

LOCAL

'What we have done is fail': Tiverton administrator laments Lafayette House demolition



[Antonia Noori Farzan](#)

Providence Journal

Published 5:06 a.m. ET Jan. 15, 2025

TIVERTON – The destruction of the historic Abraham Brown House, also known as the Lafayette House, represents a major failure on the town's part, interim Town Administrator Patrick Jones said on Monday.

"I think we owe the citizens of our community an apology for failing them, because we did not do our due diligence in preserving our character and our history," Jones, who previously served as the town's police chief, told members of the Tiverton Town Council.

The iconic farmhouse on Main Road, which was built before the American Revolution and housed the Marquis de Lafayette during the 1778 Battle of Rhode Island, was torn down by owner David M. Rose in late December.

Rose obtained a demolition permit from the town in October but falsely stated in his application that the house was not on any local, state or federal registers of historic properties.

Building official John M. Hoyle Jr., who signed the permit, was placed on leave for unspecified reasons after Jones became interim town administrator in early December. According to the Sakonnet Times, he has since resigned.

'What we have done is fail'

In his remarks on Monday, Jones did not put the blame on any specific departments or employees but suggested that the town could have done better.

"Essentially, what we have done is fail," he said. "When we're going to hold our community accountable to the laws and ordinances, I think we first and foremost must hold ourselves."

Jones said that he would have liked to at least salvage the wood from the house and use it to build a council chambers or something else that would serve the town, "so the spirit of that house continued to live on."

Unfortunately, town officials "did not communicate well" and didn't even notify the Tiverton Historic Preservation Advisory Board, he said.

Given that the house was privately owned, "could we have had an opportunity to make a difference?" Jones asked. "Possibly. But now we'll never know. What we need to do going forward is be better and be able to protect the historic character of our community."

Call for stronger protections

Calling the fiasco a "valuable lesson," Jones suggested that Tiverton should strengthen its protections for historic buildings, and noted that other communities such as Bristol and Warren have "comprehensive, robust historic preservation ordinances."

"Given all of the developments that are going on in our community, I think we have an absolute necessity to look at our historic preservation," he said. "We need to sit down with Historic Preservation, we need to sit down with the state, and we need to come up with a plan so the character and identity of our town doesn't get knocked down and demolished again."