



**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**
515 WATCHUNG AVENUE, ROOM 202
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07060
Phone: (908) 753-3391



Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor

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

**MEETING MINUTES – PLAINFIELD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
AUGUST 27, 2019, – CITY HALL 1ST FLOOR LIBRARY, 515 WATCHUNG AV.**

Call to Order and Public Notice

Chairman Michelson called the meeting to order at 7:36 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 Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission. 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 Attendance

2019 Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission Name, Class Designation (Term Ends)	1/22/19	2/26/19	3/26/19	4/23/19	5/28/19	6/25/19	7/23/19	8/27/19	9/24/19	10/22/19	11/26/19	12/17/19
Mario Camino, Class A (12/31/2020)	X	ab	*	ab	ab	X	X	ab				
John Favazzo, Class A (12/31/2021)	X	X	C	X	ab	X	ab	X				
William T. Garrett, Class B (12/31/2019)	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X				
Sandra Gurshman, Class B (12/31/2022)	ab	X	N	X	X		X	X				
William H. Michelson, Class B (12/31/2022)	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X				
Lawrence T. Quirk, Class A (12/31/2021)	X	X	E	ab	X	X	X	X				
Gary F. Schneider, Class C (12/31/2019)	X	X	L	X	X		X	X				
Reginald Thomas, Class A (12/31/2022)	X	X	L	X	X	X	X	X				
Member 9 (vacant- unexpired term ends 12/31/2020)	N a	na	E	na	na	na	na	na				
Gail Smith Alexander, Alternate Member 1 (12/31/2020)	X	X	D	X	ab	X	X	X				
Alternate 2 (vacant- unexpired term ends 12/31/2020)	X	ab	*	na	na	na	na	na				

Presentation of Meeting Minutes

Chairman Michelson reported that the July 23, 2019 minutes were not yet ready, as they still had some corrections to be made. This item will be carried to September 24.

Old Business

1. Certificate of Appropriateness HPC 2019-09. Applicant Alia & Brian Parker 900 Park Avenue. Block 720, Lot 1. Van Wyck Brooks Historic District

Chairman Michelson called applicants Brian and Alia Parker. There was no response from the applicants, and they have evidently not been heard from in the last month or so. Their application will be carried to September 24, 2019.

2. Certificate of Appropriateness HPC 2019-10 and Planning Board Application PB 2019-06 Applicant & Owner: Joshwa Money School, L.L.C. c/o Jonathan Steingraber. 957-63 Central Avenue. Block 759, Lot 13. Van Wyck Brooks Historic District

Chairman Michelson determined from the Affidavit of Service that proper notice had been served on nearby owners, and that the Commission has jurisdiction to hear the application.

Commissioner Sandra Gurshman recused herself regarding this application.

Mr. Jonathan Steingraber of 52 Spring Valley Rd., Morristown, introduced himself to the Commission. Plans had been already submitted by the applicant and provided to the Commissioners, since the case had originally been scheduled for July 23, 2019. His intention is to open a “bed and breakfast” inn, which is a permitted use in the historic districts. He noted that, by its most recent use, this was the largest single-family house in Plainfield. He believes this would be the “highest and best use” of the property.

Mr. Steingraber requested guidance on the material required for the parking lot. He stated that gravel was more historically accurate, but the City requires concrete or asphalt; gravel would be easier to maintain. Chairman Michelson suggested more a more attractive color gravel be used. Commissioner Garrett asked about the color of the pre-existing gravel.

Mr. Steingraber stated that bluestone was currently there. Vice-Chairman Quirk suggested maintaining consistency, with bluestone for the parking lot and north driveway leading to it, except that the handicapped parking space, already there, is concrete.

Chairman Michelson asked about the applicant’s attempt to buy an appropriate handicapped lift, which is one of two items requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness (CA). This is a State Construction Code requirement for a “bed and breakfast” inn. Mr. Steingraber stated that he called a few companies, and was informed that they are not doing commercial wheelchair lift installations, until a contemplated bill in the New Jersey Legislature is voted upon, expected to be done in November. Chairman Michelson asked if what the applicant was thinking of is a regulatory change at the state level; the applicant did not know. Vice-Chairman Quirk asked about the size of the lift, and the entry point into the house from the lift. Mr. Steingraber walked over to Vice-Chairman Quirk and reviewed the 2nd and 3rd pages of the site plan. Mr. Steingraber explained that the lift was going to be like the one removed when the residence became a single-family house again, several years ago. It will be only about 3 feet high.

A discussion was had among the Commissioners, about whether it matters that the owner/applicant is a limited-liability company, and owner-occupancy is a required feature for bed and breakfasts. This is an Ordinance issue, and will be addressed by the Planning Board.

Chairman Michelson asked if Mr. Steingraber had any product literature for the lift. He did not. Chairman Michelson suggested that the CA be held off, until product literature on the model and style was provided. The Architectural Review Committee may deem this appropriate, without requiring another meeting. Commissioner Schneider asked for clarification on the law regarding the handicap lift, and if the Commission had any authority or discretion regarding it. Chairman Michelson explained that if it would be visible from the street, which this would be, the appearance matters. Commissioner Schneider recommended granting the CA.

Commissioner Favazzo said that he was very familiar with that type of handicap lift, that it was commonly used in such situations, and that it should match the color of the house. Commissioner Favazzo recommended granting the CA for a lift. He commented that a ramp would be too long and cumbersome, and would require an additional landing.

