

**MINUTES
OF THE
CRANBURY TOWNSHIP
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CRANBURY, NEW JERSEY
JULY 20, 2021**

TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING

The regular meeting of the Cranbury Township Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was held on July 20, 2021 at 7:00 pm by remote access videoconferencing in response to COVID-19 and the updated Open Public Meeting Act guidelines.

CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum present, Mr. Golisano called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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 January 8, 2021, 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.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Mr. Golisano, Chair, Mr. Walsh, Vice Chair, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Suttmeier and Mr. Szabo, Alt I
Members Absent: Mr. Geier, Alt II

Professionals and Staff Present: Elizabeth Leheny, P.P., Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC.
Evelyn Spann, Committee Liaison
Robin Tillou, Historic Preservation Commission Secretary

**PUBLIC HEARING – 2020 MASTER PLAN INITIATIVE
Cranbury Station Hamlet Designation**

Chairperson Golisano introduced the Township Planner, Elizabeth Leheny of Phillips, Preiss, Grygiel, Leheny, Hughs, LLC.

Ms. Leheny went over her credentials which includes a master's in city planning and Historic Preservation and a licensed professional planner in the state of NJ.

Ms. Leheny presented the overview of what is going to be accomplished and the powers that HPC has for the designation and the master plan. Chapter 93 of the Cranbury code states from time to time the Commission shall undertake a survey to identify proposed potential historic districts or sites that are worthy of protection and preservation. The process of a designation is interested parties, citizens or township officials can request a consideration of a proposed historic site or district. Once the property has been identified and surveyed then the public hearing will be set which is what we are having tonight. HPC then sends the report for the designation to the Planning Board and the Planning Board would draft and adopt any amendments to the Master Plan which also has a public hearing. The Township Committee will then introduce the Land Development ordinance, then if the Planning Board finds it consistent with the Master Plan, the Township Committee will then adopt the Land Development ordinance.

Ms. Leheny stated the Cranbury Station Hamlet designation is being presented tonight after two years of HPC study and resident input and participation. The HPC would like to vote tonight to recommend to the Planning Board that this district be designated as such in the historic preservation element in the Master Plan.

Ms. Leheny addressed the Master Plan Reexamination Report which was adopted November 7, 2019. In the Master Plan Reexamination, it was recommended to designate the Cranbury Station Hamlet as a historic district. On the west side of Halsey Reed Road south is a junction with Station Road. There are homes there that date to the mid-19th century. The properties around the Camden and Amboy Railroad track, and their history is intertwined with that. To the west of the railroad tracks is what remains of the depot buildings. The railroad established a station in Cranbury in the 1830s and took passengers between New York and Philadelphia and freight. By 1880 a Hamlet had grown up in this area and included several residents, some of which are being proposed to be in this historic district. The construction of these homes roughly took place between 1850 – 1860. As noted in the 2019 Reexamination, residents of the Cranbury Station Hamlet had come to the public meetings and expressed concerns over the impact of warehouse development around their homes. Residents called for the Hamlet to be recognized for their historic value. The Master Plan recommended Cranbury determine, with the help of HPC, whether the Hamlet would call for a designation to the historic district to aid in its protection in preservation. The homeowners worked closely with members of the HPC compiling documentation forms to evaluate if the properties met the criteria as a historic district. We were able to get additional information with the resident's input which we would not have been able to gather without their input. I prepared a statement of significance in evaluating the properties to see if they qualify for district designation. It is in accordance with the criteria established with Chapter 93 of the code and are consistent with the national register standards for historic designation which is issued with the US Department of the Interior. The homes have met the following criteria: they had an interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Township and they had an association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state or local history.

Chairperson Golisano opened the Hamlet portion of the agenda to the Commission for any comments. Chair thanked Ms. Leheny for the through presentation. This has been a two-year process as mentioned.

Chairperson Golisano opened the Hamlet portion of the agenda to the public.

Ms. Anne Gordon, 127 N. Main Street, asked if there were any thoughts or plans to put the actual railroad tracks into the Hamlet historic district.

Chairperson Golisano stated this meeting is focusing on the designation of the properties only and what is included as of right now. There have been talks of that in the past and it is on our minds moving forward.

Ms. Suttmeier stated the railroad tracks already are designated as historic eligible by the state.

There being no further public comments Chairperson Golisano closed the public forum for the Hamlet designation portion of the agenda.

Chairperson Golisano made the motion to recommend to the Planning Board the Cranbury Station Hamlet be designated as a historic district as submitted and Mr. Walsh offered a second.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Suttmeier and Mr. Walsh

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CRANBURY VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT AND BUFFER

Ms. Leheny introduced the map that was drafted for the proposed amendments to the Cranbury Village Historic District.

Ms. Leheny introduced the current Cranbury Village Historic District. Most of the district are structures that were built between 1820 – 1920. It was put on the National Register in 1980 and was locally designated in 1988. There have been no changes proposed to the properties that are currently in the historic district (HD). These properties were in the HD and continue to be in the HD.

