

Pennington Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
7/19/22

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

Robert Chandler, Jack Davis, Eric Holtermann, Katrina Hormel, Natalie Shivers, Mary Baum, Also attending, Katrina Angarone, Council Representative, Katie Ronollo, Secretary

Open time for public address

Eric opened the meeting for public address. There being no public comments, the open address period was closed.

Minutes

The June minutes were approved via a motion by Katrina and a second by Mary. All were in favor via voice vote.

New Business

Pennington School Application

Eric clarified that the Commission's involvement per the ordinance is to provide comments to the Planning Board, and not a certificate of appropriateness since this is a Development Application.

Representing the Pennington School: Jim Bash, Van Cleef Engineering, Kate Farewell, representing the Pennington School, Andy Moore, landscape architect, Quennell, Rothschild & Partners, Mark Sanderson, Architect, DIGSAU, Eric Goldberg, Lawyer, Stark and Stark

Jim Bash introduced the proposed changes to the Pennington School campus by discussing how the proposal increases landscaping, provides decorative lighting, improves both pedestrian circulation and vehicular circulation. The removal of the driveway that splits the campus will help with these goals. The plan will allow pedestrians to move around the campus with limited vehicular interaction. Mr. Bash shared the site plan focusing on Phase 1. The site plan showed the new walkways, a new driveway in front of Old Main with 9 parallel parking spots, new greenspace and the removed central roadway. The plan included the changes to the press box, increased seating for spectators and a greenspace in the middle of the campus. The proposed gymnasium and changes to Stainton Hall will be included in Phase 3. He showed sheet 4 which showed the new walkway access to the track. Phase 2 will include an earthen berm for seating and turf on the existing baseball field.

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There was a question about a hatched area along the sidewalk on Burd Road. This is intended to be extra space for spectators. The path in lower left corner of site plan is a grass pave system that leads to the headmaster's house and allows better access for maintenance vehicles.

Changes to the front of Old Main were discussed by Andy Moore who is working in conjunction with Van Cleef Engineering to implement the school's master plan. The removal of the road will allow the campus to be closed to cars after drop off. The new road in front of Old Main will allow visitors to have more clear access and convenient parking. Mr. Moore said that there historically had been a drive in front of old Main. They feel that this plan will allow more access to the lawn and make it more appropriate for ceremonies, etc. The new walking paths will provide pedestrians more direct routes to the buildings as they are now constructed.

Mark Sanderson mentioned that the new parking and the flow of the campus are intended to increase safety. The new formation of the porch in front of Old main is intended to make the campus seem more welcoming to the community.

Ms. Farewell mentioned that the master planning process included many members of the Pennington School community including the school's archivist.

A member requested that the demolition plan be displayed so the whole process might be clarified. The demolition plan included removal of roads and some parking areas. The main addition to parking will be in front of Old Main and there will be a slight net decrease in parking on the lot. It was suggested that parking be closely considered with an eye toward reducing the overall impact of parking. Ms. Farewell noted that there was a traffic study conducted which looked closely at the issue of parking.

Mr. Bash specified that there are currently 280 parking spaces where 238 are required and the plan is for there to be 260 spaces once complete. Mr. Moore explained that most of the parking on campus was recently done and that modifications will be difficult. He noted that the plan tried to soften the impact of parking through landscape. All vehicular access will be via the road closest to Stainton Hall and the exit would be via Burd Street. The landscape master plan's main focus is on safety and increasing pedestrian accessibility.

The loop road was under construction when the Master Planning process was initiated and it was a condition that had to be accepted.

It was mentioned that student parking along Green Street is already very congested and that parking and traffic pressure may now be moved toward Burd Street which is narrow and will not easily handle increased traffic.

A member asked if there have been preliminary discussions about the porch on Old Main. One rendering of Old Main was shared which showed stairs and a porch but the additional driveway and parking were not clear. Ms. Farewell indicated that the master plan noted the history of the front of Old Main and the traffic circulation. She stressed that this design plan is not final. Since the plans are not final, it was asked what the Commission and the planning Board are being asked to comment on. Eric Goldberg noted that they are going before the Planning Board to seek preliminary and site plan approval for Phase 1 and 2. * The bulk of the first 2 phases include landscaping, road and walking path changes. The gymnasium and Stainton Hall

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additions will be addressed in Phase 3. Mr. Goldberg agreed that since the porch design is not final, they would return to the HPC for review of a developed design.

