

Matawan Historical Sites Commission
Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 7pm
Matawan Municipal Community Center Conference Room

Call to Order: 7:01pm

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: Borough Administrator Ryan Michelson, Jason Peist, Suzanne Reynolds, Reggie Hawn

Approval of Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve September 12th and 24th Meeting Minutes

Main Motion: Russell 2nd: Yanny

Ayes: All present Nays: none Abstain: none Absent: none

The October 10th and November 14th meeting minutes were not considered.

Matawan Historic Sites: Property Reports

Burrowes Mansion

Electric upgrade – waiting on work with HMR Architects.

Exterminator's report – no update.

Mt. Pleasant cemetery

Boundary Markers and Encroachment – no updates.

Mt. Pleasant interpretive sign – no update. Chairman Roinestad reiterated wanting to do this before America's 250th especially because Monmouth County's history is Matawan's history, as Matawan was one of the first three towns established in Monmouth County.

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) involvement in marking graves – no update. Mr. Orr noted that two stones were repaired and headstones were cleaned.

Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) – no update.

Freneau Grave

No report.

St. James Zion Church/Johnson Avenue Cemetery

No report.

Old Business

Downtown Preservation District/Revised Ordinance

Borough Administrator Ryan Michelson indicated he hoped to present findings from the Redevelopment Attorney on the draft ordinance but didn't receive that yet. He intends to circulate it in advance of the January meeting, perhaps so the commission could have a work session to discuss it.

Property reviews

Fountain House/201 Main Street

Ms. Arnold noted that she, Mr. Orr, and Jason Peist visited the Fountain House, where the property owner asked for recommendations. He currently has a notice of violation from Zoning but no other violations have been issued since the owner is working with this commission.

Ms. Arnold noted that the biggest concern is the siding. The preference would be to remove the siding and repair what's underneath, as the vinyl on top could damage the layer underneath if there is moisture and mold. Ms. Arnold referenced the U.S. Secretary of the Interior standards, to remove and repair. She indicated that if the commission is more concerned with the façade then it should request that nothing else be added to what's already there, and recommend that the vinyl be removed on the front and repaired with the other restoration he's doing on that side. Mr. Roinestad noted that the current changes made degrade from the preservation aspect of downtown Main Street but the front façade is the most important. He thought the property owner seemed like he'd consider restoring at least the front.

Mr. Russell asked how of the house was covered in vinyl. Mr. Peist indicated it was three sides and the diagonal in front.

Mr. Roinestad recapped that the property owner did work without knowing about the ordinance but now he knows and should at least maintain the front, which should include the diagonal. Mr. Roinestad noted that replacing asbestos siding with vinyl is different than replacing original siding with vinyl, but it's unknown what was there prior to asbestos siding. The commission exists to preserve houses like Fountain House.

Jason Peist suggested that the commission request sample board and approve the color or sample board, and that this is not an uncommon request of an architect.

Mr. Roinestad suggested that at a minimum there should be a concession from the property owner to at least maintain the front and remove the vinyl diagonal section, which was done after he was informed of everything.

Jason Peist recommended putting a timeline on it, including for putting the shutters back on before they are "lost" or disappear. He suggested a deadline of May 1st and providing an extension if necessary.

Mr. Orr questioned the recommendation with a deadline and how it would be enforced.

Borough Administrator Michelson noted that Zoning could set a deadline and enforce this.

Mr. Orr also asked if that could be legally challenged, under what auspices it could be required or the deadline be set, since the existing ordinance didn't specify this authority.

Mr. Roinestad stated that the ordinance still exists and the exterior alteration would change the historic character of the DPD. He added that both versions of the DPD incorporate this house so it's undeniably within the district and the Ordinance pertains to it. While it could be challenged, the commission is here to give its position and recommendations and it can provide a reasonable timeframe as to when it should be done.

Mr. Orr read noted the importance of a meaningful ordinance, and recited the last section of the historic portion of the Borough Code, that the "... Planning Board shall not disapprove applications

pursuant to this section, except in regard to the considerations as set forth in paragraphs g. 1., 2., and 3. above.” However, Mr. Orr acknowledged that there doesn’t appear to be g. 1., 2., or 3.

Mr. Roinestad posited that the commission could relay that vinyl siding shouldn’t be used on an historic property, and at a minimum any vinyl covering the front should be removed.

Mr. Russell asked if vinyl remains on the sides, can it be removed in future?

