

PENNINGTON BOROUGH
30 North Main Street, Pennington, NJ 08534
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
June 18, 2024

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mary Baum, Robert Chandler, David Coats, Jack Davis, Eric Holtermann, Katrina Homel, Natalie Shivers, Yasmine Zein, Nadine Stern, Kaitlyn Macellaro

I. OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC ADDRESS (15 MINUTES)

Mr. Holtermann asked if there was any member of the public who had joined the meeting and had comments on items not on the agenda. There being no member of the public wanting to comment, the open period for public comment period was closed.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Mr. Coats made a motion to approve the April 16, 2024 minutes with a few minor edits and were seconded by Ms. Baum. All were in favor with one abstention from Ms. Homel via voice vote.

III. APPLICATIONS

2023-02: Update: Minor Work Application: 35/37 West Delaware Ave, The Pennington School

Mr. Holtermann announced that the work is done and they did comply with what the Commission asked them to do. He stated that the shutters have been installed.

2024-01 Update: Certificate of Appropriateness: 141 South Main Street, Richard Butterfoss

Mr. Holtermann discussed how Mr. Butterfoss put the framing down and nothing has been done since then.

2024-02 Update: Minor Work Application, 18 South Main

Mr. Holtermann confirmed that he is not doing any work outside of the house and it is all interior work.

Design Discussion: 246 S Main, Bethel AME Church, Applicant: Daniel Kline

Mr. Kline introduced himself and is accompanied by Mr. Frank Sories. He described that the demolition of the handicap access ramp is their primary concern. Mr. Sories stated that the historic front facade of the church should remain unchanged. He asked if it would be possible to demolish the addition on the right side of the church. He described that they would have to assess the condition of the roof and would replace it with something similar if need be. He explained that if they can't demolish it, then they would want to retain it and reconfigure the inside of the church. He stated that the wooden ornament at the top, the three gothic windows and the two red metal doors would remain unchanged. Mr. Holtermann asked if their intent was to use this as a

residential use or continue to use it as a church use. Mr. Sories confirmed that they would convert it to a residential use. Mr. Holtermann read the significance of the building from the survey into the record. Mr. Sories described how the configuration of the historic woodwork in the entryway with stairs going up to the main church, the stainless steel windows on either side and the wood paneling on the interior would be retained. He stated that he would like to take a look in the attic to see if there is wooden infrastructure that can be exposed to have a higher ceiling in the main part. Mr. Kline asked if Mr. Holtermann has been in the attic. Mr. Holtermann confirmed that he has not been in the attic, just in the basement and the main floor. Mr. Sories explained if the addition were to remain then they would want to add another gothic window echoing the shape of the ones that were already there.

Ms. Baum questioned if we are being asked if it is okay to remove the addition. Mr. Holtermann clarified that they have not purchased the property yet, but are interested in understanding where the Commission stands with their proposed changes.

Ms. Homel asked when the addition was put on. Mr. Davis stated that he thinks it was around the 1990's.

Mr. Holtermann addressed how they mentioned about adding a driveway for off-street parking in their application. He confirmed that this is a zoning issue and the Commission would not be able to speak on this.

Mr. Coats asked if the addition would need to be removed in order to have the driveway or would the removal of the handicap ramp be sufficient enough. Mr. Kline stated that they would have to take some measurements. Mr. Coats asked if the addition would be replaced with something else. Mr. Sories explained that the original configuration of the church would be restored.

Ms. Homel asked if we have any pictures of the church without the addition on it. Mr. Davis noted that he thinks it might be in the Pennington Profile.

Ms. Baum pointed out that the Commission has no control on what they do on the inside of the church. Mr. Holtermann stated that the Commission would be in favor of retaining the central historic portion of the church. He said that there are blueprints for the addition.

Ms. Shivers pointed out that we should preserve the integrity of the original building and not add anything to mimic the original artifact.

Mr. Holtermann stated that their direction sounds acceptable and plausible and the next steps would be to come to the Commission with specific plans once they are the official owners.

Mr. Davis questioned if the part that would be exposed once removing the addition would mirror the other side. Mr. Sories explained that it would be symmetrical to the other side with the steel windows.

Ms. Homel asked if the Borough would have any interest in putting in any kind of historical markers. Mr. Sories described that there is a plaque on the right side of the entrance that explains the history of the church.

Design Discussion: 15-17 North Main Street, incl Styleworthy, Applicants: Carl Fuccello and Philip Dillon

Mr. Holtermann read the surveys for 15 and 17 North Main Street. Mr. Dillon introduced himself as the manager of the LLC that owns both properties. He explained that Carl Fuccello is his business partner in this project. He stated that Mr. Fuccello had a conversation about retaining the existing rustic shakes at the gables on Styleworthy. Mr. Holtermann confirmed that we have an established standard where if someone is proposing smooth hardie plank or something close to that material, he can approve it as a minor work application. He explained that the applicant was proposing aluminum or vinyl siding and windows with the muntins between the glass and that wouldn't be able to be approved through a minor work application and would have to come talk to the Commission. Mr. Dillon asked if the only issue with Styleworthy was the decorative gable. Mr. Holtermann clarified that the decorative gable is a contributing feature of the character of the building, but the Commission has a concern about the siding that would be used.

