

Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2015

Location

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

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Andrew Burian at 7:35 pm in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law of 1975.

Attendance

Present:

Members: Andrew Burian, Tom Gale, Anthony Ganim, Joanne Kaiser, Bob LaCorte, Barbara Lawrence

Alternates: Frank Aiello, Nancy Hohnstine

Staff: Vincent Dominach, Senior Zoning Officer

Absent

Members: Jean Ambrose, Susan Goldey, Barbara ten Broeke

Council Liaison: Ted Chase

Historian: Bob Mettler

Guests

Mitchel Ardman, engineer for Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

William Feinberg, architect for PVP Franklin LLC, 495 Weston Canal Road, Somerset, NJ

Victoria Floor, representing owners of 26 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Mitch Frumkin, representing owners of 475 Canal Road, Somerset, NJ

Warren Hilla, engineer for PVP Franklin LLC, 495 Weston Canal Road, Somerset, NJ

Kathryn Kopp, Esq., attorney for Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ and PVP Franklin LLC, 495 Weston Canal Road, Somerset, NJ

Nagisa Manabe, applicant of Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Catherine Pavelec, representing Kingston Village Advisory Committee on Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Elizabeth Romanaux, future owner of 26 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ and neighbor of Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Alfred and Filomena Russo, Kingston residents on Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Robert von Zumbusch, representing Kingston Village Advisory Committee on Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Kevin Wilkes, architect for Simply Yoga, 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ

Reorganization

Election of Officers

The following slate of officers was nominated by Mr. Burian, seconded by Mr. LaCorte and approved by unanimous acclamation.

Barbara Lawrence, Chair

Andrew Burian, Vice Chair

Tom Gale, Secretary

Barbara ten Broeke, Secretary-Alternate

Following the vote Ms. Lawrence took over chairing the meeting from Mr. Burian.

Adoption of 2015-16 Calendar

A motion to adopt a 12 month meeting calendar for the coming year with a correction of the January 2016 date [copy attached] was made by Ms. Lawrence, seconded by Mr. LaCorte and was approved unanimously. In general the Commission will meet the first Tuesday of the month, except for February, which is pushed back since the January meeting came so late in the month, September, when the meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday and November, when the meeting is scheduled for the second Monday. There was some question about a possible conflict on the September meeting but Mr. Dominach volunteered to reconfirm the date.

Formal Reviews

1. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Victoria A Floor representing owners Christopher Floor and Caroline May requesting approval of a previously constructed rear deck and rebuilt exterior stairs and landing leading to a loft space over the garage at 26 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ, Block 5.02, Lot 143.01, zoned R-20H and located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-0004

The Commission heard testimony from Ms. Floor and reviewed a set of six unsigned and undated printed color photographs representing current views of the house plus a cover sheet drawing prepared by David E Cohen, AIA, dated 1/8/15 titled A-0.0 that includes a site plan, code information and a B&W rendering of the deck, stairs and landing,

The Commission learned that the property is in the process of being sold and in that process it was discovered that the stairs and landing had been rebuilt and the deck installed in the 1990s without the proper approvals. The building is a modern Dutch Colonial Revival design said to date from 1977. The deck and stairs are at the rear of the building which screens all but a corner of the landing from public view.

The meeting was opened to the public but no one chose to speak so the public portion was closed.

A motion was made (Mr. Burian) and seconded (Ms. Kaiser) to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application as submitted as it was determined that the property is not a contributing property in the district and the project should have negligible visual impact on the D&R Canal Local Historic District and nearby historic properties. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Arie Behar requesting approval to install a new 25 kW standby generator and to modify previously approved plans to remodel the house at 475 Canal Road, Somerset, NJ, Block 59.01, Lot 2.01, zoned CP and located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-0003

The Commission heard testimony from Mr. Behar's representative, Mitch Frumkin, as well as reviewed a site plan that indicated the proposed location of the generator, the proposed generator manual cover with an image of the unit, and two architectural drawings prepared by Potter Architects LLC, one, dated 5/13/14, representing the elevations of the originally proposed remodeling and another, dated 12/2/14, that showed how and where they proposed to change the original elevations.

As background, the applicant had approached the Commission in January 2013 with a request to change their proposal to demolish the existing building and replace it with a new home that the Commission had reviewed in March 2009. The January 2013 request was a proposal to remodel

the existing building and add attached garages. Both prior applications were heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment because there were a number of existing and new variances that needed approval in both plans. A condition of Board approval for the more recent application included a requirement that the home be built as shown on the plans submitted to the Board and the Commission.