Ms. Leheny introduced the current historic district buffer. They are subject to the same requirements as those that are in the HD. Consistent with the Master Plan the HPC would like to reevaluate the buffer to ensure it meets the integrity of the existing historic district from inappropriate development and to meets the commonsense test. There are properties that are proposed to be removed from the existing buffer zone extending around the HD.

Ms. Leheny introduced the properties that are in the historic district buffer and are under consideration to be in the historic district which is now in the beginning phases. There are several lots where a portion of the lot are in the district and the remaining portion is in the buffer. To make the map easier to understand, the entire parcels would be put in the historic district. To do it by tax lots seem to make the most sense. There are two properties that are in the buffer, outside the buffer and in the historic district. The first is the Brainerd Lake which is public property owned by the Township and the second is the Municipal Building/Cranbury School. We are quite limited by law as to what we can impose in terms of review on these publicly owned properties. It is a courtesy review and not binding, but we would like the HPC to be a part of that conversation. There are rules that give time limits of how long something could be under review. This way HPC considerations would be a part of the conversation. The second category of homes are homes that have been identified as being over one hundred years old and may qualify as historic. More documentation would have to be done to see if a significant portion of the property have retained their historic integrity.

Ms. Leheny continued to introduce the properties in the buffer that are proposed to be added to the historic district. It can be categorized as being connectors and/or non-contributing buildings to the historic district. These properties may or may not be qualified as historic properties but what happens to these properties could have significant ramifications on the historic district. The National Register of Historic Places include historic districts of contributing and noncontributing buildings.

Chairperson Golisano pointed out many of those are currently in the buffer area as it is right now. The buffer area is in the same reviews as would be for a typical application presented to the HPC. The appropriateness of those reviews is dependent on the buildings itself and everything is taken on an individual standpoint due to not all buildings being the same.

Ms. Leheny reiterated that any property that is currently in the buffer and being proposed to be in the historic district would not have any additional review of what currently exists.

Ms. Leheny introduced the properties on N. Main Street that are outside of the existing buffer. It includes approximately fourteen properties. One of the properties is a preserved farmland. Others are 80+ and 100+ years old and are worth investigating and studying. The idea is to try to connect the upper portion with the main portion. Not all these properties are going to qualify as individual historic resources. It will be similar to the noncontributing as to where they contribute to the overall character and ambiance of the streetscape. What happens on these properties would impact the historic district.

Chairperson Golisano stated that part of this whole project is taking the current buffer standard and adding those buildings to the district. Once that is done you would see the 200 ft. buffer around those new adds after study. All those parcels are touched by the buffer. You can see there are impacts to houses within developments that are visible to N. Main Street. We are trying to be realistic about views and streetscapes for what is within the district or within the buffer area as you are looking down Main Street.

Ms. Leheny introduced the proposed new Brainerd Lake buffer area along Evans Drive to preserve the view corridors from Main Street and Village Park. It is to avoid potential inappropriate construction or development that would impact those historic views and detract from the vistas. The proposed buffer would be in those areas in the rear portion of the homes or along the shores of the lake. There are regulations put in place that have environmental considerations and in addition to that this would be aesthetic considerations to preserve that vista.

Chairperson Golisano opened the floor for public comments to the proposed changes to the Cranbury Village Historic District and Buffer portion of the agenda.

Michael Renz, 159 S. Main Street, asked if Heritage Park is part of the historical district. The red line seems to go through Heritage Park. The lot and block of our residence is a part of Heritage Park. Our home was moved in 1995, it sat on the corner of Old Trenton Road and Main Street to the current property we have now. What is the purpose of increasing the size of the historical boundaries? A number of these homes have no historical value.

Chairperson Golisano pointed out that a number of these homes are in the buffer zone that come in front of HPC for a review. Many of the homes proposed fall into that category. We want to make it a cohesive and contiguous district.

Ms. Spann stated Township Committee meetings assures we collect all public comment information, so we can circle back to those questions. The Commission secretary will be collecting the public comments.

Mr. Szabo stated before 159 S. Main Street was in the historic district and once it was moved it was no longer in the historic district.

Ms. Marlowe stated it is now in the buffer zone which makes no difference.

Elizabeth Silverman, 144 N. Main Street, stated we were in the buffer zone, and we have done additions to our house we have come before the HPC for review. If we were in the buffer zone and then changed to the historic district how would the procedure change.

Ms. Marlowe stated they would not change.

Ms. Leheny asked the age of the home of 144 N. Main Street.

Ms. Silverman stated it is from the 1930's, it is 80+ years old.

Ms. Leheny stated different remedies or considerations are given to different homes. Modifications to different remedies are considered to different homes, if there is something more modern it would not be given the same type of review from something that came from the 1860s. Whatever review you had in the past would continue if the proposal were approved.