Mr. Dillon described that the previous owner of the house had started replacing the windows on the lower portion of the house and they want to continue to go with the same design. Mr. Holtermann shared photos of the buildings, the windows and the siding. Mr. Chandler pointed out the ten over one window and how unusual that is to see nowadays.

Mr. Fuccello mentioned that the siding that is on there now is the asbestos shingle. He described that in order to do the hardie plank siding, they would have to remove all the asbestos shingles as well as the clapboard and re-sheath the entire house. He explained that it is going to cost thousands of dollars more and ruin the integrity of the house.

Mr. Fuccello asked if the previous owners were approved to put in the windows and Mr. Holtermann stated that this was done long before the Commission existed.

Mr. Fuccello stated that there was a stop work order placed on the building after they had to put an emergency roof on and gutted certain areas so they could determine where the plaster was coming down and to get a good assessment of what needs to be done.

Mr. Fuccello stated that it is going to be very difficult to hardie plank this house and he mentioned that there are five properties on that street that have vinyl siding.

Mr. Holtermann explained that this Board is in favor of retaining the original historic materials. He asked if there is a possibility of removing the asbestos shingle and repairing and reusing the clapboard below. Mr. Fuccello shared that they wouldn't know until they took off the asbestos shingle and exposed the clapboard, but it looks like there are a lot of nails that may not make it feasible. Mr. Dillon asked if we would retain asbestos on the siding. Mr. Chandler predicted that the clapboard is going to be in good shape after they remove the asbestos. Mr. Holtermann confirmed that if they want to retain asbestos shingles, then they can without the Commission's approval.

Mr. Holtermann showed pictures of a few houses in Pennington that have recently installed hardie plank and an example of window trim with aluminum siding. Mr. Fuccello stated that they will be using azek trim. Mr. Coats clarified that the two options are they keep the asbestos shingles and repair as needed or remove the asbestos shingle and repair the underlying clapboard. Mr. Holtermann stated that another option would be some level of removal and installation of new siding. Mr. Dillon asked if there was a separate process to get approval for the vinyl siding. Mr. Holtermann explained that they would have to appeal the Commission's decision to the Planning Board if they disagree with their opinions and suggestions. Mr. Davis confirmed that the vinyl siding that are on houses now in Pennington was done before there was a Commission. Mr. Fuccello asked how hardie plank is historic. Mr. Holtermann responded and said it is nearly impossible to tell the difference between hardie plank and smooth wooden clapboard once installed. Mr. Holtermann asked if the removal of the asbestos and the repair of the underlying clapboard to be feasible. Mr. Fuccello agreed and stated that they don't know the quality of the clapboard underneath from all the nails from the asbestos.

Mr. Chandler suggested that he and Mr. Holtermann meet at the property to take a look at what Mr. Fuccello is describing. Mr. Holtermann explained that they cannot have more than three members meeting at once without a public meeting or noticing. Ms. Baum suggested to give Mr. Fuccello and Mr. Dillon the opportunity to remove the asbestos siding and see the condition of it and report back to the Commission with their findings.

Mr. Fuccello stated that he would want to do the windows and the siding at the same time. Mr. Holtermann asked if there was any chance of the four windows on the second floor to be restored. Mr. Fuccello said he would have to take a better look at them to see if they are in good working order. Mr. Holtermann suggested on using something like a Marvin ultimate window with a Simulated Divided Lite (SDL) if they needed to be replaced. Mr. Coats asked if there is a picture of the projection going out towards Emily's and Mr. Holtermann showed him that picture. Mr. Coats, Mr. Davis, Ms. Homel and Ms. Baum all agreed with Mr. Holtermann's suggestion.

Mr. Fuccello asked if they can take the front elevation and replace those windows with the grids on the exterior and Mr. Holtermann agreed. Mr. Fuccello asked if they can use the white vinyl windows with grids on top for the side and the rear. Mr. Coats stated that the Commission usually discourages vinyl windows. Mr. Holtermann asked if they would consider a fiber glass window for the sides because they have a better profile and they fit better. Mr. Dillon announced that they are being sued by their tenant, so they are dealing with some legal costs as well. He explained that he offered her the opportunity to purchase the shop from them and she never responded and was complaining about the asbestos and the water dripping into the shop. Mr. Coats mentioned that some of the side windows are visible from the street and he would like the fiberglass windows better. Ms. Homel asked if we never approved vinyl windows before then what precedent we are sending if we approve it now. Mr. Holtermann agreed and said it is a very uncomfortable position for the Commission to be in. Mr. Holtermann said for them to reach out to him for a good time to meet and Mr. Fuccello and Mr. Dillon agreed.

