

# Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

## Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes

### June 7, 2016

#### Location

Franklin Township Municipal Building, 475 DeMott Lane, Somerset, NJ

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mr. Burian at 7:30 pm in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law of 1975.

#### Attendance

Members: Andrew Burian, Thomas Gale, Anthony Ganim, Susan Goldey, Jean Gierlich, Joanne Kaiser, Robert LaCorte (arrived 7:35), Barbara ten Broeke

Alternate: Nancy Hohnstine

Historian: Robert Mettler

Staff: Mark Healey, Director of Planning

Council Liaison: Dr. Theodore Chase

#### Absent

Members: Jean Ambrose

After taking roll, Mr. Gale noted that there was a quorum and that, with the absences, Ms. Hohnstine would be voting.

#### Guests

Bill Bowman, reporter, Franklin Reporter & Advocate

Brandon Fisher, for emergency hearing for 2358 Amwell Rd., East Millstone, NJ

Katie LaCorte, guest

Shashi Mittal, for 1760 Easton Ave, Somerset, NJ, 16-00009

#### Formal Reviews

1. Review of an application for a FTHPAC recommendation to the FTZBA on a sign variance application submitted by Shashi Mittal requesting approval of a new building mounted sign previously installed without a permit at 1760 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ, Block 424.02, Lot 23.02, zoned GB and located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File 16-00009

The Commission heard testimony from Shashi Mittal, as well as reviewed the information from a CoA application form and an undated document prepared by All State Signs that included a colorized and dimensioned elevation of the sign, a section detail of the sign and wall mounting, sign installation details, a photo of the front façade without the sign and a photo simulation of the front façade with the proposed sign.

Mr. Mittal explained that a variance was needed because the sign exceeded the 30 square feet area and 3 vertical feet limits allowed by Township Code. The sign, as designed and installed, is 24 feet wide with the main portion 44" tall. There is additionally a 4 foot tall by 50" wide star in the front

gable. Mr. Mittal noted that the sign had dimensions similar to the adjacent liquor store in the end unit. He felt that the size of the sign was necessary and appropriate given the distance from the public right of way and the comparable sign size on neighboring units.

The sign serves a new market that occupies one half of a recently renovated space that was once a Drug Fair in an existing late 20<sup>th</sup> century single story strip mall known as the Easton Franklin State Shopping Center. The adjacent liquor store in the end unit shares the other half of the renovated space. In June 2015, the Commission reviewed and took no exception to an application for similarly sized signage proposed for the liquor store.

Ms. Goldey felt that the sign has no negative impact on the historic district and did not believe it was overbearing. Mr. Ganim felt that the sign was out of scale and was troubled that it was much larger than allowed by Township Code and that it was installed without approval. Mr. Burian pointed out that some of the other units in the shopping center with smaller signs were just a single bay wide but the market and liquor store were multi bay units so, in his opinion, the larger signs were justified. Ms. Gierlich asked how the applicant was not aware the sign needed approval before it was installed. Mr. Mittal stated that he believed the error occurred because construction plans were originally submitted without the sign details. When amendments to the plans were subsequently submitted, the sign details were included which confused what was being approved. Mr. Gale noted that the sign was as large as the façade would allow and agreed with Mr. Ganim that it seemed overly large but also agreed with Ms. Goldey that the sign should have little impact on the historic district, certainly not enough, in his opinion, to warrant recommending that it be removed and replaced with a smaller sign.

No public chose to comment on this application.

A motion was made (Ms. Goldey) and seconded (Ms. Gierlich) to ***take no exception to the application requesting approval of a new building mounted sign installed without a permit as submitted*** and was approved by majority voice vote with one opposed vote (Mr. Ganim). The property itself is not considered historic nor are the neighboring properties with the exception of the historic D&R Canal and State Park across Easton Avenue from the property. It was felt that the proposal will have limited additional negative impact on historic canal and state park and on the local historic district as a whole.

Following the hearing there was a brief discussion with Mr. Healey regarding the application and approval process.

