

Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2015

Location

Large Conference Room, Franklin Township Municipal Building, 475 DeMott Lane, Somerset, NJ

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Barbara Lawrence at 7:30 pm in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law of 1975.

Attendance

Present

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

Alternates: Nancy Hohnstine

Staff: Vincent Dominach, Senior Zoning Officer

Council Liaison: Councilman Chase

Absent

Members: Frank Aiello, Jean Ambrose

Historian: Bob Mettler

Guests

Bill Bowman, Editor of Franklin Reporter & Advocate

George M Conway, Jr., Trap Rock Industries, representing Joseph and William Stavola, LLC, for 1391 Canal Road, Princeton, NJ

Kathryn Kopp, Esq., Attorney representing Monmouth Real Estate Investment Corporation for 1135 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ

Peter Richardson, Rutgers Prep Director of Campus Operations, for 1345 Easton Ave., Somerset, NJ

Nicholas Stewart, Monmouth Real Estate Investment Corporation, A. Project Manager, for 1135 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ

Tuchman Real Estate Group representative and architect for the Kingston School, 25 Laurel Avenue, Kingston, NJ

Robert von Zumbusch, representing the Kingston Village Advisory Committee

Formal Reviews

Ms. Lawrence started with a discussion of the review process and focused particularly on motions. She referred to a document she had shared that included the steps listed in the By-law the Commission was to follow in reviewing applications. She pointed out that motions should contain a statement of the reason(s) for the Commission's decision and that Commission discussion should precede a motion so that we are ready to vote once a motion is made and seconded with the only discussion following a motion being what is necessary to clarify it.

1. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Rutgers Preparatory School, 1345 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ, requesting approval to replace the existing roof and gutter on the garage at Easton Ave, Somerset, NJ, Block 466, Lot 1.01, Zoned R-20H, located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-00010

The Commission heard testimony from Peter Richardson and reviewed a single page document describing the project with undated printed color photographs of the front of the garage and one end of the existing gutter showing its profile, as well as a color availability chart for the proposed GAF Timberline dimensional asphalt shingles.

The garage is a simple, one-story, gable end, rectangular building of undetermined age that is located at the rear of the early 20th century house, near the southeastern property line which borders a stream valley that separates it from the Rutgers Prep campus. The building is nestled in mature trees that obscure it from view both in the front and the rear. It sits over 200 feet from the rear property line that borders the D&R Canal with the narrow gable ends facing the front and rear of the property. As such, it is not easily noticed by the public either from Easton Avenue or the D&R Canal State Park.

Mr. Richardson explained that they propose to replace the existing three tab asphalt shingles with dimensional asphalt shingles that match what was used on the house a few years ago. The modern aluminum K-style gutter on the front of the garage would be replaced in-kind. He explained that there currently is no gutter in the rear and none is proposed.

No one from the public chose to comment on this application.

A motion was made and seconded to **approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application to replace the existing roof and front gutter as submitted** and was approved by unanimous voice vote. It was felt the proposal was appropriate as the garage did not seem to be a significant historic structure, the materials proposed are similar to or in-kind replacements for the existing materials, and the building generally is not visible to the public so there should be no negative impact on the historic property and the local historic district.

2. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Monmouth Real Estate Investment Corporation, 3499 Route 9 North, Suite 3C, Freehold, NJ, requesting approval to construct a new entrance doorway, install an awning over the new doorway and install a new generator on an existing pad at 1135 Easton Ave, Somerset, NJ, Block 259, Lot 79.02, Zoned GB, located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-00009.

The Commission heard testimony from Katheryn Kopp, Esq. and Nicholas Stewart and reviewed the 4/14/2015 version of a set of drawings prepared by The Montoro Architectural Group that include sheets T-1 with location maps, general information, and notes, A-1 with a key plan of the full building footprint, and elevations, floor plans, and a section of the area being modified for the new entrance door and awning system, and A-2 with section and plan details and a door elevation with notes. We also reviewed an untitled and undated image from what appears to be a site survey that indicates the existing pad and proposed generator location with surrounding bollards and screen enclosure locations detailed as well as a printed copy of a color chart of awning material colors.

