



**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
JANUARY 28, 2020 – CITY HALL 1ST FLOOR LIBRARY, 515 WATCHUNG AVENUE**

Call to Order and Public Notice

William Nierstedt, Administrative Officer for the HPC, 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

2020 Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission Name, Class Designation (Term Ends)	1/28/20	2/25/20	3/24/20	4/28/20	5/26/20	6/23/20	7/28/20	8/25/20	9/22/20	10/27/20	11/24/20	12/22/20
Mario Camino , Class A (12/31/2020)	X											
John Favazzo , Class A (12/31/2021)	X											
William T. Garrett , Class B (12/31/2023)	ab											
Sandra Gurshman , Class B (12/31/2022)	X											
William H. Michelson , Class B (12/31/2022)	X											
Lawrence T. Quirk , Class A (12/31/2021)	X											
Gary F. Schneider , Class C (12/31/2023)	X											
Reginald Thomas , Class A (12/31/2022)	ab											
Member 9 (vacant- unexpired term ends 12/31/2020)	na											
Gail Smith Alexander , Alternate Member 1 (12/31/2020)	X											
Alternate 2 (vacant- unexpired term ends 12/31/2020)	na											

Also Present – HPC Consultant Barton Ross, HPC Secretary April M. Stefel and Ruben Perez, Esq., Board Counsel

Reorganization Meeting for 2020

Nomination and Election of Chairperson. Commissioner Gurshman made a motion to nominate Commissioner William H. Michelson as Chairman. Commissioner Camino seconded the motion and it

was unanimously approved by voice vote. Chairman Michelson then presided over the balance of the meeting.

Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Gurshman made a motion to nominate Commissioner Lawrence T. Quirk as Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Smith-Alexander seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution 2020-01 Adopting the 2020 Meeting Schedule. Vice-Chairman Quirk made a motion to adopt the 2020 Meeting Schedule (running to the January 26, 2021 meeting) prepared by Planning Staff. Commissioner Schneider seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution 2020-02 Designating the Official Newspaper for Publication of Legal Notices and City of Plainfield web page. Commissioner Schneider made a motion to appoint the Courier-News, and the City of Plainfield website, as the official places for publication of legal notices. Commissioner Favazzo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution 2020-03 Adopting Procedures, Forms, and By-Laws. Commissioner Smith-Alexander made a motion to adopt the procedures and forms used by HPC for several years now, and our 2016 adopted By-Laws. Commissioner Favazzo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Public Session Adjourns to Executive Session. At 7:38 pm, Chairman Michelson read the following into the record, and asked both the public and staff to leave the room:

The HPC has determined that two (2) issues are permitted by N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) to be discussed without the public in attendance and it shall be discussed during an Executive Session. The issues are: 1) negotiation of the terms and conditions with employees of the public body (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(4)); and 2) any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of the performance of, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the public body, unless all the individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected request in writing that such matter or matters be discussed at a public meeting (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(8)). The length of the Executive Session is estimated to be 15 minutes after which the public meeting of the HPC will reconvene and proceed with business. The HPC will go into Executive Session for only the above stated reason.

Return to Public Session. At 8:14 PM.

Resolution 2020-04 Appointing a Commission Secretary. Vice-Chairman Quirk made a motion to appoint April M. Stefel as Commission Secretary. Commissioner Gurshman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution 2020-05 Appointing a Historic Preservation Consultant. Commissioner Favazzo made a motion to appoint Barton Ross as Preservation Consultant. Commissioner Schneider seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution 2020-06 Appointing a Historic Preservation Commission Board Counsel. Commissioner Schneider made a motion to appoint Ruben D. Perez, Esq. as Commission Counsel. Commissioner Gurshman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Presentation of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Favazzo made a motion to accept the December 17, 2019, regular meeting minutes as presented; Commissioner Schneider seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Presentation

William Nierstedt, Planning Director discussed proposed changes to Code section 17:13-2, which sets the fees charged to applicants. For HPC applications, the Administration proposes an increase from \$50.00 to \$75.00 for a Certificate of Appropriateness (“CA”) and a fee of \$50.00 for applications that will lead to a “No CA letter”. Discussions centered around other Board fees, changes to the HPC application process requirements, and possible future escrow accounts with allowable charges by professionals. The Commission determines that the No CA letter fee should be \$25.00. Mr. Nierstedt requested that the Commission provide a formal vote on this proposal.