Ms. Arnold responded that it can as long as there isn’t moisture and damage below the vinyl.

Mr. Roinestad indicated that Ms. Arnold drafted a letter, and asked if this letter could be used as a platform to provide guidance. The letter should note that the vinyl siding that was installed after the initial notification, from the commission and before Planning & Zoning sent a stop work order, should be redacted. Mr. Roinestad emailed the initial notification to him.

Suzanne Reynolds asked if the vinyl could be painted white. Jason Peist replied that would look worse.

Mr. Roinestad noted that when the house was sold, there was a conversation with the original buyer but Mr. Ricottone was the secondary buyer after the first deal fell through. Mr. Roinestad had discussions with the owner and realtor but it didn’t seem as though this was conveyed to Mr. Ricottone, although it was the same realtor and was aware of preservation district from prior discussions.

Mr. Russell motioned for Ms. Arnold to send the letter as discussed. Seconded by Ms. Chester

Ayes: All present Nays: none Abstain: none Absent: none

Mr. Roinestad added that the letter should CC the Director of the Planning and Zoning Department, the Matawan Borough Administrator, and the Matawan Borough Clerk.

Jason Peist suggested sending the letter by certified mail not email.

160 Main Street

Chairman Roinestad provided background, noting that it would be a 4-story building on the Santander Bank property, essentially curb-to-curb, and unlike any other developments. It’s located on Main Street and abuts Jackson Street, the center of the preservation district and a major thoroughfare through the historic district. He opined that it’s an unfitting building in that spot, and the 4-stories will overshadow houses. He’s received countless inquiries about what the commission and borough are doing about this, and thinks that more people are angered over this than any other development he can recall, even before [his] involvement with this commission. This project goes back about five years and isn’t supported by Matawan but is the result of a builder’s remedy lawsuit, brought by a law firm known for this, suing municipalities and forcing developments with an affordable housing component to be built. Many developments allowed as part of a builder’s remedy lawsuit usurp local ordinances, and municipalities are very limited in what can be reasonably done. There is usually no communication with the developer as part of the process.

Ms. Chester asked about the developer and attorney. The Borough Administrator responded the developer is Topple and the attorney is Donna Jennings of Wilentz.

Mr. Roinestad suggested discussing the commission’s approach strategy, given that this law firm quashes opposition from the onset. Suggested that this is also for public perception, and maybe the commission could appeal to the law firm and client about some concession which would diminish the opposition to this in Matawan. Mr. Roinestad read language he drafted for a potential letter from the commission, which included: an expression of gratitude for redeveloping in Matawan, conveying ideas, highlighting the property is located within the DPD and the proposed

plans impede on the historic charm of downtown, that lots of residents have expressed concerns, and that the commission invites the developer to find something mutually agreeable.

Ms. Arnold asked about when the DPD was established in the code. Mr. Roinestad replied that he believed Santander Bank was there before the ordinance was adopted.

The Borough Administrator provided some background about the borough's affordable housing requirements, noting that Matawan has a 48-unit obligation, which was decreased from 52-units.

Ms. Arnold asked if the design was already set or if there was room for movement in the design.

The Borough Administrator replied he was unsure. He commented that he would like for the redevelopment attorney to review the commission's letter before it's sent.

Ms. Yanny asked if the neighboring homeowners were challenging the building impeding their quality of life.

Mr. Roinestad noted that a letter isn't only representing commission members, but the entire town and Matawan's interest in maintaining the historic district.

Mr. Russell and Mr. Orr both asked about fire access to historical homes.

Reggie Hawn advised that many years ago when the parking lot was expanded for drive-through, it was approved only on the condition that the fire department could travel through at all times. She indicated this should be in the council's records, or perhaps with the deed.

Suzanne Reynolds spoke with County Commissioner Arnone and the county is concerned about safety because it's on a county road, therefore the plans have to be submitted to county in addition to the borough. It's a drawn out process but the county is open to working with Matawan.

Ms. Yanny suggested inviting the developers to visit historic homes in Matawan.

Mr. Russell supports a letter being on the record. There was general agreement from the commission members that an official letter should be sent.

Mr. Roinestad argued that developers in these situations don't often consider the community, as they don't have to apply to the Planning/Zoning Board, so there is no opportunity for locals to have input; it's just a lawsuit.

