



CITY OF PLAINFIELD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
 515 WATCHUNG AVENUE, ROOM 202
 PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07060



Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor

William H. Michelson, Chairman
 Lawrence T. Quirk, Vice-Chairman

MEETING MINUTES- PLAINFIELD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OCTOBER 24, 2017, 7:30 PM. CITY HALL 1ST FLOOR LIBRARY, 515 WATCHUNG AVENUE, PLAINFIELD, NJ

Call to Order and Public Notice

Chairman Michelson called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M. and in conformance with the Open Public Meetings Act read aloud the following: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, this is a regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Plainfield. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the annual meeting schedule was published in the Courier-News, and copies of the meeting schedule are posted in the offices of the City Clerk and Planning Division. I ask that everyone including Commission members please turn their cell phones to silence or vibrate and not take or send any electronic messages during this meeting."

Roll Call

2017 Historic Preservation Commission Name, Class Designation (Term Ends)	1/24/17	2/28/17	3/28/17	4/25/17	5/23/17	6/27/17	7/25/17	8/22/17	9/26/17	10/24/17	11/14/17	12/19/17
Mario Camino , Class A (12/31/2020)	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	C	X	X		
Aisha Eustache , Class C (12/31/2020)	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	A				
John Favazzo , Class A (12/31/2017)	X	X	X		X	X	X	N	X	X		
Bill Garrett , Class B (12/31/2019)		X	X	X	X	X	X	C	X	X		
Sandra Gurshman , Class B (12/31/2018)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X		
William Michelson , Class B (12/31/2018)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L	X	X		
Lawrence Quirk Class A (12/31/2017)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L	X	X		
Gary Schneider , Class C (12/31/2019)	X		X		X			E		X		
Reginald Thomas , Class A (12/31/2018)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	D	X	X		
Alternate Member #1 VACANT (2 year term)												
Alternate Member #2 VACANT (2 year term)												

Also present: HPC Recording Secretary Scott Bauman

Presentation of September 26, 2017, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Schneider made a motion to carry the September 26 meeting minutes to the November 14 meeting; Commissioner Gurshman seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by voice vote.

New Business

1. Historic Preservation Commission Certificate of Appropriateness Application HPC 2017-13

Referral from the Zoning Board of Adjustment Application ZB 2017-06

810 Central Avenue. Block 760, Lot 6. Van Wyck Brooks Historic District

Applicant & Property Owner- Yates Real Estate, Inc.

Mr. Bauman informed the Commission that the applicant served notice for the September 26 meeting, the application was carried to October 24, and the Commission has jurisdiction to proceed. The applicant's attorney Steven Rother, Esq., of Post, Polak, Goodsell & Strauchler, 425 Eagle Rock Avenue, Roseland, NJ 07068, thanked the Commission for meeting as a subcommittee and suggested that the applicant's architect attend future meetings.

Mr. Rother introduced William Doran, 26 Dundee Road, Kendall Park, New Jersey, as the applicant's architect. Mr. Doran distributed revised elevation drawings and discussed the changes he made to the plan since the last meeting including redesigning the exterior elevations and roofline; lowering the fascia line; redesigning the dormers; revising the wall fenestrations on the addition so it is similar to the original building; adding a brick water table base to the addition to match the existing building; and redesigning the back porch so it is similar to the front porch.

Commissioners studied the elevation drawings. Chairman Michelson noted that the windows do not line up with the rooms and asked what is planned for the third floor addition. Mr. Doran said the floor plans should have been changed to meet the revised elevations and if not he will make sure it is done; he further said that the third floor high pitched roof will not affect the size of the rooms. Mr. Doran added that the top of the mansard roof is 3 feet higher than it should be to store the HVAC equipment. Vice-Chairman Quirk asked with the change in height what will the height of the 3rd floor addition be; Mr. Doran said the building height will be 37 feet.

Vice-Chairman Quirk reiterated Chairman Michelson's comment about the windows not matching with the floor plans, specifically rooms 306 through 309. Mr. Doran said he can explain the window configuration and that the window locations on the floor plans agree with the elevations- the windows will be dormered: flush with the outside wall at the bottom, and dormered out up to 1.5 feet. Vice-Chairman Quirk asked what the new stucco finish on the addition would look like; Mr. Doran replied the stucco will be smooth and off-white to compliment the brick and the trim line will be stucco too. Mr. Doran said the mechanicals will be behind the mansard roof; the roof area will be open and a 3.5 foot high parapet will screen the equipment from view.

