

Mahwah Historic Preservation Commission

September 13, 2010 Minutes

Meeting called to order at 7:30 pm. Note: The HPC secretary, Mrs. Storms, had advised the Chair she was not able to attend this meeting. Meeting minutes were taped, and HPC Mrs. Drago took additional notes.

Roll Call:

Present

Barbara Shanley, Chair
Yvonne Beatrice
Deborah Grob
Alex Michelini
Marthajean Drago

Absent

John Bristow, excused
Randall Brewster
Tony Bourgholtzer
Carol Greene, excused

Flag Salute

Sunshine Law: The Chair, Mrs. Shanley read the Sunshine Law.

Legal: Mrs. DeScherer was not present.

Public Session: Mr. Michelini moved to open the Public Session and Mrs. Grob seconded the motion. All approved.

No members of the public were present.

Mrs. Beatrice moved to close the Public Session and Mr. Vasiliadis Grob seconded the motion. All approved.

Minutes: Mr. Vasiliadis moved to postpone the approval of the August 2, 2010 minutes until the October 4 meeting, as there is not a quorum of members present tonight who were at the August meeting; Mrs. Drago seconded the motion. All approved.

Chair's Report:

The Chair reported that she has been contacted by Pastor Jay of the church that now occupies the historic Masonicus Schoolhouse. It is protected on Township Ordinance #1313. He advised the building has developed mold problems inside and needs to be painted on the outside. His parishoners are experiencing health related issues to the mold in the ceilings. He advised that they have a small congregation with a very small budget, and due to the historical status of the building, are looking for help in the form of grants to pay for the work. The Chair advised him that the Township has no grant funds in its budget. However, she would look into County or State grant funding. She advised that she had called Robin Brown, of the Bergen County Office of Historic Affairs. Mrs. Brown stated that the County had a grant in process, but to be eligible, the property or site has to be on the State of NJ or Bergen County Historical Register. Mrs. Brown advised that to find funding for capital improvements, like the church needs, you need to go to the state historical organizations and they require that the property be either on a State or National register. State grants that are available in the 2010 have closed as letters of intent to apply were due in July and August.

Mrs. Drago asked if the County would fund work on an emergency basis and Mrs. Shanley stated she did not know. In NY, Mrs. Drago advised that they have grants for churches and houses of worship, and she suggested maybe NJ would have that too, but that is an option to pursue. Mrs. Drago added that the grant process for the county award is very involved and takes a long time, so if the work is needed to be done on an emergency basis, they would take too long for the funding approval.

The Chair advised that she would look into church grants. Mrs. Drago asked the Chair if fund raising could be done at Mahwah Day, and Mrs. Shanley indicated that she had offered Pastor Jay that option but he has such a small congregation and it was really too late to participate.

Mrs. Drago added that the little church on Avenue A had had this same type of problem and a church in another town eventually helped them financially. She suggested that Pastor Jay could look into that aspect. The Chair will continue to try to help find financing for the work that needs to be done at this church occupying the historical Masonicus Schoolhouse.

Winter Dairy House:

Mrs. Shanley, Mrs. Grob and Mr. Michelini visited the Winter Dairy House to determine the condition it is in. It has deteriorated severely since 2007 and is in need of work. The township is basically not willing to put any money into it at all and grant money is not available as it is not a registered historic site.

Alex Michelini indicated the house is in pretty bad shape, and while it is a nice piece of property, it needs a lot of work.

Discussion took place concerning the areas of deterioration. The Chair suggested that the HPC recommend to the Council that the Township subdivide the property and sell the house separately. Discussion ultimately did not form any conclusion except that the house even if sold, would not be protected, as it is not on the ordinance. There would be environmental law issues as it is next to a river. If the Township subdivides it, the HPC could ask for a deed restriction stating the house cannot be demolished. The Chair suggested that the HPC contact a realtor to see what the value of the property would be if sold off separately.

Mrs. Drago said she will call Coldwell Banker to see what they think. Mrs. Shanley will pursue the subdivision with Mr. Campion, the Township Business Administrator.

Fletcher House – The Chair reported that the electrical wiring is being installed. The construction work on the outside is being done in accordance with the Historic Easement on the property filed with the County. With the permission of John Terpstra, the owner of the construction company hired to do the work on the Fletcher House, Mrs. Grob and Mrs. Shanley visited the site and went inside. It is not ready for the original woodwork to be reinstalled yet. The exterior siding shingles are partially finished, the windows are installed and rooms upstairs are framed out. Mrs. Shanley indicated the new replacement windows on the first floor are in accordance with the specifications of the Easement and match in size and number of panes the original windows.