We learned this project will be in the same mid 20th century single story L-shaped strip mall that fronts on Easton Avenue and backs up to the D&R Canal where we recently approved façade alterations and changes to accommodate a fitness club. This new proposal relates to the use of a currently vacant space, located at the intersection of the two wings, for a dialysis office. When asked, Mr. Stewart explained that there will be a main entrance at the front of the building but the proposed new doorway will be used only occasionally, mainly by special needs patients. The

proposed doorway location is about halfway along the long sidewall that parallels the southeast property line that is shared with another commercial complex with several standalone businesses and a linear strip mall. The long sidewall serves as the rear entrance for the stores located in the front wing. Just on the other side of the shared property line is a car wash that will screen the new doorway and awning from the neighboring property. The proposed doorway is in a nook created by the offset intersection of the front wing with of the rear section of the strip mall that will house the new office.

There is asphalt paving surrounding the strip mall including from the building to approximately the edge of the property all along the long side and rear of the building. There isn't any public parking along the southeast side of the building as the width between the building and the property line doesn't allow for much more than a through lane though the nook offset will allow vehicles to pull up to the door without blocking the through lane. An existing chain link fence across this side through lane at the back corner of the building is to be removed. The paving at the new doorway may need to be modified to create a gentle slope to the door.

The pair of new doors will be 6'x7' aluminum and glass units that will match others in the complex. One will be an ADA compliant automatic door, the other will be manual. The awning will be a simple shed design with covered sides. It will be 20' wide, 6.5' tall, project 8' from the building and the internal metal truss system will be supported by two 4"x4" metal posts at the outer corners. Mr. Stewart indicated that a solid black material will be used for the awning cover. Additionally there will be new emergency light and horn units installed beside the new doorway which will match exiting units.

The applicant proposes to reuse an existing concrete pad in the rear of the building to install a new emergency generator for the new office. There was discussion about the noise from the generator and the need for screening. We learned the generator will produce approximately 72dB when running, which will include weekly maintenance runs in addition to emergency use, but given its distance (an estimated 90') from the rear property line and the D&R Canal State Park beyond, no additional sound abatement was considered necessary. The application indicated that either wood or CMU screen could be provided but, given the required offset and a height of 5', it was felt that the enclosure would be more visually intrusive than just the exposed generator so an enclosure was considered unnecessary.

No one from the public chose to comment on this application.

A motion was made and seconded to **approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application to install a new entrance doorway, awning, and emergency generator as submitted** and was approved by unanimous voice vote. The property itself is non-contributing property as are the properties to either side. It was felt that the proposal as approved would have limited negative impact on the historic D&R Canal and State Park at the rear and on the local historic district as a whole.

3. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Rishay Group LLC, 5 Champlain Court, Randolph, NJ, requesting approval to install a new sign for a new business at 1760 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ, Block 424.02, Lot 23.02, Zoned GB, located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15-00011

No one appeared to present the application so no action was taken.

4. Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by Jack Schimpf, Director of Purchasing, Trap Rock Industries, LLC for owner Joseph and William Stavola, LLC, PO Box 419, Kingston, NJ requesting approval to demolish the existing house at 1391 Canal Road, Princeton, NJ, Block 9, Lot 3.02, Zoned CP, located within the D&R Canal Local Historic District. File No. 15 000

The Commission heard testimony from George M. Conway, Jr., representing the applicant and reviewed seven full page printed photographs that were undated but appeared to be recent, a zoning map of the lot with the building footprint indicated, and the survey page for the property from the Griggstown State and National Register Historic District nomination.