Mr. Frumkin reviewed the proposed changes to the building renovation plans that included modifying the first floor levels in the work room and sun room making them more consistent throughout the house, modifying the proposed roof lines below a garage wing dormer and over several first floor doorways and bay window for esthetic reasons, changing the proposed sun room exterior French doors to a window, and modifying the porch by enclosing it with screened panels and adding access by changing a window to a paired French door and transom design. He also explained that the generator would be located beside an existing freestanding garage and that it would be fueled by a new underground propane tank. It was noted that the building is not easily visible to the public due to the elevation and vegetation of the property.

The meeting was opened to the public but no one chose to speak so the public portion was closed.

A motion was made (Mr. Burian) and seconded (Ms. Hohnstine) to recommend approval of the modifications and additions as submitted as it was determined that the proposal should have little new adverse effect on the historic value of the property or on the D&R Canal Local Historic District and nearby historic properties. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Review of a change of use and site plan approval application going before the Board of Adjustment proposing to demolish an existing garage and a metal shed addition on the barn, to convert the existing house into a yoga studio, construct a new residence, and to modify the site with a new driveway, parking lot and lighting to support the yoga studio at 24 Sycamore Place, Kingston, NJ, Block 5.02, Lot 152.04, zoned R-20H, located in the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-0002 and 14-00038

In considering the application, the Commission reviewed a set of site plans that included a cover page and sheets SP-1 through SP-10 prepared by the Reynolds Group Inc., dated 10/7/14, a set of architectural drawings that included sheets A-100, 200, & 300 prepared by Wilkes Architects, dated 10/6/14, that contained floor plans and elevations for the proposed yoga studio and house, a set of six printed color photographs showing the current conditions of the residence, barn and garage, a packet of documents that included a demolition site plan D-001 prepared by Wilkes Architects, dated 12/15/14, a boundary and topography survey BT-1 prepared by The Reynolds Group Inc., dated 7/21/14, and seven pages of unsigned and dated printed color photographs of the conditions of the garage and shed addition to the barn the applicant is seeking approval to demolish. The Commission also heard testimony from the applicant, Ms. Manabe, project architect, Mr. Wilkes, and project engineer, Mr. Ardman, as well as took comments from members of the Kingston Village Advisory Committee and the public.

Before hearing from the applicant, the Commission and Mr. Dominach discussed how best to present our recommendations to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. There was also a discussion on the appropriateness of the Commission to comment on the change of use portion of the application. Mr. Dominach advised that it would not be appropriate for the Commission to comment directly on the use but that we can and should comment on the parts of the application, such as the parking lot, that are tied to the use. Mr. Gale noted Section 112-200 D. (6) of the Code of Franklin Township

reads “To advise the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment on applications for development, construction of an addition, alteration or change in use [emphasis added] of any historic site, building, structure, or object requiring board approval.”

The applicant was then invited to present their application. The applicant’s attorney, Ms. Kopp, started by giving the Commission some background on the site and the recent work that had been performed. We learned that the previous owner had obtained permits in 1999 to modify the residence including changing the pitch of roofs and enlarging the porches and had started working on the building but had not made progress for a very long time. When the applicant acquired the building, the alterations were only partially complete. A new roof had been constructed over the original that was still inside the building. The porches and other modification including changes to the wiring and plumbing systems were unfinished. When they sought permits to modify the building for the studio use, the Township’s Code Enforcement office told them there were still open permits for the residence. Code Enforcement asked the applicant to undertake some work to make the building safer which involved removing much of the interior including the original roof. Commission members asked if there was any documentation showing that the project had previously been approved by the Commission. Mr. Wilkes said they had made OPRA requests and Mr. Dominach said there was nothing in the files regarding Commission approval. As the Code Enforcement office recognized the permits as active, Mr. Dominach said there were no further approvals required to complete the work proposed by the previous owner.

Using the set of six photos, Mr. Wilkes described the current conditions in more detail and mentioned that they had recently removed the aluminum siding which revealed wood clapboard siding, window trim and corner boards. He said they plan to retain the wood siding and trim, repairing what they can where necessary and replacing in kind where it is too badly damaged or missing. He explained that they wish to replace the existing windows with modern replacements but that they will be made of wood with the same details as the original. He referred to elevations he had displayed at the meeting to talk more about the porch, window and siding details. The Commission noted that the drawings included in our packets differed from the ones he displayed, especially with reference to the siding and trim details and the new windows in the gable ends, with his drawings showing the windows would be rectangular rather than round as originally presented. Plans called for the new gable ends to receive vertical patterned siding. While the porches will need some additional alteration, their final appearance will match their prior appearance, we were told. When asked about their projection he said the porches would project six feet. He said that the new roof had shingles that were in good condition so there was no plan to replace them at this time. We learned that the existing building dates to the early 20th century, possibly the 1920s as identified in the Kingston Village New Jersey and National Register Historic District nomination where it is listed as a contributing property. While the Mr. Wilkes originally thought that it might be a Sears kit house, he has recently learned that it is likely not.