This case is also a reference from the Planning Board, for which the Commission provides recommendations or objections. Chairman Michelson recited the variances and other relief that the Planning Board would have to consider, for parking, front and side yard setbacks, and maximum lot coverage. There will also have to be 7 items (as per the Planner's report of 7/15/19) of relief from supplementary zoning regulations, involving parking, buffering and screening, as well as the surface material for the parking lot and north driveway. The applicant has asked for waivers from site plan and performance standards, regarding the parking lot, north driveway, drainage and lighting.

Vice-Chairman Quirk asked about what plantings and buffers Mr. Steingraber proposed to install in various places on the property. The applicant agreed to use whatever plants the Boards require. The Commission will defer that question to the Planning Board.

Chairman Michelson opened the meeting to the public. Sandra Gurshman of 957 Madison Avenue, recused from the Commission because of distance to her home, asked Mr. Steingraber, who would not be living in the bed and breakfast, to ensure that guests do not stay longer than the ordinance allows? Mr. Steingraber said after the approvals of, and opening of, a bed and breakfast, he would find a "partner" to live on-premises. Ms. Gurshman asked if Mr. Steingraber would consider changing the address to the Stelle Avenue side as it was at one time. Mr. Steingraber said no, it would cause zoning issues for him.

Chairman Michelson asked if breakfast would be served to guests. Mr. Steingraber said he did not plan on serving breakfast. Vice-Chairman Quirk said it was an ordinance requirement to offer breakfast. Mr. Steingraber said he would provide it, if he needs to, and if he is not required to have a commercial kitchen. A discussion was had about the desirability of a bed and breakfast, given that the only one that Plainfield had has ceased operation.

Vice-Chairman Quirk made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for a bluestone gravel parking lot and north driveway, and for a handicapped lift at the right rear porch, pending approval by our ARC once it has product literature, as well as landscape screening described in the plans. The Commission also answers the referral by advising the Planning Board that we have no objection to any of the variances, waivers and other relief referenced in the planner's report. Commissioner Schneider seconded, and it was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Informational Hearing – 149 Crescent Avenue, Crescent Area Historic District

Mr. Jaime Mancía of 149 Crescent Avenue introduced himself to the Commission. Mr. Mancía explained he needed to address a citation from the Health Inspector regarding lead-painted windows. He stated that Health Inspector Mary Martínez ordered him to replace 22 windows because of lead paint, and that she would not accept stripping the paint off. The reason for the action was that a child of the 1st-floor tenant tested positive for lead. A discussion ensued over what authority the Health Inspector had, to allegedly demand replacement of the windows rather than allowing existing windows to be stripped and repaired, pursuant to proper EPA regulations.

Vice-Chairman Quirk explained that if the windows must be replaced, it must be like for like. The Commission has always strongly recommended that, if at all possible, historical features of buildings (here, wood windows) be repaired rather than replaced. This owner could do a like-for-like replacement of the existing windows, without a hearing, but that would be far more expensive.

Chairman Michelson stated he would get clarification on what Mr. Mancía was told by the Health Inspector. After follow-up, Chairman Michelson would contact Mr. Mancía with further instruction.

Informational Hearing – 720 Madison Avenue, Van Wyck Brooks Historic District

Scott Liggins of 506 West Eighth St. introduced himself to the Commission and explained he had a similar problem, with 30 lead-painted windows. The Health Inspector required him to remove or strip the windows but the cost of replacement would be impossible for him.

Chairman Michelson explained the requirements of replacing like-for-like materials, and noted that this house has a number of curved and irregular windows, this being exactly the sort of detail the Commission wants to be preserved. He will also contact this owner, once agreement is reached with the Health Inspector.

Unfinished Business

2019 Tri-County History Fair – Commissioner Favazzo offered to redesign materials for display and donate a tablecloth with an HPC logo. Vice-Chairman Quirk volunteered to help Commissioner Favazzo with the Fair.

Bill Nierstedt needs to be notified, and asked to locate the material for the Fair.

PMUA Environment Fair – Chairman Michelson and Vice-Chairman Quirk volunteered to represent the HPC.

Chairman Michelson updated the Commission on the following:

Master Plan Subcommittee – We are on track for being able to adopt the Historic Preservation Element at our September 24 meeting. Historic Consultant Barton Ross has generated and assembled a great deal of material, and the subcommittee will meet on September 5. Our Planning Board Chairman and Economic Development Director are expected to come as well.

District Expansion of Netherwood Heights and Van Wyck Brooks – A meeting with the Planning Board Chairman allowed numerous details, mostly procedural, to be worked out. The Planning Board will hear

the Netherwood Heights half of this project at its September meeting, and will hear the Van Wyck Brooks half in October.

Yates House Case in U.S. District Court – U.S. District Judge Kevin McNulty issued a Decision on this case, and the City won hands-down. Technically what was before him was merely Yates' Motion seeking a Preliminary Injunction, but the Judge went ahead and wrote a ruling that addresses all the merits and issues quite exhaustively. It was over 60 pages long. He cited numerous details from both this Commission's handling of the case last year, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment hearings as well. Particularly pleasing was the Judge's favorable attitude toward the Historic Preservation system, and his citing of previous Master Plan and Ordinance provisions which were all put into the record from both the Commission and Zoning Board hearings. While Yates can appeal, it is unlikely that much more activity will take place at the District Court level. Chairman Michelson will continue to monitor the case for any developments.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chairman Quirk made a motion for adjournment, seconded by Commissioner Schneider. All voted in favor, none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 9:33 P.M.