Vice-Chairman Quirk made a motion to amend Section 17:13-2 of the City Land Use Ordinance, “Certificate of Appropriateness”, to increase fees from \$50.00 to \$75.00 for a CA and from zero to \$25.00 for No CA Letter. Commissioner Schneider seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

The Architectural Review Committee (“ARC”) was discussed. Chairman Michelson explained that the committee consists of the Chairperson (1) and three (3) other HPC members, from which any two (2) out of four (4) members can direct the Planning Staff to proceed with the requested action. Due to some members’ time constraints, it was decided that Commissioner Thomas would be replaced with Vice-Chairman Quirk. Mr. Perez clarified that this was a mere substitution, which will not add an member to the ARC for quorum purposes. Chairman Michelson agreed. A motion was made by Commissioner Schneider that this year’s ARC will consist of Chairman Michelson, Vice-Chairman Quirk, and Commissioners Gurshman and Garrett. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith-Alexander and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Old Business

- **Hearing #1: Certificate of Appropriateness HPC 2019-21. Applicant & Owner: Ahrre Maros 916 Madison Avenue. Block 759, Lot 4. Van Wyck Brooks Historic District.**

Application was made for a CA approving the after-the-fact enclosure of an existing side porch, extending to the rear of the house, construction of a brick foundation for same, and removal of a “Bilco” door to relocate basement access. Also proposed is the addition of a replica of the former side porch, to be added in front of the after addition. Both the after-the-fact addition and the proposed new addition require Zoning Board approval due to insufficient space, violating the bulk requirements.

Chairman Michelson stated that this Application would not be heard this evening, due to the failure of the Applicant to supply revised plans and other materials for the HPC’s review, as determined at the December 17, 2019, meeting. Mr. Nierstedt had already advised the Applicant not to come tonight.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schneider to carry this application to the February 25, 2020, HPC meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gurshman, and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

New Business

- **Hearing #2: Certificate of Appropriateness HPC 2019-22. Applicant & Owner: David & Cheryl Buckman 1127 Watchung Avenue. Block 638, Lot 9. Putnam Watchung Historic District**

This Application seeks the change of a single-family home to 2-family residential plus mixed use. It also seeks replacement of an existing 6 ft. high chain link fence with new 6 ft. & 4 ft. high fences; repair of a barn and new garage doors and windows; and addition of a new wood-framed porch and ADA ramp. A zoning determination may need to be made.

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 Schneider recused himself from the hearing due to proximity (within 200 foot radius) of the Applicant.

Mr. Buckman came to the table to present the application. He gave a brief history of the property, which has informally been known first as the Ginna House, and then the Monday Afternoon Club. The west half of the house, containing what may be described as a ballroom, was used for many years for various events and entertainments. Mr. Buckman acknowledged the two variances required, for the use and fence. There was extensive discussion regarding the plans for the house, “barn” or carriage house, parking area, fencing, handicapped ramp (not required but possibly appropriate), trim details and “Yankee gutters”, to name a few. For clarification, Vice-Chairman Quirk requested that the plans submitted be marked Exhibit A (sheets A-1 through A-7) and the specifications for the barn (garage doors and windows) as Exhibit B.

The Applicant proposes 24’ board-on board-fencing with a diamond feature, then 24’ of stone wall with a aluminum fence on top, along Kensington Avenue. There are two existing stone pillars which will be retained. The drawing shows 6 angled parking spaces and a gravel driveway leading to them, both in the northeast part of the property. Vice-Chairman Quirk said he did not regard the parking as part of this Application, but Chairman Michelson said it was also not the status quo..

A Motion was made by Vice-Chairman Quirk, seconded by Commissioner Gurshman, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness (“CA”), and to report to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, as follows:

- To replace the existing chain-link fence, which is currently incomplete with only posts installed, along the Kensington Avenue (east side) of the Property, beginning at the northeast corner, for a total of 156 feet south, ending at a point 8 feet south of the existing slate walk between the sidewalk and the gravel driveway, as shown on site plan A-1 dated 11/26/19 and marked as Exhibit A.

The fence will be 6 feet high, and will alternate between sections of wooden “board-on-board” fencing, and a low stone wall with a decorative metal fence atop the stone wall. See Exhibit A, site plan Sheet A-6 dated 12/23/19 and marked Exhibit A. In addition there will be two (2) new fence gates. For any part of the new fences, the Applicant shall have the option of making it 4 feet high instead of 6, as that would not then require a variance.