Westervelt Hosey House: The Chair reported that this protected historic home has a new owner but she does not know who it is and was concerned as one prospective buyer had called in 2009 and wanted to put a skylight on the front roof.

Master Plan - Historic Plan Element: The Chair has been contacted by Kevin Kain at Burgess Associates concerning the Historic Sites spreadsheet we have worked on. They want it to be all placed on one

spreadsheet, not broken out with tabs at the bottom separating the categories of schools, parks, churches, etc.

Mrs. Shanley will work on combining the spreadsheet tabs, adding that it will then need to be carefully proofread again to be sure nothing was accidentally omitted.

Historic Marker: Quackenbush Barn by Winter Park: The Chair will meet with Ed Sinclair of the DPW to determine the best placement for the historic marker.

Winters Farmhouse: The Chair reported that there is a broken window at the back of the house causing water damage to the building. The Chair will inform the manager of the property that repairs are needed and will also contact the manager to determine the best location for the historic marker.

Mahwah Day: Mr. Michelini, Mrs. Shanley and Mr. Brewster are tending the Mahwah Historic Preservation Booth on September 25. The Chair purchased a tent to cover their site on the field, and the cost was reimbursed to her from the HPC budget, so the tent is owned by the HPC. HPC Brochures will be printed up by Mr. Brewster on his own printer. The HPC is providing a list of all Township historic markers (erected by the HPC) with photographs of the identified sites.

Chestnut Trees, LLC: The Chair reported that she had been advised by the HPC secretary that Dr. Krazinski of Chestnut Trees, LLC is requesting that the HPC reconsider the street names proposed for the roads. He wants one of the roads to be named Krazinski Lane, after his father. He had advised that his father was active in Mahwah, serving on one of the Boards, had lived there for 45-50 years, and he was the founder of the tree farm, Chestnut Trees LLC. Mrs. Drago added it is difficult to do that because the HPC policy has always been that we do not name streets after residents. The Chair added that if a name was allowed to be used in the past, that person had either made a significant contribution to the township, or was a well-known local historical figure for other reasons. Mrs. Drago added that owning a property for 45 years does not entitle someone to having a street named after them, and also that the names of streets in a proposed development can add or detract from the desirability. The Chair reiterated the names of the streets we had proposed..

DEP Filings: None at this time.

Old Business: Mr. Michelini asked if it was necessary to have an HPC motion to add the Havemeyer Mansion, and the Joyce Kilmer house markers added to the Mahwah Day list of sites with markers, even though the HPC did not place those markers. Accordingly, a motion was made by Mr. Vasiliadis, seconded by _____ to add the Havemeyer House marker and the Joyce Kilmer marker to the list. Mr. Michelini made “thumbnails” describing each property so that viewers would learn a brief history of each site. The secretary will put together the booklet from the photographs HPC members took and Mr. Michelini’s ‘thumbnails’.

New Business: Mr. Michelini advised that he had, at the Chair’s request, checked other communities, particularly in Morris County, but not limited to that area, to inquire how the historical preservation commissions in those areas convey the idea that there is an advantage to homeowners who have historic buildings, to have them declared historic structures. He advised that some of the community historic organizations he did contact, are just as confused as most people on this issue. The chair of the Long Hill Twp (Chester) in Morris County, indicated that he is currently writing an ordinance as part of that township’s Master Plan. He advised that as his town had no tax incentives, he had no direct experience in that area. However, his research indicates that things such as easements, rehab tax

credits, property tax assessment fees and permit fee waivers would be extremely valuable toward preservation. Montville Township stated that they do not have any incentives. However, there is a Morris County Trust for Historic Preservation. Mr. Michelini added that in his research, all the people he talked to stated they knew that designating the house as an historic site, does enhance the value of the property. He read from a brochure about Bedford Stuyvesant in NY, which indicated that conclusively, over time, neighborhood (values) appreciate better over time than non-historically designated areas. Mr. Michelini summarized his research from other states than NJ. He did not find that there is no concise program that says “if you follow this” you will attract more people. It has to be on a case by case basis. He said there are programs for funding. However, finding them is not easy, since it needs to be determined if the site or area is eligible for them.

He stated that the Bergen County Dept. of Parks gives funding to historic organizations. Mrs. Drago reported that to receive money from the County your property needs to be open to the public for a certain amount of time. The Chair indicated that this whole inquiry was to determine a way to encourage the homeowner of an historic property to list their property on the ordinance. Further discussion about ways to encourage owners to list their historic properties ensued. The Chair thanked Mr. Michelini for his research.

Budget: No items at this time

Mr. Vasiliadis moved to adjourn the meeting and Mrs. Grob seconded the motion. All approved.

These minutes are a synopsis of the MHPC tapes, which are on file at the Township Municipal Building
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