

**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 December 1, 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, 1st Alternate; Mr. Golisano, Vice Chair; Ms. Marlowe; Ms. Ryan; Mr. Szabo; and, Mr. Walsh, Chair

NON-MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms. Evelyn Spann, Township Liaison; Ms. Elizabeth Leheny, PhillipsPreiss, Mr. Jonathan Brosious, Resident; Mr. Robert Gill, Contractor

OLD BUSINESS

Cranbury Station Hamlet Designation/State of Significance Review

Elizabeth Leheny was present to discuss progress on the Statement of Significance and current and historical maps of the Cranbury Station Hamlet area. The Statement of Significance addresses the history of the Hamlet and the criteria for determining its historical significance, and includes a description of its boundaries, and descriptions of the Hamlet's individual buildings and forms. Ms. Leheny noted that the Hamlet's significance lies largely in its association with the railway and its impact on the development of Cranbury.

It was noted that not all properties in the Hamlet have a completed a historic significance survey form. Currently missing are forms for the properties at 90 Halsey Reed Road and 96 Halsey Reed Road. It was noted also that the history may have to be developed by HPC for those properties for which the homeowners are not directly participating in the historic designation process. Ms. Suttmeier will also be contacted to determine if she had prepared history on either of the outstanding properties.

Ms. Leheny noted that the Statement of Significance is otherwise in good shape. She noted also that she will take some photos of the Hamlet properties to supplement the Statement of Significance.

HPC will continue to advance work on the Hamlet designation; however, action will not likely take place until the latter part of January 2021.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Village Commercial District Signage / New Signage Ordinance

Discussion on this item was continued from the November 17, 2020 HPC meeting. The first point of consideration was in reference to approval authority over color selection for signage. Differing opinions were expressed by the HPC members on the role of HPC in this regard. Some saw control of color selection as an added layer of protection to ensure a compatibility of signage with the character of the historic district. Bright or neon colors on the exterior of buildings could detract from that character. However, questions were raised about how to define what might be considered “garish colors” or “subtle colors.” It was suggested that color selection might be better addressed by the zoning officer.

It was stated also that signage primarily follows zoning rules. The ordinance indicates that no more than three colors may be used, but not what those colors may be. There was some discussion about the possibility of recommending that the three-color limit be removed from the ordinance. However, the limit supports some uniformity for the historic district; therefore, removing it could have unintended consequences. It was noted, though, that the three-color limit also includes black and white, which may be too restrictive. Materials used for signage may present another concern, e.g., plastic sandwich boards on sidewalks.

Ms. Spann noted that the proposed sign ordinance currently under consideration does not represent a change to any of the current rules about signage; rather, the proposed ordinance simply consolidates of the signage related provisions that are currently found in varied locations in township ordinances. This consolidation has also allowed for the identification and removal of duplicated signage rules. Ms. Spann noted also that the HPC has a role in signage review at present and that that role has been made more noticeable in the consolidated ordinance. HPC would continue to function in an advisory capacity in offering its opinion to businesses on what would provide the best overall appropriate look for the historic district.

It was noted also that the purpose of the consolidated ordinance in terms of the historic district is not to create uniformity in signage, but to allow HPC to weigh in on a case-by-case basis regarding what is appropriate at a particular point in time. In that regard, it was noted also that there existed signage in the past that may not be appropriate now for the historic district. Further, it was noted that asking a business to change its logo, for example, is not what HPC would be seeking to achieve.

The issue of signage inside of windows was also addressed again. Given the 1st Amendment issues associated with such, the legality of attempting to control the appearance of such signs would need to be researched further. It was noted also that given the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, the township wants to support businesses in having as much marketing flexibility as possible during these difficult times.

Overall, it was felt that HPC should have a role in signage review and should negotiate on behalf of historical presence, but that it should be careful not to overstep its advisory role in the process.

The issue will be on the December 15, 2020 HPC agenda for final discussion and to come to final agreement on the role of HPC in signage review.

APPLICATIONS

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. Discussion on this application continued from the November 17, 2020 meeting of the HPC. Mr. Jonathan Brosious, homeowner, and Mr. Robert Gill, contractor, were present for the discussion.