Commissioner Garrett asked Mr. Doran if he considered adding dentil molding to the roofline of the addition to mimic what is on the house; Mr. Doran said he chose not to do that because he wanted to minimize the size of the new building. Commissioner Favazzo asked what the lintels are made of, Mr. Doran replied stucco, Commissioner Favazzo commented, to contrast it to the wall surface, the lintels should be off-color so they project out.

Commissioner Thomas agrees with the Commission's comments about building proportions; he thinks the details to the addition need to be more substantial, especially how the details resolve themselves at the end of the addition- for example aligning the water table. Commissioner Thomas added he is not asking the applicant to redo the columns in the front but he wants Doric columns for the rear porch.

Commissioner Gurshman asked if there were any alternates to a stucco exterior, Mr. Doran said brick, or Hardieplank. Commissioner Thomas said Hardieplank would show the change over time between the original building and the addition. Commissioner Favazzo said Hardieplank has potential as an alternate to stucco.

Mr. Rother said he appreciates the comments on the details and reminded the Commission that his client needs to balance the costs of these suggestions but at this time he wants to hear all of the Commission comments and details that they would like to see.

Commissioner Camino thanked Mr. Rother for the revised elevation plans; he further commented that stucco buildings are not appropriate in that neighborhood.

Commissioner Favazzo commented on the extended size of the dormer window on the front elevation; Mr. Doran said the first floor windows are larger than the second floor window which are larger than the third floor windows, he is trying to bring that detail into the plan. Mr. Doran said the window that Commissioner Favazzo is referring to does not have to be oversized and it can be made smaller- there is no issue with egress in case of an emergency.

Commissioner Schneider apologized for missing the last meeting and said that he listened to the recording of the September meeting. Commissioner Schneider said he appreciates the efforts for veterans, citing his family's military background. Commissioner Schneider said as a Commissioner he cannot wrap his head around changing the building; he could not find any buildings in the historic district that have been added to or had its roof raised. Mr. Doran commented that the addition is already there; Commissioner Schneider said the proposal changes the whole feel of the building. Mr. Rother reminded the Commission that the city approved an addition not too long ago. Chairman Michelson said there are two separate applications- the Certificate of Appropriateness for design, and the referral from the Zoning Board.

Chairman Michelson summarized his own comments by saying he doesn't like the stucco, Hardieplank may be more appropriate, the windows should have curved lintels in the new section, and the 1950s addition should be removed as it will eliminate a bulk requirement.

Vice-Chairman Quirk asked if a structural analysis has been performed on the addition; Mr. Doran said an analysis has not been done. Vice Chairman Quirk cited concern over addition of a floor on top of an aging building and whether the foundation and frame of the 1950s addition would prove to be reusable for a new addition; Mr. Doran said they haven't gotten that far yet.

Chairman Michelson opened the meeting to the public and asked to limit the discussion to design and architecture.

Arne Aakre of 915 Madison Avenue introduced himself as the President of the Van Wyck Brooks Historic District and a resident of Plainfield living one half block from the property in question. Mr. Aakre said at the last hearing the applicant said the addition was not visible from the street; Mr. Aakre said that the addition can be seen. Mr. Doran said a member of the public said it could not be seen, there is a lot of vegetation but he doesn't think the individual meant that the addition cannot be seen from other streets. Mr. Aakre said the addition can be seen from both Central Avenue and West Eighth Street. Mr. Aakre asked Mr. Doran if the applicant asked him to design the use without any addition; Mr. Doran said no.

Anthony Flax of 706 Bromley Estates, Pine Hill, New Jersey, introduced himself as the president of the veterans group and he noted Commissioner Schneider's comments and reminded the Commission that good faith must be attached to every piece of this process.

Jaime Santiago of 621 South Second Street said he has seen historic pictures of the building and asked if the city had its own plans for the building. Chairman Michelson said the city only responds to applications from private property owners- the city has no say but the city is not unmindful that the building has been neglected and abandoned for years. Vice Chairman Quirk added that the applicant came before the HPC to preserve the roof and the work was never done; further adding that the owner has an obligation to maintain the building. Commissioner Favazzo said the owner can repair the building at any time, the city has guidelines to follow and there is no reason why this property could not have a new roof and windows. Commissioner Thomas added that the point of the meeting is to help the applicant go forward, not to give the perception of stopping him; the Commission is not stopping the owner from making sure the property looks perfect- the property is not city-owned. Hearing no further public comment, Chairman Michelson closed the public part of the hearing with respect to the architect.