Mr. Conway originally presented the application for demolition approval at the April 7th FTHPAC meeting when he explained that the property is under contract to be sold to Somerset County but the County had stipulated that the building must be removed before they purchase the property and he referred to a letter from the County stating that position. Therefore, he said, the applicant wishes to demolish the building, cap the well, and remove the septic system. There were a number of questions raised at the April hearing including the intentions of the County for the property, whether there were alternatives available to preserve the building by subdividing the property or moving the building and even whether the demolition would need State Historic Preservation Office (SPHO) approval, which is not normally required of a private property owner, because Somerset County would be required to obtain approval after purchase so they were essentially sidestepping that requirement by requiring the demolition as a condition of sale. As a result of the open questions at the April meeting, it was proposed that the application be withdrawn at that time to allow the applicant an opportunity to obtain some answers regarding County plans and State review.

Mr. Conway explained that he was returning to this meeting to get a firm answer, one way or the other, on the demolition request.

At the prior meeting we learned that the nomination page describes the building as a c. 1840 1 ½ story, 4 bay wide by 3 bay deep vernacular style house and lists its architectural significance as notable. We also learned that it currently has an asphalt shingle roof, vinyl siding and shutters, one over one replacement windows, a replacement front door and storm door, and front porch railing that all appear to be fairly recent changes that currently appear to be in good condition.

Also at the last meeting, Mr. Conway briefly discussed recent history of the property by saying that the previous quarry owners had acquired many properties that surrounded the Kingston quarry and all these properties had transferred to the current owners with the sale of the quarry in April 1971. In April, Mr. LaCorte explained that the property was being acquired with other neighboring land for what is being called the Somerset County Southern Park. He said it's an open space purchase and that Franklin Township will be contributing 10% of the purchase price. Also in April, Mr. Dominach said he understands that the County does not want to be a landlord so doesn't want to purchase land with buildings.

Ms. Lawrence reviewed the twelve factors, found in 112-200 H (2) (a) under Demolition in the Township Code, the Commission is to consider when first determining if preservation in place is feasible or, failing that, whether preservation at another site is feasible.

Mr. Gale reported that the day before he had called Thomas D'Amico, AICP/PP, Somerset County Supervising Planner and Historic Sites Coordinator to ask him if he had any information on the proposed sale of the property. Mr. D'Amico said that he had not heard about it but wondered, as others had at the April meeting, if the State might have to review the demolition. He suggested the Mr. Gale speak to someone at the SHPO. Mr. Gale reported that he then called the SHPO and spoke to Mr. Craig who felt that the demolition would probably require State approval but suggest that Mr. Gale talk to Daniel D. Saunders, Administrator and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, and transferred the call. Mr. Saunders felt that it was an interesting question and indicated that the State would probably need to review the demolition but said he would raise the question at the State Attorney General office. Mr. Gale said a short time later he received a call from Mr. D'Amico who reported that he had spoken to someone in the County who explained that they had no compelling need or plan for the property and were only accepting it because it was offered for sale with other contiguous parcels. On the call, it was reiterated, however, that the County was only interested in the property if it had no structures on it. At the hearing, Mr. Burian indicated that he believes the State must review the demolition request.

Mr. Gale presented a copy of the layout of the property taken from the County's online GIS map that indicated that the house was set very close to one side of the property. He suggested that the private sale of the property, either in full or as a subdivided lot, could preserve the historic resource and be more beneficial to the Township as a tax ratable and character-adding feature in the area, as well as for the applicant since an improved property should be more valuable than a vacant one. Mr. Conway and Mr. Dominach pointed out that there was already a contract of sale in place which currently limits the options for private sale.

