

Pennington Historic Preservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

4/18/2023

Opening Statement

Adequate public notice of this meeting has been posted in Borough Hall and sent to the officially designated newspaper, the Hopewell Valley News. This meeting was held via Zoom.

Attendance

Mary Baum, Robert Chandler, Dave Coats, Jack Davis (arrived @ 8:21), Eric Holtermann, Katrina Homel, Natalie Shivers, David Stevens

Absent: Barbara Kirsch

Also attending: Kati Angarone, Council Representative, Katie Ronollo, Secretary

Open time for public address

Eric opened the meeting for public address. There were no members of the public participating thus the period for public comment was closed.

Minutes

The February minutes were approved via a motion by Katrina and a second by Natalie. All were in favor.

Applications

No new applications.

15 West Delaware Avenue-Front window replacement

Eric and Bob met with the owner, architect and contractor on March 17, 2023. After discussion, it was agreed that the windows would remain as built. Any other modifications to the front of the building, including the front door, will be cleared by the HPC. Eric and Bob suggested benches instead of planters in the front of the building. The owner is aware that any changes to the public right of way requires Borough Council and/or zoning approval. Eric and Bob toured the inside and many historical details remain in place.

The issue of holding a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) was raised by the Borough Construction Official. He does not believe that he can refuse to issue a CO if all the construction code requirements have been completed satisfactorily. Eric specified that the ordinance as written provides power of pre-approval wherein a building permit would not be issued if HPC prior approval has not be received. Members discussed ways to ensure that any resident applying for a construction permit is aware whether or not the structure is in the Historic District. A check box has been added to the Zoning permit. The construction permits cannot be modified.

Other Business

Promotion of Historic District

The owners of 15 W. Delaware mentioned that they were not aware the building was in the Historic District. Kait referred to an earlier discussion about Haddonfield requiring disclosure

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upon sale of a home in the Historic District. There may be a way to implement a similar notification in Pennington. Katrina will reach out to Haddonfield to see how they educate people about the Historic District and how the disclosure requirement is enforced. The updates on the website, including a list of addresses, and notices in the welcome package will all help to increase knowledge of the district.

Municipal Building Open House

The open house took place just prior to this meeting. There were a lot of committee members in attendance along with a few members of the public.

Streetscape Improvements

HPC comments were shared with the Mayor and with the planners for the project.

Historic Preservation Ordinance Revision

Katrina, Bob and Eric have looked at the full ordinance and have made some changes including specifying notifications to the Borough Administrative person instead of a specific title. They have clarified that buildings in the district are described as contributing, key contributing and non-contributing and defined these terms in line with the state historic office definitions. Some items from the certificate of appropriateness section were moved to the minor application approval area. In-kind changes have been more clearly defined as well as specifically noting that vinyl and aluminum siding are not appropriate options. The ordinance calls for annual election of officers which will be completed in January to align with member's terms. NJ Municipal Land Use Law requires A, B and C class members on a Historic Preservation Commission. A and B members shall total at least one less than a quorum which means Pennington's HPC should have at least 3 A and B members. The Decision was made to request Council approval changing Bob and Natalie to the A category and Katrina to the B category. There is no longer a D category per ordinance 2012-7.

Master Plan Update

The Planning and Zoning Board has published a draft of the Master Plan Reexamination Report. There will be a public forum and presentation of the report at 7:30PM on May 10, in person, at Borough Hall. One of the plan's recommendations is to implement a Historic District Overlay or separate Historic District zone to better address zoning requirements related to older structures. Natalie suggested looking at bulk regulations to consider aligning them with the reality of homes in the Historic District. These suggestions are likely to be incorporated into the Master Plan Element updates.

Railroad Station

The Station is currently bank owned. The building contains 2 units and has been empty for over a year. The fear is that it will remain empty and uncared for thus it will fall into disrepair. Eric will

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reach out to the Railroad Station Homeowners Association to discuss some possibilities to protect the Building.

HPC Website Updates

Dave, Mary and Natalie have made a lot of progress and have shared an updated outline of website contents, draft of homepage text, draft of FAQs, a list of recommended links and bullet points to frame each of the recommended links. Please provide feedback on any other areas in this document.

Katie R. discussed changing the Zoning map to show the plots and properties in the district more clearly. Posting of past applications and Certificates of Approvals is a longer term goal. A link to the 2010 Master Plan Element will be added to the HPC page and updated when the new element is approved.

The draft of the homepage, prepared by Mary, provides a succinct yet comprehensive description of the HPC and the Commission's goals. One suggested addition is to mention that a goal of the HPC is to discourage demolition of properties in the Historic District. A link to Katie Ronollo as first contact for HPC information will be added to the site. Dave prepared the FAQ section. Please let Dave know if you have suggestions for additions, exclusions, etc. Eric suggested that a distinction between the three types of applications be added to the FAQ section and will help craft that FAQ.

A list of introductions to the suggested links has been prepared by Natalie. Please provide Natalie any feedback.

The list of properties should indicate if a structure has been designated contributing or non-contributing. The survey indicates "significant" for a few sites but specific designations are not included. The survey, as well as other documents would benefit from introductory information. Eric has suggested to add information detailing the work that was completed prior to the ordinance being passed in order to memorialize the knowledge and hard work of current and former HPC members. Jack suggested that the history section be presented in the form of a timeline or bullet points to help with clarity and simplicity. Jack will share links to articles about the history of the creation of the Historic District to help explain the history.

The exact layout of the site is still being decided.

Next HPC Meeting

May 16, 2023 @ 7:30PM

Meeting was adjourned at 9:53PM.