

PENNINGTON BOROUGH
30 North Main Street, Pennington, NJ 08534
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
February 20, 2024

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mary Baum, David Coats, Eric Holtermann, Katrina Homel, David Stevens, Yasmine Zein, Nadine Stern, Kaitlyn Macellaro

Absent: Robert Chandler, Jack Davis, Natalie Shivers

I. OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC ADDRESS (15 MINUTES)

No comments.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no meeting minutes to be accepted.

III. APPLICATIONS

2023-02 Minor Application: 35/37 West Delaware Ave

Mr. Holtermann announced that work is underway and has been generally complying with everything they have approved as part of the minor work order.

2024-01 Certificate of Appropriateness: 141 South Main Street

Mr. Holtermann stated that based on the comments discussed in last month's meeting, he added an elevation drawing sketched over the building section drawing of the porch and sent it to Mr. Butterfoss. Mr. Holtermann explained how Mr. Butterfoss will be able to use that drawing to now submit a building permit. Mr. Stevens asked when do we issue him the certificate of appropriateness that he needs. Mr. Holtermann said he already issued him the certificate of appropriateness with the conditions that were discussed at the last meeting. He shared that he will forward the certificate over to Ms. Macellaro so she can add it to the Borough records. He reported that one of the conditions stated that Mr. Butterfoss and/or his contractor will have to meet with him on site before he starts work to show him samples of what they will be using.

2024-xx Pennington School Old Main Front Porch

Mr. Holtermann explained how this isn't an application yet, but he received an email from Kate Farewell, who is an owner's representative for the Pennington School, stating that Clarke Caton Hintz has been hired to do the work for the front porch of the Pennington School. Mr. Holtermann suggested that they could present to the Committee informally before submitting an application if

they wish. Mr. Holtermann discussed that when the Pennington School site plan was approved previously, they had agreed to come back for review of the front porch. He described how this would be a development application, which would require an advisory letter to the Planning Board. He wondered if they need to come back for a certificate of appropriateness or do we write an advisory letter to the Planning Board. He mentioned that asking the Planning Board Attorney would be best and asked Ms. Stern if he should reach out to Mr. Schmierer directly or if he should go through the Borough office. Ms. Stern said Ms. Macellaro should be the one to contact Mr. Schmierer. Mr. Holtermann stated that he was going to send Ms. Macellaro an email to forward onto Mr. Schmierer.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Report on Annual Presentation to Council on Monday, February 5-

Mr. Holtermann reported that he gave a simple presentation discussing many of the things we talked about in the past year. He announced that there has been some good progress with the website and that he will circulate the report out to everyone sometime next week. Ms. Stern stated that she thought it was a good presentation and it gives the opportunity for questions to be raised and to keep the communication rolling. Mr. Stevens shared that there was a nice excerpt about it in MercerMe. Mr. Holtermann said the writer for MercerMe reached out to him and asked if they can write a little bit more about the buildings at risk.

B. Planning Board Master Plan Update: List for Planning/Zoning Subcommittee-

Mr. Holtermann explained how he circulated the strategic goals for the Historic Preservation from Ms. Kassler-Taub. He stated that the Master Plan Committee were looking for comments and/or concerns regarding this list. Mr. Stevens commented how HPS9 regarding the economic incentives to support the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods tied in nicely with HPS1, which indicated the preservation of the Pennington's Railroad Station. Ms. Homel brought up that the Pennington's Railroad Station is currently part of the condo association and doesn't think that it would necessarily impact the goals. Mr. Holtermann said he met with George Ford and he explained that the Railroad Station is an albatross that they are stuck with and there could be a possibility of severing it from the co-op. Ms. Stern stated that the goals should be higher level and nothing specific. Mr. Holtermann expressed that the Historic Preservation elements generally include a list at the end of possibly significant historic buildings. He suggested that the Master Plan Committee could put something at the end of the element identifying some significant historical things that are in town that currently don't have the protection because they are not in the District. Mr. Holtermann highlighted the ordinance has protected some of the smaller, more modest houses in town and the least expensive real estate in town. He also mentioned that we updated our ordinance in order to make the mandatory changes recommended from the State Historic Preservation. Ms. Stern asked if our goal was trying to get certified local government status. Mr. Holtermann responded and said that it has been a stated

goal for a long time, but they haven't been perusing it vigorously recently. Ms. Stern questioned if Ms. Kassler-Taub was the liaison from the Master Plan Committee to the Historic Preservation Committee and Mr. Holtermann confirmed. Ms. Stern suggested some changes to the ordinance and Mr. Holtermann said that the ordinance was ready to go for its initial review and other changes could be considered before final. Mr. Holtermann announced that now that the website and the meeting minutes are up to speed, we can apply for the CLG (Certified Local Government).