Design Discussion: New Porch at Old Main- The Pennington School

Ms. Shivers, Mr. Chandler and Mr. Holtermann had a meeting with Pennington School and Mr. Holtermann stated that they are at a preliminary stage in their project. He noted that they also met with John Hatch and a project architect from Clarke Caton Hintz Architects and stated that they are very good architects with a good sense of history. He mentioned that it can be appropriate for an addition to stand a little bit apart from the age of the building, so that it is from its own time and not a false historic recreation.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. David Stevens Resignation-Open Position-

Mr. Holtermann asked if anyone from the Commission knows of someone that would be interested in joining the Commission as an alternate. He requested to send a name to himself, Ms. Macellaro or the mayor.

B. NJ Historic Preservation Conference, June 5-6, Jersey City-

Mr. Holtermann stated that he was accompanied by Ms. Homel at the Conference and they both attended a great session about CLG's and eligibility for grants. Ms. Homel noted that being a CLG makes us eligible for technical assistance from the Historic Preservation office. She mentioned that Burlington City is working on developing a document for a buyer to sign acknowledging that they are in the historic district. She added that the historic districts are marked on the street signs in Cranbury. She stated that at least one Commission talked about how they reached out to middle/high schooler historic clubs to engage with students that are interested in history. She noted that a town mentioned they have their own YouTube channel where they post their hearings. She shared that Cranbury mentioned that they have a local history shelf in their library that advertises the Commission. She commented that, reportedly, some towns offer grants for homeowners and they use the money from open space funds. Mr. Holtermann encourages everyone to attend sometime in the future.

C. Preservation NJ Membership Benefits for HPC

Mr. Holtermann shared that he received a letter from Preservation New Jersey, a group that the Commission belongs to. Mr. Holtermann read that it offers a featured story about Pennington's HPC that we will share in a newsletter, online or on social media. Participation in one of our Q&A with PNJ virtual events to discuss your experiences in HPC and the challenges and successes you have had. Ms. Homel asked if we would ever consider featuring Jack's tour of Pennington. Mr. Holtermann stated that it is interesting to see how other Historic Preservation Commissions vary in some ways from ours.

D. Planning Board Master Plan Update: Historic Preservation Element-

Mr. Holtermann shared that he started to go through some table of contents from other

towns. He noted that Mr. Jackson said he can reach out to Jim Kyle, the Borough Planner at any time with questions. He added that Jim Kyle could be helpful in steering us towards what is essential for us to include in the element. He noted that our current preservation element was written before there was a Commission, so it's very much in need of rewriting. Ms. Stern asked who the liaison is from the Master Plan Committee and Mr. Holtermann confirmed it is Amy Kassler-Taub. Ms. Stern asked if Ms. Kassler-Taub has given us a target date. Mr. Holtermann noted that we have already gone past the target date, but he explained that we didn't have personnel to dive into it at the level that was necessary at the time. He stated that other groups went ahead in the agenda and he is going to work on it in the next couple of weeks since he has more free time in the summer.

E. Ordinance Revision Update-

Mr. Holtermann stated that he sent the ordinance revision update to Ms. Macellaro today to forward to the Borough Attorney, the Planning Board Attorney and to include Nadine Stern in the email.

F. Borough Webpage: HPC Introductory info, further discussion

G. At Risk Buildings: Pennington Train Station, Bethel AME Church, Old High School

Ms. Stern asked if there are any other potential buyers for the Bethel AME Church. Mr. Holtermann confirmed that there is still a group related to the church interested in purchasing it. Mr. Davis stated that he spoke with Beverly Mills and he didn't get a sense that they were interested in doing that. Ms. Stern stated that she heard from Susan Witcher that they were asking their master group that runs their congregation to see if they can get funding. Mr. Davis asked if the demolition of the addition is a good thing and Mr. Holtermann thought so.

Ms. Homel asked if the old high school is being zoned as an E zone. Mr. Holtermann explained that the Pennington School is in the E zone, but Toll Gate School and the Administration Building are both in the R-80 zone. He stated that the concern is if the school administration building were to ever sell to a developer then they can build any kind of residential development under the R-80 zone. He said that the town would probably be more interested in that building having some level of protection and/or review because that building can be ideal to some moderate to low income housing. He explained that if the buildings are modified to an E use then they could always continue as an educational use without any further review. Ms. Homel asked if it opens the door for a charter school purchasing it if it is made into an E use parcel and Mr. Holtermann stated that it does.

Adjournment 9:14 PM