Upon noticing another guest in attendance, Mr. Burian asked if we could learn the reason for his visit. Mr. Fisher said that he had come to the meeting to seek an emergency approval. Mr. Burian asked for more details so Mr. Fisher explained that he was a roofing contractor with Fisher Roofing and was seeking emergency approval for a replacement roof for a property on Amwell Road in East Millstone across from the firehouse. He said the owner, Gary Onka, had arranged to have the roof replaced by a friend who had already had the materials loaded on the roof before it was learned that the friend was not able to do the roofing. Mr. Fisher also explained there were leaks in the roof and that Mr. Onka needed to have repairs made to meet an insurance deadline in mid-June. He noted that the existing roof was a 3-tab asphalt shingle roof and that the replacement shingles loaded on the roof were

Timberline dimensional shingles. Mr. Gale asked Mr. Fisher if the roof could be tarped or patched temporarily and Mr. Fisher said he believed it could be. Mr. Fisher provided an approximately 4"x6" printed color photograph of the front elevation of the house as well as product literature for the Timberline shingles. Mr. Gale noted that the building was one of the more significant structures in the historic district.

Ms. Goldey made a motion to amend the agenda to consider the emergency application to replace the roof at 2358 Amwell Road, East Millstone, NJ. The motion was seconded by Mr. LaCorte and passed by majority voice vote (Mr. Burian and Mr. Gale opposed). Several members expressed concern that it wasn't clear to them what the consequence of the motion would be when they voted so asked that the motion be reconsidered. A motion to reconsider the previously approved motion to amend the agenda to consider the emergency application was made by Joanne Kaiser and seconded by Barbara ten Broeke. A roll call vote was taken and the motion to reconsider the previously approved motion passed with a vote of 6 yeas (Mr. Burian, Mr. Gale, Mr. Ganim, Ms. Kaiser, Ms. ten Broeke, and Ms. Hohnstine) to 3 nays (Ms. Goldey, Ms. Gierlich, Mr. LaCorte). Ms. Goldey again made a motion to amend the agenda to consider the emergency application to replace the roof at 2358 Amwell Road, East Millstone, NJ. The new motion was again seconded by Mr. LaCorte and passed by majority voice vote (Mr. Gale opposed).

2. Review of an emergency application for approval to replace the roof at 2358 Amwell Road, East Millstone, NJ, Block 65, Lot 6, zoned R10H and located within the East Millstone Local Historic District.

As noted above, the Commission heard testimony from Brandon Fisher and reviewed an approximately 4"x6" printed color photograph of the front elevation of the house as well as product literature for the Timberline shingles. There was no CoA application to review as none was submitted.

In addition to his prior statements, Mr. Fisher noted that Mr. Onka didn't care if the replacement roof was 3-tab like the existing roof or Timberline as was currently loaded on the roof if it meant he could have the roof replaced. Through questions to Mr. Fisher, the Commission learned that the new roof would be installed over the existing roof that was approximately 25 years old. He said that shingled roof would be replaced but not the flat front porch roof and the existing gutters and downspouts would not be replaced. He briefly explained what would happen to the Timberline shingles currently staged on the roof. Mr. Mettler stated that the building dates to c. 1850.

Mr. Burian made a motion to ***approve the emergency in-kind replacement of the existing roof using 3-tab asphalt shingles of a similar appearance.*** The motion was seconded by Ms. Goldey and approved by unanimous voice vote. The Commission recognized that the building has historic significance but felt that the in-kind replacement would have little new negative impact on the historic property, the neighboring historic properties and the local historic district.

## Informal Reviews

None

Mr. Burian proposed amending the agenda to allow Mr. Healey to discuss the Historic Element of the Master Plan scheduled under New Business next and the Commission unanimously agreed.

## New Business

### 1. Historic Preservation Plan Element of the Franklin Township Master Plan

Mr. Healey first distributed a 26 page document that expanded on the outline for amending the element he had provided prior to the meeting. He explained that part of the process for amending the Master Plan is to allow committees and commission to participate in the revision process prior to submission to the Planning Board. He said the document he distributed starts from the existing element but updates major sections, especially the recommendations related to seeking Certified Local Government designation now that the CLG application has been formally submitted. He described this version as a rough working draft. He said a more formal draft will be presented for review at a future meeting and HPAC comments can be reflected in draft revisions prior to review before the Planning Board. Dr. Chase added that an updated Historic Preservation Plan Element could help Franklin Township move to a Silver Certification in the Sustainable New Jersey Green Team program.