Using the seven photos in the demolition documents, Mr. Wilkes reviewed the conditions of the garage and shed addition on the barn. He speculated the garage may not be quite as old as the house. He said it appeared to have been constructed using some salvaged material and that it can’t currently accommodate cars. He said it is in poor condition structurally and we learned that it was in the path of the new driveway to the proposed parking lot. The metal shed addition, he explained, is a simple design and is currently damaged.

Moving to the proposed new residence, it was again noted that the drawings Mr. Wilkes was referring to were different than the ones the Commission had originally received which lacked much detail including siding and roofing details. There were also differences in the windows and front façade details on the drawing Mr. Wilkes referred to.

Moving to the site plan, Mr. Ardman said that only a portion of the 3.8 acre lot would be developed. He explained that the proposed 20 space studio parking lot had been tucked behind the existing residence as much as possible, while leaving space to use vegetation to buffer the side yard border with the rear yards of neighboring properties, to help screen it from view. When asked if the parking lot would be able to service the studio, we learned the studio has been operating in a nearby shopping center since 1998 and from experience, some students typically carpooled so it was expected that the lot as designed would be adequate. Mr. Ardman told the Commission the driveway alignment was shifted from the original location to help break up the appearance. The Commission learned the proposed simple, 3'x3' wood sign at the front driveway entrance would not be lit. Mr. Ardman also reviewed the new lighting proposed that includes four, twelve foot LED lights with a simple modern design, two planned for either side of the parking lot and two along the driveway. He stated that the proposed lighting would not spill light off the property. We learned that no driveway curbing or sidewalks were proposed but a stop sign at the end of the driveway was indicated. It was explained that the driveway and parking lot would be asphalt. Typical hours of use for the yoga studio and the need for lighting when not in use were discussed. In reviewing the vegetation, we learned that some trees along the south border had been professionally trimmed. It was noted that several trees in the areas of the proposed driveway and parking lot would need to be removed but others in the front, side, and rear would be retained. Additionally, several new ginkgoes are proposed for the front and, as noted earlier, there will be evergreens planted to screen the proposed parking lot. When asked if a rain garden could be considered, Mr. Ardman noted that the retention basin would be planted. When asked about the reasoning for having the studio in the front building and the residence in the rear, Mr. Wilkes said they wanted to keep the more intense use in the front. Ms. Kopp noted that the proposed residence will be smaller than the existing residence. When asked about the reasoning behind the proposed residence location, Mr. Ardman noted that existing vegetation would help screen it from the neighboring residences to the north.

A motion to open the meeting to the public was made (Mr. LaCorte), seconded (Mr. Burian), and was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. von Zumbusch came forward representing the Kingston Village Advisory Committee (KVAC). He referred to Kingston's Village Center designation and the Planning and Implementation Agenda the Committee prepared. He said that while the property might not be historically significant alone it is as part of the village. He was complimentary regarding the renovation of the existing building but noted that the proposed use was not the historic use. He was concerned what impact the proposed use would have on neighboring property values. He referred to the Commission's duties related to the Township Master Plan and noted that the Master Plan indicates a residential use for this area while commercial use was planned for the Main Street/Rt. 27 corridor area of Kingston. He felt it was important to retain the residential use to maintain the harmony of the historic neighborhood. He took issue with the length of the driveway as proposed and felt the proposed parking lot was an intrusion. He also felt the sign, particularly its size, was inappropriate in a residential neighborhood. He mentioned traffic concerns but Mr. Burian said that was not something the Commission could address. He felt the Commission should comment on the appropriateness of the use change. He

noted that the application would also need approval from the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission.

Ms. Pavelec came forward next, explaining that she was a resident and also a KVAC member. She said the yoga studio's website seems to indicate that events other than classes occur there occasionally. She felt the studio would be better located in the commercial area and that the historically residential character of the neighborhood should be preserved. She noted that she felt the change of use would not be fleeting, that it would permanently alter the residential character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Romanaux explained that having grown up in the village and as the contract purchaser of the neighboring property to the north, 26 Sycamore, she has issues with the proposed change of use. She did not think the proposed use was appropriate for this location.