Mr. Rother introduced Daniel Doran, PE of 939 Ridge Road, Monmouth Junction, as the applicant's engineer; Mr. Doran qualified himself as a witness and the Commission accepted him as an expert. Mr. Doran provided the Commission with an overview of the site plan and he described the site changes including location of chain link

fencing, driveway, lights, parking spaces, and vegetation. According to Mr. Doran, the applicant is proposing to clean up the site, widen the driveway for two-way traffic and re-surface the driveway and 11 parking spaces, which includes 2 handicap accessible spaces. Belgian block curbing will surround the parking area, and at the rear of the building there will be a handicap ramp with a concrete walkway. South of the handicap area there will be a 15x30 loading area- not the typical loading area as its largest vehicle will be a cargo van. There will be on site a 10x10 trash enclosure with 6 foot high solid wall to match the building façade. There will be a dense row of arborvitae on the south west side to mitigate the impact of the parking lot and driveway on the adjacent property. There will be a monument sign in the northwest corner of the property- the top portion of the sign will be 16 square feet with the lettering "Yates House", and the base will be 16 square feet and contain 2x8 plaques. Commissioner Camino wanted to know how tall the four flagpoles in the front yard will be; Mr. Doran said 30 feet and they will be part of a contemplation garden in the front yard around the southern portion of the sign. Commissioner Favazzo asked how tall the house is and Mr. Doran responded 41 feet.

Chairman Michelson asked Mr. Doran how the owner intends to regulate vehicles on site and whether the proposed driveway is wide enough for two-way traffic. Commissioner Thomas commented how the scale of the proposal changes the building from residential form to commercial- does the applicant need a commercial-sized driveway? Commissioner Thomas asked about the size of trucks expected on site; Mr. Doran said major trucks are not expected to enter the site. Commissioner Thomas suggested if this was the case then they should consider a smaller driveway. Commissioner Thomas said the applicant should keep the property residential, reminding that the property is surrounded by residential uses. Commissioner Thomas asked if 30 foot flagpoles were needed to carry on a function; flags will be displayed anyway; Commissioner Thomas recommended that the contemplation garden be located in a more private place on the property such as the backyard.

Chairman Michelson asked Mr. Doran if the old handicap ramp and concrete walkway will be removed from the northeast part of the property; Mr. Doran said yes. Commissioner Favazzo commented that the monument and flags interferes with the property's residential appeal. The monument sign is not residential, it is more institutional.

Commissioner Garrett commented that more room is needed on site to bring in the largest fire truck with outriggers; Chairman Michelson said the Fire Chief will review the proposal with regards to fire safety, Mr. Doran added that the building will have a fire suppression system and a stand pipe.

Vice Chairman Quirk confirmed that the overall size of the monument will be 4x8 feet and that the concrete walkway with ramp on the northeast side of the building will be removed.

Commissioner Gurshman asked what happens when the monument runs out of room for memorial plaques; Mr. Rother said they will have to consider that when it happens. Commissioner Gurshman asked if there were any provisions for outdoor living; Mr. Doran said there is a grass area behind the parking lot to be used for passive recreation which will include benches and tables.

Commissioner Schneider said he is in the real estate business and is devoted to preserving buildings in historic areas, and this proposal sounds more like a commercial than residential and he feels that the wrong building is being proposed for the concept. Citing fire issues and truck traffic, Commissioner Schneider said that he is hearing about a lot of conflicts and as a realtor, his sense is that this location is not the right place and that the people living in this area spend money on preserving their houses. Mr. Rother commented that they will be back to the Commission to talk about use but not because he believes he has to, the Commission has no jurisdiction over use and he hopes to have witnesses at the next meeting to demonstrate that the individuals being housed here are a protected class and are entitled to reasonable accommodations, even in historic districts. Commissioner Schneider said there are many areas in the city that can suit the applicant's plan.

Chairman Michelson opened the meeting to the public to discuss site plan issues with the applicant's engineer.

April Stefel of 935 Madison Avenue cited her support for veterans and commented that she feels that one flagpole is reasonable; she reminded the applicant that he is moving to a residential area and he needs to be sensitive in putting these massive structures in a residential area.

Anthony Flax of 706 Bromley Estates, Pine Hill, New Jersey, commented that the Commission needs to understand that their intent is to abide by all state and federal laws; they did not come here rigid and unreasonable, but rather in the spirit of compromise. Mr. Flax further commented that the NIMBY mentality astonishes him and they will pursue every legal option available.

