

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

**TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING**

The regular meeting of the Cranbury Township Historic Preservation Commission was held on November 17, 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 December 19, 2019, 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.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr. Banks, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate; Mr. Golisano, Vice Chair; Ms. Marlowe; Ms. Ryan; Mr. Szabo; and, Mr. Walsh, Chair

**NON-MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Ms. Evelyn Spann, Township Liaison; Mr. Richard Preiss, Township Planner, Mr. Jonathan Brosious, Resident; Ms. Linda Schilling, Resident; Mr. Barry Wham, Engineer

**OLD BUSINESS**

Proposed Changes to Historic District and Buffer Areas / Cranbury Hamlet

Discussion focused on the required next steps to advance the proposed changes to the Historic District and the Buffer Areas, and to advance the designation of the Cranbury Hamlet. It is the desire of the Historic Preservation Commission to move these issues ahead to the Township Committee in January 2021. Discussion ensued regarding whether HPC completed all of work required to this end.

Mr. Richard Preiss, Township Planner, noted that there are limited funds this year to complete the tax map work required for the proposed changes to the Buffer Area. As such, work has been halted regarding utilization of the tax maps to designate the tax properties to reflect proposed changes to the Buffer Area. However, such work will resume in the new year. Mr. Preiss added that there were sufficient funds for Ms. Elizabeth Leheny, Principal, PhillipsPreiss, to complete the Statement of Significance pertaining to the Hamlet designation, and that Ms. Leheny would provide the draft statement by Wednesday, November 19. The Statement of Significance represents that last element of work on these topics that can be completed this year.

Discussion ensued regarding advancing all three recommendations (i.e., changes to the Historic District, changes to the Buffer Area, and the designation of the Hamlet) at one time as a package, as opposed to advancing them for consideration independently as separate issues. Because changes to the Buffer Area will necessitate changes to individual properties, the Buffer Area changes must be made pursuant to an amendment to the historic district element, amendment to the master

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plan, and designation by the Township Committee. There was some question as to whether the Township Committee is prepared to advance the Buffer Area changes if they receive the proposal in January or February. However, it was noted that the focus of the HPC should be on getting the mapping completed and advancing the proposed changes to the Township Committee. How the recommendation proceeds for adoption is a matter to be addressed by the Township Committee. The same applies to changes to the Historic District and the designation of the Hamlet.

Ultimately, the timing for consideration of all three issues would be determined by the Township Committee in consultation with the Township Planner's office. Therefore, the HPC does not necessarily have to delay any individual issue in order to advance all three issues at the same time. How the Planning Board and the Township Committee then proceed to take action is within their purview.

Mr. Walsh indicated that HPC would wait to see the draft Statement of Significance from Ms. Leheny and would place that item on the December 1 HPC agenda. Mr. Walsh noted also that there is a need to wait for funding to become available to advance the work on all three initiatives.

Ms. Spann noted that it is necessary also to ensure that the work on these issues be done correctly the first time, and to listen to the recommendations from the professionals. Additionally, Ms. Spann noted that the Township Committee is aware of the work that HPC has been doing on these issues; therefore, the HPC is encouraged to continue moving forward. The decision about whether to bundle the issues or address them separately may be dictated at least in part by whether there is concern raised by the public about one or more of the proposed changes.

Next steps regarding these issues will be addressed again at the December 1 meeting of the HPC.

#### 2020 Volunteer Term Dates/HPC Membership.

There was a brief review of the process for proposed HPC membership changes. Mr. Banks will submit to the Township Clerk, his letter of resignation, effective December 31, 2020. Mr. Walsh will then submit a letter to the Township Clerk recommending the appointment of Mr. Szabo to complete Mr. Banks's 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate term, and the appointment of Ms. Suttmeier to fill the full member position to be vacated by Mr. Szabo. All changes, if approved by the mayor, would become effective in January 2021.

#### #55 North Main Street, Re/Max Signage.

Discussion continued from the October 20 HPC meeting regarding the proposed Re/Max signage, as well as the role of HPC, generally, in reviewing signage within the Village Commercial District. There was discussion about the jurisdiction of the HPC to review and make recommendations on signage, particularly in the case of signs located on the insides of windows. Mr. Golisano recused himself from the discussion as it pertained specifically to the Re/Max signage, as he provided the schematics for such.

Discussion ensued regarding HPC's role in reviewing and making recommendations pertaining to signage, and whether that role should be limited to outdoor signage. In the past, HPC has been involved in ensuring compatibility of outdoor signage with the historic character of the downtown area; therefore, the question focused more on the HPC role pertaining to indoor window signage.