Mr. and Ms. Russo came forward to state that they did not have an issue with the proposed renovations of the existing residence but they did have issues with the site plan proposed. They said that a 20 car parking lot and a commercial sign do not make sense in a residential area. Ms. Russo also asked if more historically appropriate lighting could be installed.

As there was no one else present that wished to come forward, a motion to close the public portion of the meeting was made (Mr. LaCorte), seconded (Mr. Burian), and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Kopp summarized that she felt the proposed renovations were appropriate and maintained her feeling that the parking lot, driveway, lighting, and sign were necessary and appropriate for the proposed change of use to a yoga studio and that she did not feel the Commission should debate the change of use.

Because of the complexity of the project, in making its recommendations to the Board, the Commission decided to address parts of the application separately; more specifically, we considered four main components,

- the demolition of the garage and barn shed addition,
- the renovation of the existing house,
- the construction of a new residence, and
- the site plan changes related to the commercial use. On the latter, we further separated those changes into separate questions of signage, driveway, curbing and apron change, lighting and parking.

The Commission decided to consider the demolition questions first. Believing the metal shed addition did not appear to be original to the barn and did not add character to the property, a motion was made (Mr. LaCorte), seconded (Mr. Burian) and passed by unanimous voice vote to take no exception to the demolition of the shed addition on the barn as it was determined that its demolition should have little to no impact on the historic value of the property or the local historic district. The Commission thought the garage appeared to be original, possibly as old as the house, but that it had a simple design with no notable features. While it believed that a garage has relevance in a residential use, the Commission felt that salvaging the garage appeared questionable and relocating it didn't seem practical therefore a second motion was made (Mr. Burian), seconded (Mr. LaCorte) and passed by a majority vote of six in favor, one opposed, with one abstention to take no

exception to the demolition of the garage as it was determined demolition will have only slight negative impact on the historic site and the local historic district.

Moving to the renovation of the house, a motion was made (Mr. LaCorte), seconded (Mr. Burian), and passed by unanimous voice vote to take no exception to the proposed exterior renovations to the existing house as it was determined that they will have no significant negative effect, beyond what has already been done, on the historic site or the local historic district.

On the question of the new residence, a general opinion shared at the meeting was that any additional building on the property behind the main residence would be most appropriate if it had a simple design and utilitarian feel but that the building proposal lacked adequate detail therefore a motion was made (Mr. Burian), seconded (Mr. LaCorte) and passed by unanimous voice vote to take no exception to the size, massing and location of the proposed new residence as it was determined they will have limited negative impact on the historic site and local historic district but recommend that the applicant must get approval from the Commission, via a Certificate of Appropriateness application, for the final design and appearance of the proposed new building.

Moving on to the site plan, the discussion on making a comment on the change of use was revisited. Testing the waters, Mr. Gale floated a motion to recommend against approval of the change of use application for a contributing property in a historic residential neighborhood. Ms. Kaiser seconded the motion but after further discussion and comments from Mr. Dominach that making a recommendation on use is not appropriate for the Commission and that doing so could taint the Board of Adjustment hearing but offering recommendations on the separate details of the site plan would be appropriate, helpful and welcomed by the Board, she withdrew her second and receiving no new second, the motion fell to the floor. Feeling the need for clarity on the question, Mr. Gale proposed that the Commission seek a legal opinion on its abilities and limitations of commenting on change of use applications in local historic districts. Mr. Dominach said getting an opinion would be easy.

After deciding to make detailed recommendations on parts of the proposed site plan, the Commission broke the plan down to five separate questions. On the freestanding sign, a motion was made (Mr. Burian), seconded (Mr. Aiello) and passed by a voice vote of six in favor, one opposed,, with one abstention, to take exception to a freestanding sign in a historic residential neighborhood as it was determined that it would have a negative visual impact on the historic site and the local historic district. On the driveway, a motion was made (Mr. Burian), seconded (Mr. Gale) and passed by unanimous voice vote to take exception to a driveway designed to commercial standards in a historic residential neighborhood as it was determined that it would have a negative visual impact on the historic site and the local historic district. Another motion was made (Mr. Burian) seconded (Mr. LaCorte) and passed by a voice vote of seven in favor, one opposed, to recommend that any driveway at this location have no curbing and a residential style apron as it was determined that this would minimize any negative visual impact on the historic site and local historic district. A motion was made (Mr. LaCorte), seconded (Mr. Aiello), and passed by unanimous voice vote to take no exception to the two lights proposed in the parking lot conditioned upon there being no light spillage onto adjacent properties and that the lights be a warm color as it was determined that this would have a diminished negative visual impact on the historic site and local historic district but recommend that the driveway light design come back to the Commission for approval, via a Certificate of Appropriateness, by a revised submittal with a more residential type lighting as it was determined this would minimize any negative visual impact on the historic site and

