school in Baltimore's Tuscany-Canterbury neighborhood, said after the meeting that that was a generous offer but any decisions about selling the property would have to be decided by the school's trustees.

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He also said that Calvert School has been unable to purchase a former fraternity house at 3906 Canterbury Road - in part because of the community's opposition to the school's request to demolish Castalia.

Also yesterday, the panel delayed a vote on landmark designation for the former Pennsylvania Railroad Co. district office building at 200 E. Baltimore St. Its owners said they needed more time to prepare for the hearing.

Like Calvert School, the building's owners agreed not to seek a demolition permit for it or make changes to the exterior until the hearing resumes March 11.

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GRAPHIC: Photo(s)

The Castalia property was built in 1928 by Calvert School's first headmaster, Virgil Hillyer, and designed by Laurence Hall Fowler.

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