It was noted that there are existing ordinance requirements, e.g., sign size limitations, that are under the purview of Zoning. However, the issue of historic character compatibility was less clear. The ensuing discussion revealed varying opinions and interpretations of the proper role of HPC in signage review. Practical issues were raised regarding, for example, how the HPC could ensure that a business's specific colors, logo, etc., could be made compatible without requiring the business to

change any of its defining features. Other issues were also raised regarding HPC's role in preserving and protecting the historic character of the community.

It was noted that the proposed new sign ordinance contains a general standards section that does give a role to HPC in reviewing signage for compatibility purposes regarding the use of colors, materials, etc. As such, signage review would likely be something that HPC would want to retain within its purview.

Mr. Preiss noted that the discussion on this matter would need to continue as the proposed new ordinance advances. He added that he does believe that the new ordinance establishes a role for HPC, particularly where the Village Commercial District is concerned. Additionally, Mr. Preiss did note that signage, generally, is protected under the First Amendment and, as such, it would be difficult to prohibit a business from displaying its logo or using certain colors on a sign. HPC, though, should feel free to be part of the debate, and this is an opportune time for HPC to come to a resolution internally regarding its role regarding signage review.

Ms. Spann added that HPC might want to consider the types of signs and features of those signs that it would want to review. She noted that HPC does have a say in signage, particularly in the Village Commercial District because signage is very much a part of the appearance of the downtown area. If the HPC discusses the matter again at its December 1 meeting, the outcomes of that discussion could be addressed to the Planning Board at its December 3 meeting, at which it will consider the proposed new signage ordinance.

Mr. Walsh directed that the signage issue be placed on the HPC agenda as an open item for December 1 for further consideration.

#### Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Application: Phase 3 Survey.

The new 2021 Certified Local Government grant application has not yet been released. The HPC Secretary will continue to check for its release this month. Additionally, prior discussion by the HPC of a phase 3 survey to focus on the farms west of town was identified in the January 7, 2020 HPC minutes. Such a phase 3 survey was previously proposed as the topic for the 2021 CLG grant application.

### **APPLICATIONS**

#### HPC073-20, #2 Maplewood Avenue, Storage Shed Construction.

This major application for the construction of a storage shed was originally submitted on October 13 and discussed previously by HPC. However, the possible requirement of a zoning variance delayed action on the application. However, the homeowner since rescinded the element of the application that would have required the variance, which allow the application to proceed for approval review on November 17.

Mr. Walsh noted that this application had been discussed previously and that HPC was comfortable with the appearance of the proposed structure and the materials to be used in its construction. It was noted that the distance of the proposed shed from Brainerd Lake was the only other outstanding issue, but that such did not warrant delaying consideration since the zoning issue had been resolved. Therefore, the application was moved to a full vote.

Roll call was taken: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo, and Mr. Walsh.  
INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks, Ms. Marlowe (recused), Ms. Suttmeier (absent).

#### HPC074-20, #41 South Main Street, Front Porch and Rear Siding Repair/Replacement.

This application was for replacement of porch decking, porch columns and railings, and replacement of siding and corner boards on rear corner of house. The matter of particular concern was

whether consideration was given to repairing rather than replacing the porch elements in order to retain as much of the original structure as possible.

The homeowner, Mr. Jonathan Brosious, was present for the discussion. Mr. Brosious indicated that it was his hope to retain the original elements; however, his contractor's review of the porch revealed extensive damage, including railings that are nearly falling off and bases of almost all of the columns that are rotted. Replacing one or two of the columns would result in a mismatched appearance. Mr. Brosious noted that the planned replacement material (Permacast) would mimic the original look and would not give a shiny, plastic appearance.

Question was raised about the two half columns that terminate into the house and whether those columns would also be replaced. The concern was whether the Permacast columns would match appropriately to the space left by the removed half columns. If those two columns could be retained, the difference between those and the replacement columns might be only slight. HPC noted also that house siding might extend behind those half columns. Mr. Brosious will follow up with his contractor regarding retaining the half columns.

Discussed ensued regarding the railing height. The original historic railing is not likely consistent with the current code; however, the homeowner is not required to modify the historic railing. If the historic railing is replaced in its entirety, it would then become subject to current code requirements. Further, the spacing of replacement balusters would likely be different than the original. These issues, taken together, would also affect overall proportions of the porch elements and, thus, the historic character of those house. Options to address these issues, as well as porch decking material and appearance issues, were offered to Mr. Brosious. Mr. Brosious was also advised to consult with a Township building official for more specific information.