Discussion focused primarily on the outstanding issues pertaining to treatment of the half columns that terminate into the house, porch railing height, and selection of proposed replacement materials for porch elements.

The proposed plan is to replace the half columns, as well as the full columns. Work will be done to ensure a secure fit of the replacement columns. Since work is also being done on siding on the rear of the house, HPC suggested taking some of the clapboards that are in good condition from the rear of the house and using them on the front if needed to ensure the proper fit of the replacement half columns. This would also ensure a coherent look of the siding on the front of the house. Mr. Gill indicated that that would be a workable solution. It was noted also that the new columns will be very similar in appearance to the original.

Regarding the railings, the issue of the possibility of repair versus replacement was raised again. In addressing this issue, Mr. Gill noted that the cost to repair the existing railings could exceed the cost of replacing them. It was noted also that wood railings are not available in lengths in excess of six feet and some of the homeowner's railings are eight feet in length. Mr. Gill stated also that repairs could be made to existing railings if old wood could be secured. Newer wood does not last as long, which is why many homeowners are moving toward composite materials. However, older wood is difficult to find and expensive. Replacement is also the preferred approach since it would ensure a coherent overall appearance.

In terms of railing height and materials, Mr. Gill noted that the new railings would be six to eight inches higher than the current railings in order to meet code requirements. The proposed new railing would be a fiberglass composite on the outside with a hollow metal interior, which would not be visible. The railings would come in a soft gloss/matte finish and would not be painted; however, the railings can be painted if desired. The columns would come in the same finish as the railings and would not be painted.

Discussion ensued regarding the railing height. The height of the existing railings is 24-26 inches. While an increase in the railing height may be acceptable, bringing the railing height up to level of the windowsill, concern was expressed by HPC that increasing the railing height could significantly change the appearance of the house. A suggestion was made that Mr. Gill discuss the railing height issue with the township code official; however, Mr. Gill had already done so and was advised that the railing height must be 36 inches and that compliance had liability implications for contractors. HPC recommended to Mr. Gill that he review the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 5. Community Affairs, Chapter 23. Uniform Construction Code Subchapter 6. Rehabilitation Subcode regarding railing height. Some flexibility may be found in that subcode that could be discussed in a follow-up conversation with the township code official.

The issue of balusters was also raised. HPC noted that spacing of new balusters should be consistent with the existing spacing. Mr. Gill indicated that he will check to see if the railings are pre-drilled and, as such, the spacing already established, or whether the holes can be drilled at desired spacing. It was noted also that the existing balusters are rectangular, but that the replacement balusters would likely be square.

Decking was also discussed. HPC noted that the existing decking comes straight across, but more modern decking has a finishing strip. Preference should be given to retaining the current appearance with either square or rounded ends. Mr. Gill noted that rounding off the ends would remove the finish on the material; however, leaving the ends square would be possible.

Three issues were summarized by HPC for further investigation: (1) possible changes in baluster spacing, (2) changes in baluster width, and (3) the possibility of preserving the existing railing. Mr. Brosious and Mr. Gill agreed to investigate these issues and return to the HPC at its December 15, 2020 meeting for further discussion and action by HPC.

HPC079-20, #41 South Main Street, Driveway Paving, Curb, Concrete Work

This application was deemed minor and no discussion was necessary. It was approved as submitted by Mr. Walsh, Chair.

NEW BUSINESS

New Homeowner Letters Sent. None

MINUTES

The minutes from the November 17 meeting were reviewed and approved with edits.

Roll call was taken on the November 17 minutes: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo, and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks and Ms. Suttmeier (absent).

DISCUSSION

The HPC asked about the status of the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant application. The HPC Secretary reported that the 2021 application had not yet been released by the state, but that the CLG website is checked daily for updates.

The HPC also noted that it wants to ensure that any members of the public who may be in attendance at its meetings is duly invited to provide comment. It was noted that, at each meeting prior to review of the minutes from the previous meeting, the public would be asked for any comments at that time.

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 four (4) pages, constitutes a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting held on December 1, 2020.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name on this 16th day of December 2020.

Lori Thompson

Lori Thompson
Recording Secretary
Historic Preservation Commission