The drive in front of Old Main will be closed during large events such as graduation. It will be open on a daily basis for visitors to the school. It is not clear that visitors entering the building will be using the new staircase or a different entrance. The proposed front entrance is not handicapped accessible. Parking in front of Old Main may cut off access to the lawn and on many days may feature a line of large parked SUVs which will impact the view of the building and porch.

The majority of Commission members agreed that parking in front of the building is not a good idea and will not enhance the beauty of the campus. It was noted that the rendering shows a monumental staircase and a modest porch which may be at odds with each other.

The HPC was heavily involved in assisting with the collaborative process regarding relocation of the Alumni House. Commission members welcome the opportunity to work with the school and consultants on the final design of the porch and other aspects as requested. The Commission will share historic photos that show the original porch on front of Old Main that may be used as a model for the future porch. The driveway and reduction of the front lawn space would be a dramatic loss for the school and the town.

It was suggested that that parking in the rear of Old Main be considered in place of the new drive in front. It was noted that a primary goal of the master plan was to remove cars from the center of campus and keep them on the outskirts.

Other notes from later in the meeting:

No one from the Pennington School was there to represent the school, only consultants. In the past it helped to have school personnel involved because they know how to work with the town and the importance of the campus to the community.

The Commission has had positive experiences working with the Pennington School and hopes this application will offer opportunities for collaboration, too.

The traffic flow plan has serious issues. Movement of cars through parking lots for daily drop off and pick up along with 3 possible exits onto Burd Street could be problematic.

Katie Ronollo will complete the minutes by Friday and share with Eric. Eric will generate the comments to share with the Planning Board and will read aloud at the planning meeting.

Katie Ronollo will try to get a new link to the full application to share with group.

Master Planning Process

Andy Jackson, Planning Board member, discussed the Master Plan process and asked for the Historic Preservation Commission's assistance in updating the Historic Preservation element. He noted that Jeanne Van Orman would be the liaison between the HPC and the Master Plan Committee. The hope is that the process will be an opportunity to align current regulations that are opposing or inconsistent. One issue of importance to this Commission is to have a historic district overlay. For details, see Andy's attached presentation.

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Railroad Station

Jeanne Van Orman, resident of the Station at Pennington, joined the meeting to discuss the status of the train station and possible ways to preserve the site. Katrina Homel recused herself from this discussion. Jeanne noted that the building is now banked-owned and the future of the building is not guaranteed. Jeanne would like to explore ways in which the Borough could take ownership of the building in order to preserve it. As a home-rule state there are creative options to preserve historic sites. It might be possible to add the building to the historic district. Jeanne will do some research on the Hopewell Train Station and how it was acquired by Hopewell Borough. George Ford, President of the Station at Pennington Association, explained that the 2 units in the railroad station are now combined into one. Combined the building has been on the market for about \$450, 000. The station is part of the condominium association but the owners of the train station are responsible for the maintenance of the inside and all of the exterior, unlike other condo units. The association may step in and complete repairs to the exterior if the need arises, at the expense of the train station owner. The situation is quite complicated and not wholly analogous to the Hopewell train station. The Station has some protection by being a part of the condominium association and being on the HPC's radar. Ideally, a mutually agreeable plan can be found to protect the station from further deterioration or demolition.

Old Business

241 South Main Street

Bob and Eric continue to work with the new owner. He has signed a minor work certificate of appropriateness. There are some issues with the owner obtaining and disclosing materials and exact plans. The construction department has issued permits and are keeping a close eye on the work happening at the site. The certificate of occupancy will not be granted without HPC's agreement.

Web-site updates

Once the description/information section is complete it will be added to the web-site.

Unauthorized Work Notice

Still in progress.

We expect to skip the August 16 meeting and meet next on September 20.

*Note that contrary to what was said by Eric Goldberg, the Planning Board Application Review Committee is anticipating only providing preliminary and final review for Phase 1 not Phases 1& 2.