It was recommended that Mr. Brosious look at the property with the recently renovated wraparound porch located at the corner of North Main Street and Plainsboro Road for additional ideas. The HPC Secretary will provide Mr. Brosious with the address to that property.

Mr. Brosious will follow up with his contractor on the HPC discussion and recommendations. The HPC indicated that the application would be considered again at the December 1 meeting and that Mr. Brosious should provide the spec list of products to be used, identifying material, sizing matches, etc. The HPC asked also that Mr. Brosious advise as to whether the half columns would be retained, how the rail height would be maintained, and how the top of the stairs would be addressed.

It was agreed that the replacement of the siding at the back of the house, also addressed in the application, was acceptable and would not need to be discussed further.

Mr. Brosious will send all new information to the HPC Secretary and the application will be placed on the 12/1 agenda for further consideration.

The HPC thanked Mr. Brosious for his commitment to maintaining the historic character of his home and for his willingness to investigate the recommendations put forth by the HPC.

On another matter, Mr. Brosious asked for direction regarding curb, driveway, and concrete patio work that he is also planning to do at his property. The HPC advised that such work would need to be reviewed by the HPC under a separate application. Such application was requested, along with close-up photographs of the existing concrete to determine its nature and composition. A new, second application can be considered also at the December 1 meeting.

#### HPC076-20, #9 Plainsboro Road, Installation of Aboveground Fuel Oil Tank.

This application was for the removal of an underground fuel oil tank and the installation of an aboveground fuel tank along the right side of the dwelling. The primary point of discussion was whether the tank could be located at the back of the house, rather than at the side, as proposed. Mr. Barry Wham, the engineer for the project, indicated that the tank needs to be placed two feet from a window and he is not familiar with the back of the house and whether such access would be available.

He noted also that the tank may ultimately be temporary if the homeowner chooses later to switch to natural gas.

Discussion ensued about the visibility of the tank if placed at the side of the house. Placement of the tank at the back of the house would be preferred; however, if properly screened from street views, the tank could be placed at the side. Such screening would be through the use of natural materials/plantings. The HPC agreed that either of the options for locating the tank would be acceptable.

As this work constituted a minor application, it was approved by the Chair without roll call vote.

#### HPC077-20, #40 Station Road, Re-roof Existing Outbuilding.

This application was for the re-roofing of an existing outbuilding and the partial removal of its chimney, the latter of which was the main point of discussion. Homeowner, Ms. Linda Schilling, was present for the discussion. She indicated that the building itself is dilapidated and has no foundation. There is nothing particularly historic about the structure or the chimney, which is of a plain cinderblock construction and is pulling away from the main structure. The homeowners had replaced the roof previously 35 years ago. There is no electricity to the building, which it sits on a back corner of the lot and is not easily visible from the street.

Ms. Schilling noted that two contractors advised that the structure be demolished; however, she would like to retain it. If retaining the structure, she was advised to remove the chimney to below roof level as it also is difficult to flash in its current position.

The HPC asked about the possible full removal of the chimney for improved appearance, and whether there were any safety issues in retaining it even if removed below roof level. Ms. Schilling noted that there are so safety issues given the location of the building and considering that no one goes into the area of the structure. She noted also that she was concerned about that full removal of the chimney might reveal other issues that need to be addressed. As such, her preference was to retain a shortened chimney.

The HPC agreed that, given the lack of historical significance of the structure and of the chimney in particular, and given its relatively hidden location on the property, that the work could proceed as proposed. As this work constituted a minor application, it was approved by the Chair without roll call vote.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

New Homeowner Letters Sent. The following letters were sent on October 26, 2020:

- 9 Station Road
- 11 Station Road
- 83 North Main Street
- 89 North Main Street

### **MINUTES**

The minutes from the October 20, 2020 regular meeting were reviewed and approved as presented. The minutes from the November 3 special meeting were reviewed and approved with one minor correction.

Roll call was taken on the October 20 minutes: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks, Mr. Szabo (not present at October 20 meeting), and Ms. Suttmeier (absent).

Roll call was taken on the November 3 minutes: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo, and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks and Ms. Suttmeier (absent).

## **DISCUSSION**

None.

## **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

There being no further business, a motion duly made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Golisano, 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 six (6) pages, constitutes a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting held on November 17, 2020.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name on this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of December 2020.

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Lori Thompson  
Recording Secretary  
Historic Preservation Commission