

MADISON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting – May 12, 2020

Meeting conducted remotely through Zoom, with assistance from Michael Pellessier, Communications & Technology Coordinator for the Borough of Madison.

Attending: Madison Historic Preservation (“HPC”) Co-Chairs Janet Foster and Mary Ellen Lenahan; Members John Forte, Max Hart, Chris Kellogg, David Luber, Jill Rhodes and John Solu; Recording Secretary Laurie Hagerich. Absent: Member Carmine Toto and Council Liaison Carmela Vitale. One member of the public, Jeff Friedel, was present.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Foster at 7:40 pm and she announced the meeting was called in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. A verbal roll call was taken by Ms. Hagerich.

The minutes of the March 10, 2020 Public Meeting were considered and on motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the minutes were accepted as written.

Mr. Jeff Friedel, owner of property at 62 Ridgedale Avenue, was introduced as a member of the public. He said he plans to undertake renovation of his 18th Century home in the Bottle Hill Historic District and wishes to retain its historic character. He may be coming back to the Commission for advice at a later date when his plans are more defined.

Organizational Matters/New Officers:

Mr. Kellogg reported for the Nomination Committee that HPC officers for 2020 should include a Chairperson and an Executive Chairperson or persons in accordance with the Madison Historic Preservation Ordinance. A system for rotating the leadership may be considered later. For the remainder of 2020, the Nomination Committee proposed that Ms. Foster serve as Chairperson and Ms. Lenahan and Dr. Rhodes serve as Executive Chairpersons, in anticipation of taking the leadership in future years. A person is also needed for the position of HPC Secretary, to work on publicity and bring attention to HPC projects and current issues. The Nominating Committee’s proposal to appoint Ms. Foster, Chairperson, Ms. Lenahan and Dr. Rhodes, Executive Chairpersons, and to continue to seek a person for the position of Secretary, was voted upon and unanimously approved.

Sign & Façade Update:

There were no new Sign and Façade Applications.

Administration: Master Plan Update:

Mr. Luber, HPC’s representative on the Madison Master Plan Steering Committee, which is assisting Dr. Susan Blickstein on Master Plan revisions, gave a report on the latest meeting held on May 8, during which the subject of Design Guidelines was discussed. Councilperson Astri Baillie, after being advised of the importance of visual Design Guidelines to HPC’s mission, indicated funds might be available through the Borough Open Space Fund. Ms. Foster has prepared a Request for Proposal, sent to four architectural firms for a bid, and is awaiting responses. The goal would be to have the Design Guidelines completed at the same time as the revised Master Plan. The creation of additional historic districts was also discussed at the May 8 meeting.

On April 28 the Steering Committee met to go over results of the Master Plan survey. Since public meetings are not possible at this time, a virtual Open House is planned to give the public opportunity for feedback on the direction of the new Master Plan. Historic Preservation is one major focus, and Mr. Luber strongly recommended all HPC members, and family and friends, participate in the Open House. Mr. Luber will send the link to everyone.

Old Business:

Update on Saxum Real Estate appeal and decision of Zoning Board re: Madison Theater decision:

Ms. Lenahan reported that at its April 9, 2020 meeting, the Zoning Board of Adjustment passed a Resolution in favor of Saxum Real Estate in its appeal of three of the HPC's thirteen **mandatory conditions** on the demolition of the Madison Theater and the plans for the new residential and commercial building at this location. The three conditions were that all approvals by appropriate review boards and offices be secured before demolition; that a movie theater, initially proposed for the new building, be included; and that the massing of the building should not exceed the established zoning for the downtown. The condition from the HPC for documentation is still in effect. Saxum's attorney contacted HPC's attorney, Jonathan Testa, seeking clarification of this condition. Saxum's representatives have not yet responded to HPC's directive that providing the documentation is their responsibility. Ms. Foster will reach out to Saxum if there is no word in the next week or two.

Report of Subcommittee for Ordinance revision and Design Guidelines:

Dr. Rhodes reported all comments from HPC members have been collated and sent to attorney Jason Hyndman. His responses were reviewed by a Subcommittee of HPC Co-Chairs Foster and Lenahan and Ordinance Subcommittee Chair Rhodes. The redrafted Ordinance is being prepared by Mr. Hyndman. Once a revised draft is received, Dr. Rhodes will convene with the other Commission members through subcommittee groups to review the draft. Following a review by all Commission members, the draft ordinance will be referred back to the Ordinance Subcommittee to informally present it to the Planning Board Chair and one or two Council persons to gauge support and obtain feedback before the Commission formally refers the Ordinance to the Council. Having the Design Guidelines bid in place with the revised Ordinance would be good but not essential, as each can proceed separately.

New Business:

49 Park Avenue and Bottle Hill Historic District properties:

This property, on HPC's Inventory, and the Morris County Cultural Resources Inventory, is again on the market. A young couple has expressed interest and hopefully will enter into a contract and take on the renovation.

The Sayre House, another historic property in the Bottle Hill Historic District, will also soon be on the market, in addition to one of the three East Jersey cottages across from 62 Ridgedale Avenue. HPC would strongly encourage preservation of these properties.

Preservation Celebration:

Ms. Foster raised the idea that it would be good to celebrate preservation by acknowledging recent work on homes or businesses in town that contribute to the preservation of a building and/or streetscape.

Several possible sites were discussed, including 16 Myrtle Avenue, 34 Ridgedale Avenue and the house on Crescent Road which had a complete renovation. Ways to acknowledge and publicize the work done were considered, such as lawn signs, a page highlighting the property on the Borough website and social media pages. Several members were assigned to photograph and gather information on the sites and prepare a news article. At the June meeting, the sites will be discussed, along with ideas for publicity and ways to carry out the event.

Other Business:

Mr. Solu gave an update on some other preservation projects around the Borough. The Museum of Early Trades & Crafts is applying for a grant from Preserve NJ Historic Preservation Fund for renovation work in the museum building's basement. The Masonic Lodge (the former Presbyterian Church, built 1832) has applied for a grant from Morris County Historic Preservation Trust in cooperation with the Borough of Madison for a comprehensive plan of needed work on the building.

There being no further business, on motion made, seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Laurie Hagerich, Recording Secretary