

In the meantime, the cause of historical preservation will have been served.

The Davidsons would be happy to raze the old house, in which they've lived for the past four years. The county's Historical Resources Commission, which this summer reviewed the couple's request for a demolition permit, would be happy to let them. The commission recommended in August that the Davidsons be allowed to tear the building down, after a 90-day wait to see if anyone wanted to buy the structure and move it to another location.

But on a 3-2 vote, the Board of Supervisors decided that the old home, which was once owned by the Brommer family, was too important a historical landmark to risk losing. Voting to preserve the old house were supervisors Gary Patton, Joe Cucchiara and Robley Levy. Live Oak Supervisor Dan Forbus and south county Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. cast the dissenting votes.

The board majority directed the planning staff to find a way to help the Davidsons build a new home without tearing down the old one.

The board's will having been expressed, planning staffers found a way.

Under the zoning variance approved Friday, the old house that no one but three county supervisors seems to want will be converted from a single-family dwelling to a "non-habitable accessory structure." The variance was necessary because the two-story house encompasses 1,350 square feet, which is 350 square feet larger than is normally allowable for non-habitable, accessory buildings in residential districts.

Without the variance, Davidson would have been forced to subdivide his 20,000-square-foot lot, seek a waiver from county setback requirements and pay about \$8,000 in fees in order to build a new residence 20 feet from his old one.

Supervisors had suggested that some or all of the fees might be waived if Davidson would agree to rehabilitate his old house. But the 34-year-old machinist, who makes between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a year, indicated Friday that he could ill afford to pay the fees, let alone the \$50,000 to \$70,000 county planner Don Lauritson estimates it would cost to fix up the aging structure.

It was Lauritson who engineered the Solomon-like solution which will enable the Davidsons, who have two young children, to build their new

house and still comply with the board's desire to preserve the old one.

And it was Lauritson who arranged for the Historical Resources Commission to apply for the needed variance in the couples' behalf, saving them another \$500 to \$550 in county fees.

Lauritson Friday called the variance issued to Davidson and his wife the "simplest permit (they) could get to leave the old house there and put a new house on the lot."

In return for a permit to build their new home, the Davidsons consented to sign an agreement that the old one would never be used as a residence.

They also agreed to tear all the plumbing out of the old house when their new home is completed, leaving the older structure, in Lauritson's words, "in a condition that it can't be rented out."

Lauritson said the Davidsons will not have to pay \$8,000 in building and assorted other fees to construct their new home because the new house will use the same sewer and water connections as the old one. That means that the county can treat it as a "replacement structure," rather than as a new, single-family dwell-

ing. Replacement structures aren't subject to the kinds of fees normally imposed on new dwellings, the planner explained.

What will happen to the old house after the new one is finished?

"The old house will sit there until somebody else comes along and says, 'Why don't we move this to the front of the lot, rehabilitate it and rent it out?'" Lauritson said.

Davidson doesn't know why anyone would want to do that.

And he wishes the supervisors who voted to save his aging home had taken a look at it first.

"The main timbers are termite-infested; you can poke your fingers through them," Davidson said Friday. When his 8-year-old son Jonas runs through the upstairs rooms, he said, "The whole house shakes."

Davidson said the windows are perpetually ajar and that he has to cover them with plastic in the wintertime to keep drafts out.

The structure's entire electrical system runs off two 30-amp fuses.

Davidson has nothing but praise for the Historical Resources Commission and planner Lauritson. "Everybody has been real fair, other than ... the Board of Supervisors," he said. "They stuck me with this old house."