

**MINUTES
OF THE
CRANBURY TOWNSHIP
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CRANBURY, NEW JERSEY
MIDDLESEX COUNTY**

TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING

A special meeting of the Cranbury Township Historic Preservation Commission was held on November 3, 2020 at 7:00 pm by remote access videoconferencing in response to COVID-19 and the updated Open Public Meeting Act guidelines.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, adequate notice in accordance with the Senator Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6) was provided on November 13, 2020, of this meeting's date, time, and place, and the agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Township bulletin board, mailed to those requesting personal notice, and filed with the Municipal Clerk. Notification of remote access meetings going forward, until further notice, was posted on the Township website on July 3, 2020 and sent to the Trenton Times, Home News, and Cranbury Press on July 3, 2020.

CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum present, Mr. Walsh called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and Ms. Thompson performed as recording secretary.

Mr. Walsh began the meeting by reminding those in attendance that since this is a special meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, there may be no discussion of any topics other than those specifically identified on the advertised agenda that require urgent action.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Banks, 1st Alternate; Mr. Golisano, Vice Chair; Ms. Marlowe; Ms. Ryan; Ms. Suttmeier, 2nd Alternate; Mr. Szabo; and, Mr. Walsh, Chair

NON-MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms. Evelyn Spann, Township Liaison; Ms. Kirstie Venanzi, President, Cranbury Township Public Library Board of Trustees; Ms. Marilyn Mullen, Library Director; Mr. Richard Schroeder, Architect

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion of #63 North Main Street was moved to "Applications" upon the receipt from the property owners of an emergency application for the demolition of the fire-damaged structure on that site.

APPLICATIONS

HPC078-20, #63 North Main Street, Proposed Emergency Demolition of Fire-Damaged Structure

Mr. Richard Schroeder, project architect, was present. A structural engineering firm, MPP Engineers of Allentown, NJ, was engaged by the property owners to assess the condition of the fire-damaged building. The engineering report emphasized that the building is unsafe, uninhabitable, a danger to the public, and that immediate demolition is recommended. The structure cannot withstand heavy winds, a snowstorm, or other environmental extremes without danger of collapsing.

As the engineering report focused on the condition of exposed areas of the building, discussion ensued as to whether an assessment of the underlying structure might yield different results. Mr. Schroeder stated that such an assessment would be possible; however, taking the building apart would further weaken the structure and increase the risk of collapse.

APPROVED MINUTES

There was further discussion as to whether a second opinion of the structure's condition might be appropriate. It was decided that such would not be necessary given that MPP Engineers is a reputable, state-licensed firm. Ms. Spann noted that the opinion of a state-licensed and certified engineer is sufficient for the purposes of the Planning Board and that that standard would be appropriate in this case. It was noted also that the report by MPP was clear, consistent, and direct in its assessment of the danger posed by the structure in its current condition.

Additionally, Mr. Schroeder provided a floor plan and a key to the photos that accompanied the MPP report showing that the fire damage was extensive throughout the structure and not limited to one particular area of the building.

Discussion ensued regarding the historic significance of the structure. While the exact date of the original construction is not known, several resources indicate that original construction may have occurred in the early twentieth century or late nineteenth century. It was noted in one resource that the structure was considered contributing to the historic characteristic of the downtown area. As such, it was agreed that it will be important to have documentation of the structure to be demolished, its age and contribution to the historic downtown area.

The scope of the demolition was also discussed. The plan is to go all the way down to the footings and remove all foundation walls. Mr. Schroeder noted that the demolition work will take into consideration the proximity of the structure to adjacent buildings. Mr. Golisano suggested that the owners may want to look into removing the brick portion of foundation but maintaining the stone construction if possible. This may also save the owners from having to do extensive and difficult excavation, and it may be a way to retain in place some of the original age of the building.

Limited discussion ensued regarding a possible new structure to be built in its place. However, it was agreed that the Historic Preservation Commission was not the appropriate body to address issues of the new structure at this stage; rather, the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board would be the starting point for addressing the construction of a new building.

Summarizing the discussion, Mr. Walsh emphasized that it will be important to record the historical character and contribution of the building to the streetscape. Once rebuilding does begin, it will be important to ensure that the new structure also lends itself well to the current streetscape and historical character of the downtown.

Roll call was taken for approval of the submitted application: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks and Ms. Suttmeier.

HPC075-20, #30 N. Main, Oddfellows Hall, Cranbury Township Public Library

Ms. Kirstie Venanzi, President of the Cranbury Township Library Board of Trustees, and Ms. Marilynn Mullen, Library Director, were present.

Consideration of this application was in follow up to the conceptual discussion of the proposed temporary handicap access ramp that occurred during the October 20, 2020 regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. Action on the application was necessary prior November 17, 2020, which marked the end of the 30-day lease contingency period for the Cranbury Township Public Library.

Mr. Walsh noted that if the ramp is to be temporary and can be validated as such, even though possibly visible from the street, the application could be considered as minor. However, it is necessary to confirm the temporary nature of the structure. Of concern was a clause in the lease agreement indicating that the ramp would become property of the landlord upon termination of the lease; therefore, implying that the ramp could be considered permanent. Some discussion ensued regarding a possible amendment to the lease agreement; however, it was noted that the Public Library had already incurred considerable legal expense in seeking a new site and a lease amendment would require additional legal consultation. Additionally, time was limited before the expiration of the 30-day contingency period. Since it was not the understanding of the Public Library that the ramp would

become permanent at any point, Ms. Venanzi secured written confirmation prior to the meeting, in the form of an email from the landlord, stating that the ramp would be temporary to be removed upon termination of the lease.

The members of the HPC felt comfortable with the written confirmation by the landlord and noted that the interest of the HPC is the impact of the ramp on the streetscape in the present and not the legalities of what might occur upon termination of the lease. It was agreed also that the email from the landlord would become part of the application record for this project.

In terms of the ramp design, it was noted that the ramp would be of anodized aluminum, with a textured walking surface. There would be a full handrail and full guardrail, which would be the most visible parts of the structure. Footings would be placed on the existing ground surface and would be adjusted over time as needed. There would be no permanent footings.

Roll call was taken for approval of the submitted application: AYES: Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks and Ms. Suttmeier. RECUSED: Mr. Golisano.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed.

MINUTES

There were no minutes discussed.

DISCUSSION

There was no discussion.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

There being no further business, a motion duly made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Szabo, and carried, the meeting was thereupon adjourned.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I am the duly appointed secretary of the Cranbury Township Historic Preservation Commission, and that this document, consisting of three (3) pages, constitutes a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting held on November 3, 2020.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name on this ____day of November 2020.

Lori Thompson
Recording Secretary
Historic Preservation Commission