Arne Aakre of 915 Madison Avenue cited the veterans' housing project in Highland Park that the applicant testified to at the Plainfield Zoning Board hearing; the Highland Park project has 11 units and 7 tenants have cars. Where do visitors park? Mr. Doran said no individuals will be permitted to have a car parked on site, the owner is providing a vehicle service and there will be a van parked on site. Mr. Doran said for this facility, tenants owning cars will have to park them off-site, not in front of the facility or on the street. Mr. Doran said 4 of the 11 parking spaces are for employees, and the car service runs through the day. Mr. Doran said based on Residential Site Improvement Standards, 45 parking spaces are required; in his opinion there is no need- the 11 spaces provides for employees, and the car service provides rides and he feels that the parking area will be half full. Chairman Michelson asked Mr. Doran if the existing parking lot were not there would he be going for less spaces; Mr. Doran replied no.

Chairman Michelson said the Commission is not resolving the use issues tonight, adding that even though the current operator has details now, the Commission takes into consideration, once the current operator is gone, what will happen to the property 5, 10 years from now. Anthony Flax of 706 Bromley Estates, Pine Hill, New Jersey, said the population he seeks to serve is those transitioning out of shelters- they fit into poverty guidelines, they are in need of assistance with daily functions; there are seven to eight thousand homeless veterans in New Jersey and they are proposing only 25 units. Mr. Rother said Mr. Flax will be sworn in as a witness at a future meeting.

Vice Chairman Quirk and Mr. Doran confirmed that of the 11 parking spaces, 4 will be occupied all of the time. Vice Chairman Quirk asked if there will be employee night shifts; Mr. Doran said there will be a resident manager on site 24/7. When asked by Chairman Quirk if visitors will utilize the parking lot or the streets, Mr. Doran said he anticipates visitors using the extra spaces in the parking lot.

Gerry Heydt of 915 Madison Avenue said she would like to know how the building is designed for its function; Mr. Doran said it is apartments with common space- not a group home, people are coming in and are there until they are ready to move on. Mr. Rother said it is permanent housing. Ms. Heydt asked if HUD vouchers will be used, Mr. Rother said some; Ms. Heydt asked if the units were only open to veterans, Mr. Rother replied yes.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Chairman Michelson closed the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Rother said there will be no more witnesses tonight, the next meeting he will focus on use and he will bring in an expert witness who is a psychologist and PTSD expert; the owner/operator will also testify. Mr. Rother said the architect and engineer will go over the site issues mentioned tonight and revise plans based on the HPC's comments. Commissioner Thomas reminded Mr. Rother to focus on scale and to keep it residential; Chairman Michelson added the applicant should try to remove the old addition altogether.

Chairman Michelson asked Mr. Rother if he cared to submit his legal position; Mr. Rother said there are three federal statutes he wants to address as legal issues: the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Rehabilitation Act; and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)- all three require accommodations to individuals with disabilities. Chairman Michelson said for the record the Commission's advisory capacity is to advise the Zoning Board, and the Zoning Board does not have to go along with the HPC.

Commissioner Schneider said he is far from being unreasonable and that he has no problem with the current structure and adjusting the number of people, but when the structure is changed to accommodate a use, it becomes unreasonable when the use changes.

Mr. Rother agreed to waive the 45-day review period; Commissioner Gurshman made a motion to carry the application hearing to November 14, 2017; Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by voice vote, with Commissioner Eustache absent.

New Business (continued)

2. Payment of \$24,500.00 to Barton Ross & Partners, LLC for Historic Preservation Survey for District Expansions

Chairman Michelson informed the Commission that Mr. Ross has submitted his first and final invoice of \$24,500.00 for the historic preservation survey work related to the potential expansion of the Netherwood Heights and Van Wyck Brooks historic districts. Chairman Michelson said Mr. Ross has exceeded his expectations and the final work product is more than he expected. The survey is available for public view at the Planning Division and is downloadable; the State Historic Preservation Office has a copy. The Commission will conduct public hearings and make their recommendation to the Planning Board in 2018. Commissioner Thomas made a motion, seconded by Vice Chairman Quirk, to pay the \$24,500.00 invoice to Barton Ross & Partners for historic preservation survey work related to historic district expansions. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote, with Commissioner Eustache absent.

Adjournment

There being no further business Vice-Chairman Quirk made a motion for adjournment, seconded by Commissioner Gurshman; all voted in favor, none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 9:27 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Bauman

Scott Bauman, AICP, PP
Principal Planner / HPC Secretary, Plainfield Planning Division
Prepared: December 4, 2017

Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission: December 19, 2017