The Applicant has not applied for, and the HPC makes no ruling on, any change to the current parking spaces adjacent to the existing gravel driveway, as shown on site plan sheet A-6 dated 12/23/19.

- The Applicant proposes several changes to the existing barn, sometimes referred to as a carriage house, primarily on its east (Kensington Avenue) side. He proposes to remove two (2) 12-pane true divided light windows, one in the middle of, and one on the southern end of the east side of the structure, and replace them with two (2) 8' by 8' foot identical garage doors, as shown on Exhibit B-1. Prior to this work, the cut sheet for these doors will be provided to the HPC, for a determination that they match this approval. The existing "person door" on the northern end of the east façade will be replaced with a new door, shown on Exhibit A, Sheet A-3 in evidence. One of the 12-pane true divided light windows removed from the east façade shall be repaired as necessary, and used to replace the left window on the south façade, which is presently one sheet of clear glass.
- The Applicant has withdrawn the proposed basketball hoop and backboard which the plans showed above and between the 2 new garage doors on Exhibit A, Sheet A-3.
- The Applicant did not provide any details for construction of the covered patio on the west elevation of the barn, and the Commission makes no determination as to this feature.
- The Applicant will install two (2) new decorative pole lights, adjacent to the parking spaces on the Kensington Avenue (eastern) side, as shown on Exhibit A, Sheet A-2 and A-7. The new lights will match the existing decorative pole lights on the property.
- The Applicant proposes to remove a small porch on the east side of the dwelling, and replace it with a larger porch in the same location. The proposed porch will be 11' long on the street side, and 5'4" deep, to accommodate a wheelchair ramp, with facing to match the existing lattice on the porte-cochère. This porch will extend 3 feet further north than the existing porch, into the existing parking area. On the southern side of this porch, an ADA-compliant ramp is to be installed and located behind existing vegetation. This ramp will cover an existing basement window well, so the Applicant shall remove and permanently close off a basement door and windows within the well. This work however shall not be required until and unless the Applicant decides to install the ramp, the timing of which seems to be undecided.

The proposed ramp and railings shall not be visible from Kensington Avenue, due to either the existing or new vegetation. If the existing vegetation dies, new plants will be provided to maintain the vegetative screen. See the diagram on Exhibit A, Sheet A-4.

The 3' metal seam roof on the new porch will wrap around to the north façade of the building. See the diagram on Exhibit A, Sheet A-4 in evidence.

This Motion was approved by voice vote, with Commissioner Smith-Alexander voting no, and one recusal (Commissioner Schneider). It should be noted that all drawings and exhibits referred to herein were put into evidence.

With regard to the recommendations to be made to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, Chairman Michelson made a motion that this Application, as shown in our CA, be favorably reported, and the use variance granted. Further, the ZBA should consider requiring a deed restriction, to limit the non-residential part of the Property to an architectural or other design-professional business, and never to be subdivided. It

should base its approval on the principle of preserving the historic integrity of the Property and the rest of the District. This approval should be based on the “home occupation” part of our Ordinance, not a “mixed use”. This recommendation is based in significant part on the fact that the Property is probably unusable for residential use alone, due to its size and the unusual ballroom. This Project would comprise a wonderful blending of adaptive re-use, and a solution to protecting both the historic district and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. With respect to the parking requirements, the Commission defers to the ZBA, and would rehear that or any other part of the Application, if so requested.

This second Motion was seconded by Commissioner Camino, and was then approved unanimously by voice vote, except for one recusal.

Discussion

Chairman Michelson reported the favorable final Decision of the United States District Court of the Yates House case. He does not know if the Applicant will appeal this Decision to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, for which he has 45 days.

Mr. Perez gave a short explanation of the Open Public Meetings Act, focusing on what kind of communications could require notice to the public. Chairman Michelson responded that the Commission has never even come close to violating these principles, but said it is good to have it explained to the Commissioners, in case they ever notice such an issue arising.

Ms. Stefel requested of the ARC that she be given only the final determination of matters directed to it, not the give-and-take e-mails that frequently occur. Chairman Michelson, who makes the determination of what cases need to be heard and what can be granted without hearing, agreed to do so.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Michelson made a motion for adjournment, seconded by Vice-Chairman Quirk. All voted in favor, none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 11:02 P.M.