the local historic district. On the last issue, the parking lot, a motion was made (Ms. Kaiser), seconded (Mr. Burian) and passed by unanimous voice vote to take exception to a commercially designed parking lot in a residential historic district due to its negative impact on the historic site and the local historic district.

4. Review of a site plan approval application going before the Planning Board of PVP Franklin LLC requesting permission to construct 20 warehouse/office buildings at 495 Weston Canal Road, Somerset, NJ, Block 516.01, Lot 7.01, zoned M-1. The property is located in the D&R Canal Local Historic District.

In considering the application, the Commission reviewed sheets 1, 5, and 56 of a set of site plans prepared by Dynamic Engineering Consultants, P. C., dated 11/20/14, sheets A-1 through A-5 in a set of architectural drawings that included building floor plans and elevations prepared by Feinberg Associates, dated 11/10/14, and heard testimony from the project engineer, Mr. Hilla, and project architect, Mr. Feinberg.

The applicant's attorney, Ms. Kopp, first explained that there had been previously approved applications for new construction on the property for warehouse/data center facilities. Research shows that the most recent review was in May 2013 when we conditionally recommended approval of the request to build two warehouses if additional trees were planted on the northwest edge of the catch basin to further screen the buildings from Weston Canal Road, as noted by Mr. Burian. Mr. Hilla explained that some site improvement had already been started for that application including two basins that are partially built and a new road that had been started.

In the May 2013 review, the Commission noted that most of the construction would occur outside the Local Historic District boundary which extends 1000' from the centerline of the D&R Canal. With the new proposal, the Commission learned from Mr. Hilla that some building will be closer to the front property line but there is still a 544+ foot setback and the closest building will be about 700 feet from the Canal centerline. We also learned that the buildings will be located some 20 feet or more higher than Weston Canal Road which would limit public visibility of the building according to Mr. Hilla.

Other changes noted in the new application were a slight reduction in building height to 46' and a nearly 200,000 square foot reduction in building coverage with a related reduction in impervious coverage. Except for these changes and the increase in the overall number of buildings proposed, no other variations from the previously approved application were indicated. It was explained that there would be lights as there were in the previously approved application. On the question of color, the Commission learned they would be sand gray and reddish brick.

It was noted that the buildings would be built in several phases. Commission preference was expressed for building Phase 3 first as that would keep the buildings farther back on the property at first but Mr. Hilla explained that the need to build the roads and other issues would not allow that. He did point out that Phase 1 is just the single building at the front. When asked if the front building could be eliminated, he pointed out that they had already made a large reduction on the square footage and impervious coverage and that there was still a large setback.

Some members felt the application was incomplete and suggested that we needed to have a better idea of what the buildings would look like from the road.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend approval of the application as submitted and it was passed with a vote of five in favor, two opposed, with one abstention. While there are some historic resources in the area, mainly to the south except for the canal across the road and a small cemetery at the front of this property, the property itself has no known historic value. As with prior applications approved at this site, the majority of the Commission felt this application would not have a negative impact on the local historic district. It should be noted that no signage was presented therefore no recommendation was made on signage.

Correspondence, Public Discussion, Approval of minutes, Reports, Unfinished Business, New Business, and Upcoming meetings

Due to the late hour, a motion was made and passed by unanimous voice vote to table the remaining agenda items.

Adjournment

At 11:40 p. m. motion to adjourn 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

TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

2015-16 MEETING SCHEDULE

The Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission generally holds regular meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 PM in the Franklin Township Municipal Building at 475 DeMott Lane, Somerset, New Jersey.

Special meetings are scheduled as needed and will be announced as they are fixed.

All meetings are established, published, made available, and open to the public in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 of the Laws of the State of New Jersey.

The following are the scheduled meeting dates of the Commission in 2015-16:

January 20 2015

February 17, 2015

March 3, 2015

April 7, 2015

May 5, 2015

June 2, 2015

July 7, 2015

August 4, 2015

September 8, 2015

October 6, 2015

November 9, 2015

December 1, 2015

January 19, 2016

Adopted by the FTHPAC on 1/20/15