C. Ordinance Revision Update-

Mr. Holtermann reviewed the proposed changes to the historic preservation ordinance, and the Commission Members had a discussion about these revisions. Many of these changes are being proposed in response to feedback from the state historic preservation office, and incorporating these changes is one step that would support a future application to become a Certified Local Government. Other changes are being made to further clarify provisions of the ordinance. Mr. Holtermann, Ms. Homel, and Mr. Chandler collaborated as a subcommittee to create a redlined document with proposed revisions and comments, which was circulated to the Commission. The Commission discussed the phrasing in section 119-5(A) of the ordinance, titled Certificate of Appropriateness, so that it was not confusing to the reader. The language explains when a Certificate of Appropriateness, to be issued by the Commission, is required before permits are issue or work can begin for activities in the historic district or on a designated historic landmark. The Commission further discussed the addition of language about the replacement of storefronts in Section 119-5(C) of the ordinance and whether the scope of this provision adequately addressed the Commission's concerns. Another new section, Severability, was added as Section 119-17 of the ordinance, and provides that if any provision of the ordinance is invalid, the other provisions are still in effect, unless they cannot be in effect without the invalid provision(s). The next step would be to submit this to the Borough attorney prior to submitting proposed ordinance revisions to the counsel.

D. Borough Requirement to Watch Minor Video-

Mr. Holtermann reminded everyone to watch the twenty minute mandatory video required by the Borough. He stated to reach out to Ms. Macellaro if you have any questions or need help accessing the video.

E. District Survey: Update Key/Contributing/Non-Contributing on Survey Forms-

Ms. Macellaro announced that the Borough recently installed Adobe on the computer and she should be done completing the survey forms in the upcoming weeks.

F. Borough Webpage: HPC Introductory Info, Further Discussion-

Ms. Zein shared that whatever changes could be done to the website have been made. She described how the FAQ's were moved to the bottom, Ms. Macellaro's contact info was added and the link to the minutes was fixed. She stated that the only thing that may not be possible is adding descriptions under each link as Ms. Shivers had recommended. Mr. Holtermann said that he was

pleased with the way that the website is coming along and that information is readily available to the residents. Ms. Baum thanked Ms. Zein and Ms. Macellaro for all of their hard work updating the website. Mr. Coats suggested that we put the updated address list on the website. Mr. Holtermann stated that the map isn't very clear and that putting the address list would benefit the residents so they could see what's included. Ms. Macellaro concluded that she will look into adding that to the website.

G. At Risk Buildings:

Pennington Train Station- Mr. Holtermann explained how he talked to George about attending a Board meeting to see how they feel about the long term future of that building.

Bethel AME Church- Mr. Holtermann announced how there was an inquiry about using it for a residential purpose. He welcomed that person to come to a meeting to talk informally about their plans. He described how it is a key contributing building in the district and how they would be paying a lot of attention to the existing street façade and would want it maintained as is.