The consequences of both approval and denial of the application were discussed. In addition to the unresolved question of State approval, it was noted that the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission (DRCC) would also have to approve the demolition. Mr. Conway indicated that he was aware of the documentation requirements in the Township Code that include a complete set of architectural drawings prepared to federal standards, archival quality photographs, and an archeological survey report by a recognized archeologist that meets federal guidelines. It was noted that if the application is denied, Trap Rock would be required to offer the property for sale for a period of 180 days. If unsold at the end of that time, Trap Rock would automatically have Township approval to demolish the building. As with Commission approval of the application, if Trap Rock gained Township approval after first offering the property for sale, they would still need DRCC and possibly State approval. Mr. Dominach noted that there currently are no documentation requirements prior to demolition after the expiration of the 180 day sale period, as there are for a Commission approval of the demolition request, so the Commission needed to consider not only the loss of the building but possibly also the loss of any documentation prior to demolition if it denied the application. It was also noted that should the property be sold whole or subdivided, the building would remain under Commission review so future alteration or demolition requests would still require Commission approval. The time line of completing documentation or demolition following an offer for sale along with the outside approval(s) required was reviewed. It was acknowledged that both options would take many months to complete. Mr. Conway said he still would like a decision tonight but would discuss the other options of sale or subdivision with company officials and would return if there was any change.

The meeting was opened to the public and Mr. von Zumbusch indicated he wanted to comment. He said while he doesn't think the building is exceptionally significant on its own he does feel it is an important part of the cultural landscape of the area that adds value if retained. He said he believes there are alternatives to demolition, including subdividing the property if the County needs frontage or that it might be given away. On the question of preserving the building by moving it to another location, he said moving it didn't make much sense as its value is tied to its current location.

No one else came forward so the public portion of the hearing was closed.

The Commission considered taking no action until we get an answer regarding State review but we decided to attempt to reach a decision at this meeting. Members expressed their opinion that moving the building in order to preserve it wasn't reasonable while others said they felt the building appeared to be sound, usable, and no threat to the public so preservation in place should be feasible.

A motion was made and seconded to **approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application to demolish the existing building with the condition that full documentation of the building as required by Township Code be accepted by the Commission and evidence of all other required approvals be provided prior to demolition being undertaken.** A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed by a five (Burian, Ganim, Hohnstine, LaCorte, and Lawrence) to four (Gale, Goldey, Kaiser, and ten Broeke) majority.

Before Mr. Conway left, Ms. Lawrence and Ms. ten Broeke raised the issue of problems with the vegetative screening of the solar panel array Trap Rock had recently installed on Laurel Avenue in Kingston across from Rockingham State Historic Site. Mr. Conway said there had been problems with deer and weather but improvements would be made in the near future. Mr. Dominach said the Township was prepared to deal with problems such as screening when it was a condition of approval.

On the issue of the current situation where the Code requires documentation of the property when demolition is approved but not following the expiration of the offer period that would then allow demolition, Mr. Dominach suggested the Commission direct comments to the Planning Board asking that documentation requirements prior to demolition be added to the Code following a completed offer for sale required by a denial of a demolition request.

Informal Review

The informal review involved plans for the currently vacant Kingston Elementary School at 25 Laurel Avenue in Kingston, NJ. Mr. Dominach explained that the Township, as the owner of the property, would actually be the contractor on the project. We were introduced to a project architect and an employee from the Tuchman Real Estate Group that is connected with the non-profit Tuchman Foundation from Kingston. We learned the Tuchman Group plans to establish a long term lease for the school, renovate it and then sublet it. Current plans are to sublet it to a not-for-profit independent school that presently operates in a church building just outside Kingston. In addition, there will be space made available to the local community. We were told the arrangements are complicated in part because the property is encumbered by Green Acres regulations as it is listed on the Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI).

On paper, we examined four sheets prepared by harman deutsch architecture dated 4/26/15 that include A-3.0 with proposed elevations of all four sides, EX-4 with printed color photos of four exterior views showing current conditions, EX-5 which is an aerial view of the property, and a fourth sheet that is a color rendering of the proposed front elevation. Digitally we also had CS.0 which showed a general site plan with construction notes, EX-1 with existing condition floor plans for three floors, EX-2 with existing conditions elevation, EX-3 with existing condition cross-sections, A-1.0 with proposed floor plans and interior elevations, A-2.0 with proposed floorplans as furnished, SK-3 with proposed rendering views from the southeast and northwest, and A-3.0.