There was some discussion on the history and significance of Franklin Township. Comments included the significance of its location in the County and State in pre-history and Colonial American history including the early significance of Rt. 27, how the Township roads were frequented by both sides during the Revolutionary War, and the importance of Washington's stay at Rockingham at the end of the war. Also listed as worth discussing was the transition of the Township from a rural and small village agricultural community to the largely suburban community of today. Early Dutch influence was mentioned as was the importance of the Millstone Valley and the D&R Canal's history. The recent designation of the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway was also discussed.

Mr. Gale suggested that the existing master plan historic properties inventory be replaced with a revised inventory. He suggested that the revisions made a few years ago be reviewed for correctness and that the inventory should be sorted based on block and lot numbering as is common in other lists.

Mr. Healey asked what protections were lacking, e.g. are tear downs a problem. Members felt that currently tear downs were not an issue but could become one if pressure for suitable building lots increases. Members felt that "slip throughs" such the issuing of permits without HPAC review like the demolition of Chauncy Restaurant in Franklin Park some years ago are currently more of a problem.

Members discussed the status of the Franklin Inn in East Millstone.

Ms. Gierlich asked Mr. Healey about the life-span of a Master Plan revision and he replied that an average lifespan for a revision is about 10 years.

The Commission discussed success stories such as the rehabilitation and reuse of the Kingston School and restoration of the property known as the Red House Tavern in Griggstown.

Mr. Healey asked if the Commission thought that the previous goal of seeking State and National Register of Historic Places designation for the Franklin Park (aka Six Mile Run) Historic District should still be included. Members explained that it would be a complicated task as it would span not only two municipalities but also two counties. It was also felt that there was too little historic fabric with too much non-historic infill to make a strong proposal for a district. It was also noted that the district has already received a NJ SHPO opinion of district eligibility [1994] which provides similar benefits and protections as designation.

Mr. Ganim raised the issue of abandoned and/or neglected graveyards and cemeteries, wondering if they too could receive some protections.

When asked if he was seeking volunteers to help with the revision, Mr. Healey suggested that he could use the most help with Section III which covers the value and significance of historic resources and Township history.

## **Correspondence**

None

## **Approval of Minutes of May 2016 meeting**

A motion to ***approve the HPAC regular monthly meeting minutes of May 3, 2016 as submitted*** was made, seconded and passed by unanimous voice vote.

## **Reports**

### **1. Township Open Space Advisory Committee**

Mr. LaCorte shared a copy of a spreadsheet that listed projects with their current progress and expected costs for six Township maintained historic properties from the May OSAC meeting.

Members felt that the cost estimates for the Dunn property seemed too high. Mr. Gale pointed out that the line that included replacing cracked toilets and pipes probably meant that the house was allowed to freeze up last winter. He questioned the wisdom of installing new toilets and pipes given that the building remains unoccupied so might freeze up again but suggested that the heating system may need be connected to a functional water supply. The discussion expanded into a broader discussion about the costs of maintaining and risks to other unoccupied Township properties including Tulipwood and the Gunther Farm. The goals of either occupancy or sale were emphasized but the problems with Green Acres offset and Dunn access was raised. Mr. LaCorte mentioned that the next OPAC meeting would not be until July as the June meeting was cancelled.

Mr. Gale noted that Township Council had recently awarded a no bid contract for chimney repairs at Hageman that was not included on the OSAC list. Commission members shared his concern that workers unfamiliar with historic materials can do irreparable damage when working on historic elements such as chimneys and the concern that the Township continues to not seek advice of the Commission despite the unfortunate but avoidable consequences that occurred with the Pleasant Plains Schoolhouse in 2014.

2. Historic Resource Survey Committee  
No report.

### **Unfinished Business**

1. CLG  
Mr. Burian reported that the revised CLG application has been resubmitted to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.

### **New Business**

1. Peter Berrian House  
Dr. Chase mentioned that the private rehabilitation of the historic Peter Berrian House on Old Georgetown Road seems to be moving forward again although he wasn't confident about the appropriateness of the work being done. The property is not a designated historic site so the work does not come before the HPAC for review.
2. Open HPAC seat  
Mr. LaCorte introduced his daughter Katie LaCorte to the Commission and suggested that she might be interested in the open HPAC position.

### **Public Discussion**

None

### **Next Meeting Announcement**

July 5, 2016

### **Adjournment**

At 9:30 p.m. a motion to adjourn the meeting was made and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Gale, Secretary

EC:

Robert Vornlocker, Township Manager  
Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk  
Mark Healey, Director of Planning  
Vincent Dominach, Senior Zoning Officer  
FTHPAC members