

**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 15, 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. Golisano, Vice Chair; Ms. Marlowe; Ms. Ryan; Ms. Jennifer Suttmeier; Mr. Szabo; and, Mr. Walsh, Chair. Mr. Banks, 1st Alternate, was excused.

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 Historic District Designation - Statement of Significance Review

Discussion on this topic began with a review of the status of information on each of the affected properties. As of the December 1, 2020 HPC meeting, such information was missing for 90 Halsey Reed Road and 96 Halsey Reed Road. However, prior to the December 15 HPC meeting, Ms. Suttmeier provided the information for 96 Halsey Reed Road. Information remains unavailable for 90 Halsey Reed Road; however, Ms. Leheny will prepare the information for that property to conclude the project.

Mr. Walsh noted that the HPC is now at a place where it can advance the Cranbury Station Hamlet Historic District Designation to the Township Committee; however, the question was raised as to whether it would be more prudent to delay such action until the proposed revisions to the Village Historic District and Buffer Area are completed in order to advance both issues simultaneously. The HPC agreed that it would be preferable to advance both issues together. Ms. Leheny agreed with this approach.

Ms. Leheny noted also that it should not take much additional time for Mr. Richard Preiss, Township Planner, to complete the maps for the proposed Village Historic District and Buffer Area maps. Mr. Walsh reminded the HPC that work had to be halted on the mapping due to insufficient budget availability to complete the work prior to the new year.

APPROVED MINUTES

There was brief additional discussion regarding the empty lot on the northernmost extent of the Station Hamlet. Ownership and historic significance of the lot is unknown. It was noted, though, that there was a general store on that lot that had historical significance.

Village Commercial District Signage / New Signage Ordinance

Mr. Walsh opened the discussion noting that it was good for HPC to have a voice in signage review. However, there are several matters in this regard that remain to be addressed, including: determining specifically how the HPC would like to be involved in signage review, making a decision on the issues of the number of permissible colors for signs, and addressing the issue of enforcement of signage requirements.

Discussion by HPC began with the issue of the three-color limit for signs. An example of alternative guidelines regarding color selection was provided to the HPC for review. Such example also limited color selection to three; however, it provided some flexibility for the use of “accent colors.” It was then proposed that black and white not be included in the three-color limit. The question was then raised as to whether the proposal is then to establish a five-color limit (to include black and white). A final decision in this regard was not made.

It was noted by HPC that it does not want to be unduly restrictive, but that it needs to be very specific about what it is looking for in terms of signage design. The HPC wants to be business friendly; however, it was noted also that if the guidelines are too broad, businesses will not come before HPC for signage review. Conversely, if the guidelines are too narrow, they could be unduly burdensome. It was further noted that it is important to make clear in any proposed changes to ordinance language what is the “intent” of the HPC and that any proposed changes allow for discretion by the Commission.

Question was also raised about how to address a request to replicate a true historic sign. It was noted that it would not be desirable to preclude a business from replicating such a sign. The suggestion was made to incorporate into the ordinance a reference to historic precedence befitting the historic significance of the area. It was noted, though, that some signage from the past is, itself, not necessarily appropriate for the historic district today. Historic precedence must also take into consideration a precedence of appropriateness for the vintage of the building.

The role of HPC was also discussed in relation to Zoning review of signage. The issue was raised as to whether HPC’s review can be included in Zoning’s signage consideration. This would help to tighten up the process and ensure that a sign is not different from what was discussed and approved. As such, HPC’s review and recommendations could be included in the Zoning application.

The issue of the appearance of “open” and “closed” signs was also raised. The suggestion was made to develop a “starter kit” for businesses so that they do not have to reinvent the wheel regarding these signs. It was noted that such a kit for businesses might not be under the purview of HPC; however, it might still be a consideration.

It was noted that HPC is on the right track. The HPC needs to have discretion while trying to help downtown businesses and also focusing on maintaining the character of the area. It was also noted again that HPC is not an enforcement body but, rather, an advisory body. The discussion regarding signage review will continue and the sign ordinance will be one of the first considerations by the Township Committee in the new year.

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.

The HPC Chair summarized the outstanding issues regarding this application from the December 1 meeting of the HPC. These were:

- Baluster spacing
- Width of balusters
- Preserving existing railing or addressing the height of the railing to preserve some of the original wood

Mr. Robert Gill, contractor for the homeowners, began by addressing the railing height issue. While the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 5. Community Affairs, Chapter 23. Uniform Construction Code Subchapter 6. Rehabilitation Subcode regarding railing height, as discussed at the December 1 meeting, does allow for the reinstallation of the railing at a height of 30" rather than 36", there was still concern by the contractor that installation of the railing at the lower height might present liability issues. However, upon further discussion, it was clarified that the inclusion of the 30" railing height in the state's building code did constitute "building to code" and, as such, was protection against liability.

Mr. Gill noted that he measured all railings and that the height from the porch floor to the bottom railing was 1 1/2". He asked if that is a common height for historical purposes. HPC confirmed that it was an appropriate height between floor and bottom railing, but that it was more important that the bottom railing align with the baseplate of the columns. Therefore, there would be flexibility to increase or decrease that spacing to ensure a seamless appearance with the columns.

Detailed discussion ensued regarding baluster width and spacing. The existing balusters are rectangular at 1 7/8" wide and 1 3/4" deep. However, there are no replacement balusters that will match that size or rectangular shape. The replacement balusters will be square in shape. Discussion then focused on the spacing of the replacement balusters to reproduce as closely as possible the current appearance. Ultimately, it was agreed that the spacing of the replacement balusters would be measured from inside to inside and a width of 2 1/2" would be a guide. However, the contractor would have the flexibility to adjust that spacing in each section to obtain the desired appearance.

Roll call was taken to approve the application with the following considerations: Particular attention will be given to railing height and baluster spacing. Railing height will be 30" and the spacing will be 2 1/2" from inside to inside. However, baluster spacing may be adjusted slightly (e.g., by 1/8", with preference for closer spacing over wider spacing), at the discretion of the homeowner and contractor to reproduce as closely as possible the current appearance of the porch.

AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo, and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks (absent), Ms. Suttmeier.

HPC080-20, #11 Station Road, Fence Installation

This was a minor application for the installation of 4' high white cedar picket fence, 125' in length, with a 5' gate and gothic tops on 4x4 posts. The application was approved by the HPC Chair. It was included on the agenda for informational purposes only.

NEW BUSINESS

New Homeowner Letters Sent

New homeowner letters were sent to the new residents at 2 Maplewood Drive in the Historic District, and to 18 Silvers Lane in the Buffer Area.

MINUTES

The minutes from the December 1 meeting were reviewed and approved with edits.

Roll call was taken on the December 1 minutes: AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Szabo, and Mr. Walsh. INELIGIBLE: Mr. Banks (absent), Ms. Suttmeier.

DISCUSSION

An update on the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant was requested. The HPC Secretary reported that, according to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection CLG representative, the application would be released within a week of the December 8 contact. However, as of the December 15 HPC meeting, the application had still not been released. The grant website will be checked daily for release.

Uses of possible CLG grant funds was also discussed briefly. The possibility of use of the funds to refurbish the gazebo on the lake at the park was raised. It was noted also that previous discussions focused on the use of the funds to conduct a phase III survey to focus on the farms west of town. The proposed project will be determined upon further discussion after the release of the application.

There was no other discussion.

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 15, 2020.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name on this 6th day of January 2021.

Lori Thompson

Lori Thompson
Recording Secretary
Historic Preservation Commission