Old High School- Mr. Holtermann asked if anyone has heard anything about this property and that he heard a rumor that the School District may be looking to unload that property at some point. He explained how that building is significant and could be converted into residential use. He states that it would benefit the Borough in these aspects if this building went on the market. Ms. Homel asked if the Commission could extend the District like they did for the African American Cemetery. Mr. Holtermann implied that we can add it to the District as a non-contiguous piece of the District or have it listed as a local individual landmark. He explained that Hopewell Township has eight properties that are individually listed as landmarks, a few of them are private homes that are significant. Mr. Coats asked if listing this property individually would give us prevue over it. Mr. Holtermann explained that the way the ordinance is written is that anything we designate as historic as a district or individually means that we do have prevue over it. He said if the buildings are privately and not publicly owned, then there is not protection offered by the State or National listing. Mr. Coats suggested that we should do something before the School Board takes a vote and decides they want to sell it. Mr. Holtermann said he doesn't know where they are in the process and there is a possibility we are too late and might limit the buyer's value of the sale. Mr. Coats stated that the building should be kept and it is an interest to the Town. He asked Ms. Stern where the Borough stands with their housing requirements. Ms. Stern spoke about how the Borough has a long way to go to fulfill the moral and legal obligations for affordable housing. She explained that it is not property that the Borough owns and the last she heard was the indication is that the School District doesn't plan on doing anything with this property at the moment. She announced that Mr. Reilly and Mr. Jackson may know more about this property and it wouldn't hurt to reach out to them. Mr. Holtermann stated that he was going to give Mr. Jackson a call to follow up to get more information. He said the Pennington African Cemetery was in favor of being part of the District and he wonders if the School Board will be as in favor. Ms. Stern said that she heard rumors that

the School Administration offices are going to move over to the Community Center once it is built. Mr. Holtermann stated that he was going to reach out to someone at the State Historic Preservation office for their input on this old school building. He described that turning this property into a condominium would be more sustainable, more energy consonance and should be more affordable than knocking it down and starting from scratch. Ms. Homel asked if there were signs outside of each of those historic markers in Hopewell Township. She thought it was a great idea and could create an opportunity for a walking tour that people could do. Mr. Holtermann commented that it is posted on their website, but he is not aware of any signs out front. Ms. Homel pointed out that old school buildings are sometimes bought out by charter schools.

Styleworthy- Mr. Holtermann stated that this small building is located on North Main Street by the travel agency. He said that this property is for sale as well as a house that sits between Styleworthy and Emily's Café. Ms. Baum asked if the Styleworthy building is a historic building and Mr. Holtermann disclosed that it is the early twentieth century, so it is within the period of significance within the District. Mr. Stevens asked if the white house behind it is also historic and Mr. Holtermann explained that these two buildings are contributing, neither are key contributing. Their basic shape and form are consistent with the period of the District and they have not been modified, which makes them largely original. Mr. Stevens noticed that the attic windows are gone in the white house. Mr. Coats questioned if that is residential zoning or commercial and Mr. Holtermann confirmed that it was Town Center. Mr. Coats stated that any other business would probably paint it or something, but not make any dramatic change. Ms. Homel discussed that based on their location in the Town Center, it would significantly alter the look of the building if there was a change made. Mr. Holtermann stated that there was a potential buyer interested in developing the property. He said that the house is in very poor condition and wondered if it could be replaced with something more appropriate if the salon was retained. Ms. Homel added that there could be a potential compelling reason for a replacement if there isn't an alternative of someone buying it and fixing it up. Mr. Coats brought up that we have been in this position a number of times and have not allowed people to demolish. Mr. Coats also stated that a developer might want to tear down the front of Styleworthy and expand the house in the back. Ms. Homel claimed that there has been other historic homes in Pennington that had no flooring and were turned into beautiful restorations. Mr. Stevens brought up the house located on East Delaware next to the bank that they are still working on that got completely gut renovated it and it looks lovely and is making some progress. Mr. Coats stated that unless there is truly any irreparable structural damage then we would not be inclined to a demo and a teardown. He continued and said that the poor condition of the house takes away from what it is, but with some fixing up, it has the character that they are looking for. Mr. Holtermann and Mr. Coats agreed that the siding has asbestos shingles. Mr. Holtermann shared that there is still a for sale sign outside of the building, but he heard that someone might be moving towards a contract. Ms. Baum asked if the realtor is aware that the house is in a historic district. Mr. Holtermann said he left a message with the realtor when he first saw the "for sale" sign go up stating that they should be aware that the property is within a regulated historic district.

H. Other Business

Ms. Stern mentioned that the NJ League of Municipalities Local Government week is April 7th to the 13th. She explained how Pennington Borough participated last year and held an open house at Borough Hall where residents would come and learn about the different committees in town. She stated that she isn't sure of the exact date(s) this will be happening, but she has a planning group in formation. Mr. Holtermann shared that they set up a table last year and it was nice to meet the people from the other committees as well.

Adjournment 8:38 PM