The current school building consists of two separate but connected sections. The contributing, original, c. 1920, raised basement, one-story, Prairie style block has a stucco exterior, bands of large double hung windows, a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, and a projecting pedimented two-story entry pavilion with a bracketed hood over the entry. There is a modern wood canopy extending at an angle off the rear that is proposed to be replaced with an entranceway hood similar to the front hood but supported by posts rather than brackets. Several of the smaller fixed and operating windows in this section will remain but the larger existing windows are proposed to be replaced with new, divided-light, double-hung windows. The larger, linear, non-contributing, c. 1950, one story, flat roofed wing has a brick exterior with bands of large awning windows.

The building has been vacant for a number of years and has suffered a bit from neglect. All the existing building issues will be resolved under this proposal. The only other exterior change presented was the introduction of a fabric canopy attached to the nook between the older and newer sections in the front where there is an entryway. The canopy will have an oblique tent-like ridge with one end of the ridge supported by an angled free-standing pole. Mr. Gale said it appeared to him that the pitch of canopy would shed water right onto the doorway but the architect said that would be managed. Mr. Gale said he didn't care for the canopy design as presented but others seemed to like it. There seemed to be a generally favorable response to the overall proposal with signage being a remaining open question.

The meeting was opened to the public and Mr. von Zumbusch indicated he wanted to comment. He said the Kingston Village Advisory Committee is very interested in seeing the building restored and opened for community use. He said they are encouraged by the current plans.

No one else came forward so the public portion of the hearing was closed.

Correspondence

Ms. Lawrence shared that the Commission had recently received a copy of a letter from Tina Shutz, Supervising Environmental Specialist, NJDOT to Daniel D. Saunders, Administrator and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, dated March 27, 2015, regarding Section 106 review of a NJDOT proposal to replace the Georgetown Franklin Road (CR 518) bridge over the D&R Canal and the invitation for interested parties to disagree with the findings and conclusions of the letter within 15 days. Ms. Lawrence was concerned we had not received the letter in a timely enough fashion to allow the Commission to respond. She asked Mr. Dominach about the routing process in the Township but he replied that it had not come through him. Dr. Chase suggested that the Commission respond to the problem with delivery and Ms. Lawrence agreed to respond.

Public Discussion

There was no one from the public that wished to speak

Approval of minutes

Approval of the April 2015 meeting minutes

Approval of the minutes was postponed to allow members more time to review them.

Reports

1. Township Open Space Advisory Committee

Mr. LaCorte reported that the OPAC discussed the Kingston School at the April meeting.

2. Historic Resource Survey Committee

Ms. Lawrence shared her report on a meeting she attended with Mark Healey, Township Director of Planning and Commission members Mr. Aiello and Mr. Gale. They discussed working in the Kingston Local Historic district to try two different pilot methods of recording properties. One method would be to use the subscription based software known as RuskinArc in combination with the spreadsheet document Mr. Healey worked on with an intern last summer that includes previously identified historic properties in the Township and its corresponding paper map of the properties. The other would be to use survey forms, paper and/or electronic, either blank or pre-populated with currently available data, and paper maps and/or GIS software and files to collect information. After the tests are completed, teams of Commission members could work on recording Kingston first and then continue to record other local historic districts next, followed by other areas of the Township. Mr. Gale asked if the RuskinArc account had been set up and was advised to contact Mr. Aiello directly.

Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

New Business

1. Meetings of interest

Ms. ten Broeke noted that the New Jersey History Fair would be on May 9th this year and Ms Hohnstine mentioned that the Middlesex County History Day is being held at East Jersey Old Town Village in Piscataway, NJ on May 31st.

Upcoming meetings

Next meeting - June 2

Mr. LaCorte noted that the 2nd was also Primary Day.

Adjournment

Formal Reviews

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

Action Items:

1. Ms. Lawrence to respond to the correspondence we received
2. Mr. Gale to contact Mr. Aiello regarding the RuskinArc account