

Email message - Regarding Life Safety on Texas Hill Country Residence in Thrall, Texas

From: Christopher Lobas <chris@lobasarch.com>
Sent: Friday, May 28, 2021 8:03 PM
To: John Steinman (Structural Engineer); Peter Traska (Attorney)
Cc: Vicki Byrd (Homeowner)
Subject: RE: 3404 CR 450

John: Please see below and file.

Peter: Please see below and file.

My firm Lobas Architects, was terminated for personal reasons from the 3404 CR 450 Byrd Residence project on January 10, 2021. There are no outstanding payments. At this time, we have not been informed of any status on the project, nor are we requesting any reports of status on the project. Due to the manner of our severance, we claim no responsibility for any aspects of this project. This project is entirely in the hands of the Builder, and / or Owner, and / or other respective entities as delegated by the Owner.

We wish the Builder and Owner Godspeed in their construction. We are glad both to have designed the project and to have departed from it.

We are addressing matters of code / life safety.

Neither Williamson County nor the City of Thrall has an officially adopted model code. Some municipalities within the county (Taylor, others) have adopted 2009 IRC (International Residential Code) and 2009 IBC (International Building Code) respectively. Neither County nor City enforces code, excepting basic review upon the sale of a property, or upon the report of a specific infraction.

That said **Occupancy and Egress** are still concerns. **See Postscript #1 Below*

Circular Stair

The owner desired a circular stair and wished that it be installed, and decided to obtain shop drawings without our express review and take full responsibility for its installation. (Nota Bene: We never received any shop drawings for the project).

The IRC 2009 does not restrict spiral stairways, and these are not considered as a primary means of egress. The IRC 2015 does make allowances for spiral stairways, and defines specific requirements for their use.

We would advise that you reference these prior to installation and implementation of such a stair for residential use. For commercial use of the home (Bed and Breakfast or other), reference the IBC. IBC Section 1009.9 allows spiral stairways to be utilized as a means of egress for specific spaces. (250 maximum square feet)

Observation Deck

The observation deck, as drawn, is 140 square feet.

Both single family homes are covered by the IRC, and bed and breakfasts fall under occupancy type R1.

Table 1004.1.1 states that in Residential Use Groups, 1 person is allowed per 200 square feet of gross area. Based on this, 1 person is allowed on this deck at any given time.

1) If you desire additional guests, please determine this and request approval from your structural engineer and county code authority granting jurisdiction. The structural engineer may want to estimate a Live Load on this deck and advise certain common sense provisions.

2) Due to the egress from this deck, descending down one exterior flight of stairs, and one circular staircase, it is not advisable to consume alcohol or other substances on this deck.

3) It may be wise to clearly post signs encouraging care and attention to one's surroundings while ascending or descending the stair.

4) Residents and guests should ascend to (and descent from) the observation deck with due care, and at their own risk.

Again, I will likely not be available to take photographs at substantial completion, as contractually agreed, but will advise a local photographer or student to do so in my stead. Regards.

CHRISTOPHER LOBAS - LOBAS ARCHITECTS

cell (primary): (216) 200-9781 - voicemail: (216) 769-3037

web: LobasArch.com - email: chris@lobasarch.com

POSTSCRIPT

First - the reasons for the above e-mail message were threefold. * *One* - as a cursory code study. The Owner and her current design professional (Architect or Engineer) should perform a full study. *Two* - to impart that our practice does not wish any person or persons to be hurt as a result of violating common sense safety measures at this house. *Three* - to clearly state that any damages to life, limb, or property are entirely out of our hands, and are the responsibility of the Owner, her Engineer, her Contractors, and/or her Subcontractors.

Second - The Owner made no contact with our firm after May 2021. Ms. Byrd did post photographs, now in the public domain, to her "*Face Book*" account during and after construction. These photos indicate that the home was not built according to plans, and in fact certain important details were constructed in an "ad-hoc" manner. Materials were not applied with correct alignment. Windows of varying sizes were placed on the elevation randomly and without forethought. The proportions of the building, especially of elements in and around the tower, violated the plans and elevations. Once we left the project, the owner and her contractors lost direction on the project, and the design was executed carelessly.

Third - We can infer that if very basic and fundamental instructions of aesthetics and proportions from our plans and elevations were ignored, fundamental technical instructions for construction and life safety were likely ignored also. This is why we do not consider the finished work to be of a quality befitting our practice.

Fourth - At this time, we do not intend to photograph this project. Photos of the project would only serve as an object lesson in how a residential design project falls asunder - as a result of personal enmity between a homeowner and her Architect. The house has no other purpose. Nota Bene: This is not the first time that our design renderings have turned out decidedly better than the finished work.

Sincere regards, **Professor Christopher Lobas, Architect** November 2022