

Matawan Historical Sites Commission
Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at 7pm
Matawan Municipal Community Center Conference Room

Call to Order: 7:08pm

Roll Call

Members present: Kurtis Roinestad, Barry Orr, Lorraine Arnold, Gail Chester, Janilee Yanny
Council liaison: Steven Russell
Recording Secretary: Amy Denholtz Lewandowski
Public Members: Jason Peist

The meeting was called to order concerning restoration of the Ryer House.

Chairman Roinestad provided a status report about the Ryer House, noting the three items to be discussed: roof, siding, windows. Credited Ms. Arnold for finding old materials. Noted original Planning Board application, which was approved, included Hardie board, but windows would be reglazed and restored. Generally, plans aren't resubmitted for minor changes but Mr. Roinestad recalled the architect said it was approved for vinyl windows on the original application. After reviewing the 2019 application, Mr. Roinestad described calling the property owner to ask how the architect was proceeding and he stated that his lawyers said they wouldn't have to go before Planning/Zoning at all. Mr. Roinestad asked the property owner he still wanted if a letter from the commission, to which he replied the property would not go before Planning/Zoning at this time, and he hadn't made a determination about replacing the roof yet.

Mr. Orr asked if the Borough Clerk could provide the final plans. Ms. Arnold replied that she reached out to the Borough but the 2019 plans couldn't be produced, just the ones that Mr. Roinestad kept in his capacity as a member of the Planning Board. However, Ms. Arnold was provided with some 2020 approvals and documents which were approved by the board engineer to make sure contingency agreed upon was fulfilled.

Chairman Roinestad read, verbatim, the Planning Board approval relating the exterior of the house, which referenced the existing roof to be replaced as required, Hardie board siding, windows to be glazed or storm windows installed, existing chimney to be repointed." Mr. Roinestad admitted he was unsure who would oversee and ensure the building renovations met the Planning Board requirements; however, if the owners aren't going before Planning/Zoning then, he conjectured, there's nothing to send the board and a letter would merely be on the record. Mr. Roinestad was unsure what permits would be issued by the Aberdeen construction office, in it's capacity as Matawan's construction authority. Mr. Roinestad shared that he contacted Paula Ramsey, Aberdeen Director of Planning and Zoning (construction office), and they're not aware of Matawan's historic district and requirements, so he suggested meeting with Aberdeen to discuss all the things going on in Matawan and the dynamics of historic district.

Chairman Roinestad pointed out that lots of steps were taken to preserve historic features and components. This includes the preservation of the Matawan tile, nearly every ceiling where they had to cut around designs, and staircases, replicated sconces and putting in all new boxes for sconces, all the cornices along the top of windows facing the rear were replicated from treated lumber. Wanted to highlight and credit them for the features they preserved.

Mr. Orr noted that if there are modifications, it would potentially change the historic integrity of the house and its ability to remain on the registry.

Chairman Roinestad noted that Ms. Arnold drafted a letter concerning the Ryer house, which could be sent to the architect and construction office, but Aberdeen doesn't have historic homes like this so the question remained who would enforce it. Mr. Roinestad's understanding was the owner got what he wanted, turning the home into eight units, and the Planning/Zoning approval required the building maintain its historic façade. Noted the trade-off of getting the building restored and having an investment made was the partitioning of units the property owner wanted but the historic façade was a requirement beneficial to Matawan. Understood there's no downside to sending a letter to the Borough Administrator, Planning/Zoning Board, and engineer but it's not the commission's job to enforce.

Ms. Yanny and Mr. Russell agreed in the value of alerting the construction office and keeping eyes on it.

Chairman Roinestad noted the irony that they came before the commission for approval for something that was already approved, especially given that now the property owner thinks the architect misunderstood or incorrectly assumed the project would need Planning/Zoning approval again, which is unnecessary according to the lawyer.

Ms. Arnold noted that even if this is not generally something the commission would worry about, if the structure changes it would be concern.

Discussion ensued about the units as it relates to fire safety, the roof, windows, sprinklers, and egress. Mr. Peist responded to these questions based on his professional expertise.

Chairman Roinestad circled back to the question of what action should the commission take, since there's no indication, in writing or otherwise, that they'll delineate from the approved plan.

Mr. Orr commented that it would be beneficial to understand the mechanics of the process and role of the Planning/Zoning Board, engineer, applications, and ensure adherence to approved plans. He asked about what the process is supposed to be, for all the historic properties because of this and similar cases. If a property owner violates an agreement, whose job is it to notice and enforce that? Mr. Roinestad offered to call the Planning/Zoning lawyer to ask about the process.

Ms. Chester suggested asking Aberdeen for the permits issued on the property. Discussion ensued about using OPRA to get records on properties (permits issued, etc.).

Mr. Russell agreed more should be known about the process, and if the exterior changed how it would potentially affect the historic designation.