Mr. Joseph Buonavolonta, 14 Cranbury Neck Road, stated she did not see Park Place West or Schoolhouse Lane on the map. Was wondering if you were putting up nice benches.

Ms. Leheny stated the library is not currently in the historic buffer/district. That is something that can be considered.

Mr. Buonavolonta asked why Park Place West was not on the amended map.

Chairperson Golisano stated Park Place West is included, but there is one lot that is not. As we look over, we can codify our recommendations and take as much of the comments we can get.

Mr. Buonavolonta stated it is something to think about to not have a say to a building (library) that will be going up in the heart of town, it should look historic.

Michele Till, 139 N. Main Street, wanted confirmation to the documentation process and would like to know if that is something only the Township investigates or if the homeowners can build that documentation profile.

Ms. Leheny stated with the Hamlet designation there was input from the homeowners, and it is optimal, but it is not necessary.

Ms. Till asked if there is an opportunity to get included when it gets to that point.

Ms. Leheny stated yes.

Chairperson Golisano stated we worked extensively with residents who were paired up with Committee members and researched together through that process.

Sally O'Grady, 55 S. Main Street, asked if you are adding all the homes on N. Main Street, then that means the homes to the east of that will be added to the buffer district.

Mr. Szabo stated the red dotted line that you see on the amended map will be the elimination of the existing HD buffer.

Ms. O'Grady asked if the homeowner has any say if their homes are being added.

Chairperson Golisano referred to the Master Plan Reexamination “The Commission has proposed that the boundaries of the Historic District buffer be amended in a manner which is more equitable and functional, that is, to incorporate only these properties adjacent to the Historic District which are visible from the street, most notably from Main Street”. We are looking to preserve the visible streetscape so we made this initial plan to not effect houses that would have an unnecessary review because they are not visible from the streetscape of the historic district. We are more clearly defining the district.

Ms. Marlowe added it is to have the district be more contiguous.

Mr. Szabo stated we should have the number of properties that are being added to the historic district area and how many properties we are removing from the existing HD buffer area.

Chairperson Golisano stated if we were to only add the contributing properties along Main Street, they are spaced out to where these added properties would be in the buffer zone. We will be taking the time to do the study and the impact of the streetscape and the visible items for visitors and Cranbury residents alike. Hopefully we can see that as we are trying to be clearer and more contiguous with the buffer.

Vice Chairperson Walsh stated it is not the Commission’s role to necessarily tell people what to do. It is to listen, consult and collaborate with homeowners to agree it is within the best interest of the community in an endeavor to protect its historic integrity.

Pat Demers, 26 Evans Drive, would like an example of an oversight that you would feel necessary for those of us that live on Evans Drive on the lake.

Ms. Leheny stated bulkheads is something that come up repeatedly to have some aesthetic considerations going in addition to any structural considerations. The objective is to prevent any inappropriate intrusion into the view corridor. We understand the properties on Evans Drive are not necessarily historic, but we do want to protect the beautiful views from the rear yards. This will take more thought and consideration and input from homeowners on Evans Drive.

Ms. Spann stated the most obvious impact would be on the bulkheads. Her question is how this would impact her and the most obvious is if you would like to for example build a red, green and orange flashing lighted bulkhead, that would take some conversation to talk about that bulkhead that is historically cognizant of that area.

Ms. Demers asked if a fence by the water would be something that would need to be looked at.

Ms. Leheny stated possibly not, it may be only construction of a shed, but we have not gotten there yet.

Chairperson Golisano stated the way to look at this is we are interested in preserving visible viewpoints and vantage points and scenic aesthetic of the lake and to preserve that for the future. There are areas within Evans Drive and Brainerd Lake that are in the buffer zone that come in for reviews. We review those areas as an individual aspect, and we take everyone as its own case. It is something that we are not looking to oppose.

Ms. Demers asked if putting in a retaining wall would require coming before the HPC.

Chairperson Golisano stated the constraints and what would be visible on your property would have its own review. Any public comment that does not want to speak now can be addressed later to the HPC secretary whose email address is posted on the Cranbury Township website.

With no further public comments Chairperson Golisano closed the public forum at 8:17 PM.

Chairperson Golisano announced this portion of the agenda will be carried with no further notice.

MINUTES July 6, 2021 – Chairperson Golisano made the motion to approve the July 6, 2021 minutes with revisions and Mr. Walsh offered a second.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mr. Golisano, Ms. Marlowe, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Suttmeier and Mr. Walsh

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Golisano opened the public forum for anything not on the agenda at 8:20 PM. With no public comment Chairperson Golisano closed the public forum at 8:21 PM.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

There being no further business, a motion was made by Chairperson Golisano to adjourn the meeting and Vice Chairperson Walsh offered a second. By unanimous vote, the meeting was thereupon adjourned at 8:22 PM.

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 7 pages, constitutes a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting held on July 20, 2021.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name on this day of August 20, 2021.

Robin Tillou

Robin Tillou

Recording Secretary

Historic Preservation Commission