Ms. Arnold noted that sending a letter to several parties brings issues to the forefront and outlines definitions of restoration. She recommended moving ahead rather than waiting till the commission is fully educated about the process because an inspector could suggest waiting till someone complains about a violation before inspecting.

Chairman Roinestad emphasized that the commission supports the preservation of properties and the revised ordinance would be instrumental. However, the commission's scope is limited and, hypothetically, a property owner could rip a roof off and not be fined. Mr. Roinestad suggested sending Ms. Arnold's draft letter because it's pragmatic about the facts and could note the visit, the relevant elements of the Planning Board resolution, and notify people.

Discussion ensued about restoration versus replacement, and federal historic standards.

Chairman Roinestad reminded the commission that members were invited to visit the house, and there was no obligation to offer that.

Ms. Chester wondered if there was an expectation that the commission would write a letter to influence the Planning Board, if the owners had to seek additional board approval. Mr. Roinestad replied that the owner's lawyer said they didn't need to go back to the board, so they also don't need to pursue anything further from the commission.

Ms. Chester motioned to send Ms. Arnold's drafted letter to Matawan Borough Clerk, Borough Engineer, Borough Administrator, Matawan-Aberdeen Construction Office. Seconded by Ms. Yanny.

Mr. Roinestad asked if Jason Peist's letter should also be included. The consensus was to exclude it.

Mr. Orr and Mr. Russell concurred to keep the findings in Ms. Arnold's letter, and acknowledged the footnotes and references were good.

Mr. Orr approved of Ms. Arnold's concluding point about an estimate should be obtained from another experienced slate roofing company, and cost savings may be realized by keeping the roof style tile using recovered pieces from the rear in the front and substituting pieces in the back. Mr. Roinestad agreed with the roof conclusion but, in light of the updated information, he advised against discussing siding options. He reasoned that Hardie board is a better option in some ways (than paint) plus it was already authorized in the approved plan, and happens to be more expensive.

Ms. Arnold responded that it's not in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards and the preferred way is to restore; this would be secondary option.

Ms. Yanny reiterated that Hardie board is approved in the plan so it can be done.

Mr. Orr maintained that the commission has an obligation to offer the preferred restoration standards.

Ms. Chester contended it's upon the commission to stand up for the history of building, noting there are no consequences if he doesn't deviate from what was approved, but this is the commission's opportunity to respond to their request for an opinion, specifically on siding, roof, and windows.

Mr. Roinestad stated his belief that they don't need the commission and don't need a letter.

Ms. Chester clarified her motion to use Ms. Arnold's letter and provide the commission's opinion, in a letter to Matawan officials alerting of the issues, rather than directing the letter to the property owner.

Ms. Yanny expressed concerns about antagonizing them or appearing spiteful but wanting to make sure that borough employees were aware of the requirements.

Ms. Arnold reiterated that it's unnecessary to make statements based on what's already approved.

Mr. Russell stated he doesn't think it'll seem antagonistic because it prioritizes replacement but using approved material is acceptable.

Mr. Roinestad expressed his opinion that if the letter includes a component about the siding then it should affirm that it's acceptable to do what's stated in the Planning Board application and approval. Mr. Roinestad restated the Planning Board approval, for "existing siding to be repaired with Hardie plank."

Mr. Russell stated that a letter can emphasize a preference to restore over repair/replace.

Mr. Orr concurred with Ms. Arnold about conveying the historic standards of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. Russell asked about whether using Hardie board would impact the historic consideration of the home.

Ms. Arnold confirmed that per the NJ DEP, the house is certified eligible for the national register but because the interior is changed it will need to be reevaluated. It's eligible for the Matawan historic district but because of the extensive changes it would need to be resurveyed. She reached out to the DEP, which specified that using Hardie board, even though acceptable, won't

necessarily keep it on register. Ms. Arnold maintained that it's a responsibility of the commission to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior requirements and preserve historic elements.

Ms. Chester prefers, on this specific case, to repeat the existing Interior standards and the choices that are available.

Mr. Roinestad pointed out that the house is ineligible for historic designation because it's already been converted to an 8-unit multifamily, and contended that the siding isn't as concerning given the other changes that disqualify the house.

Ms. Chester posed whether the letter should be sent at all then?

Mr. Roinestad was agreeable to sending the letter but not wanting to slow anything down. Its status is based on what it was, not what it is, and the owner has to apply for the registry.

Mr. Orr noted it's still currently certified as eligible.

Ms. Arnold asked that with the building already approved by the Planning Board, does the commission need to send a letter if there is nothing additional to say.

Mr. Orr posed the question that if the commission is successful in approving an updated ordinance, then in principle what standards will the commission operate with.

Ms. Chester withdrew the motion.

Public Comment

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 9, 2024 at 7pm.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Arnold

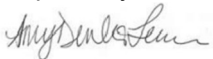
2nd: Orr

Ayes: all present

Nays: none

Adjourned: 8:48 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Denholtz Lewandowski, RMC
Recording Secretary