Mr. Orr offered that the best hope is for the county to do something or fire safety concerns to scale it back. Referenced how there was good dialogue with 110 Main Street and that when the commission offered suggestions it led to a more cooperative relationship and a revised and improved design that was historically attractive.

Mr. Roinestad pointed out that this isn't just a property sandwiched between things, it's four stories will overshadow neighbors and change the dynamic of the DPD. The letter could add language about 110 Main Street and how the revised rendering included cornices, red brick, awnings, and other builder concessions.

Jason Peist recommended approaching the issue of character and putting best foot forward to be as friendly as possible. Provided instance of the positive feedback on Facebook about the Ryer House and the diamond design on the roof as an example of preservation that has the town rejoicing and results in money and people and business coming in.

Ms. Chester noted the value and importance in community relations. Once it's built, unless it's flipped immediately they have to live with Matawan and wouldn't want to be surrounded by angry municipal officials and neighbors. Proposed the letter should appeal to their sense of practicality and suggest they improve their appearance to the community.

Mr. Roinestad emphasized that the town is historic and unique, not just pass-through. Historical society has events that are well attended from faraway. Believes the commission has a public role and the court of public opinion will weigh in too. Monmouth County will need to approve this too.

The Borough Administrator noted the development will still go through planning and zoning, which will discuss fire safety.

Jason Peist added that there should be a traffic and street parking study.

Suzanne Reynolds noted that Senator O'Scanlon is aware of this too. She referenced the affordable housing court cases and how this lawsuit is before the class action from municipalities.

Mr. Russell motioned that Chairman Roinestad prepare a letter and circulate it to the commission, for individual feedback. Seconded by Ms. Arnold.

Ayes: All present Nays: none Abstain: none Absent: none

Mr. Orr questioned that since the project will have to go through planning board, are there any circumstances that would invalidate the project?

The Borough Administrator acknowledged that a legitimate fire safety concern could make a difference.

Mr. Roinestad reiterated that Spring Street is the only fire access route. Stated that if there were to be a new historical Matawan city hall, and the current property for sold, placement at the entry of the historic district and downtown area would be nearby the bars and restaurants and would activate the downtown. Added that redevelopment is important, but this development is irresponsible and destroys the dynamic.

Ms. Chester departed.

Vacant position

Chairman Roinestad noted he spoke with the mayor, who indicated an appointment would be made at that the January 7, 2025 reorganization meeting.

New Business

Renaming Bridge MA-11 on Aberdeen Road as the Fisher-Stillwell Memorial Bridge

Mr. Russell noted that Aberdeen Road will be raised, just feet away from where the shark attacked Lester Stillwell and Stanley Fisher. Mr. Russell proposed renaming the bridge the Fisher-Stillwell Memorial Bridge, and holding a dedication ceremony for the bridge before the road is reopened. He noted it's a local road that will receive county funding; a local road can be named by the locality.

Mr. Roinestad asked if the mural will be viewable from the bridge, which Mr. Russell affirmed.

Mr. Russell thought it might be possible to approach the shark mural artist, Bob Anfusio, to have it permanently or officially finalized, unless he's content with the way it is now. Mr. Russell shared that he contacted NJ Transit but hasn't heard back yet.

Mr. Roinestad offered another approach, noting that when historic markers and welcome signs were installed, instead of sending a letter of notification to get permission they sent letter that the work will be done and [the entity] must respond if it objects by a certain time.

Mr. Russell indicated his interest in following protocols but ensuring this is done in time for the dedication ceremony, for enhanced synergy to publicize and drive tourism.

Ms. Arnold motioned to request that the Matawan governing body dedicate and name Bridge MA-11 on Aberdeen Road in memory of Stanley Fisher and Lester Stillwell. Seconded by Mr. Orr.

Ayes: All present Nays: none Abstain: none Absent: Chester

Mr. Orr motioned to convey to the Borough Council to consider contacting and supporting shark mural artist Bob Anfuso, and notifying NJ Transit for the repainting of the mural in anticipation of the opening of the new bridge. Seconded by Ms. Yanny.

Ayes: All present Nays: none Abstain: none Absent: Chester

Public Comment

Reggie Hawn stated her belief that Matawan is being taken advantage of by developers and acquiesces to them too often.

Chairman Roinestad added that the borough relies on an overlay of the DPD that goes along Main Street to Church Street, and not all the way to Route 34 as another rendition set forth.

The Recording Secretary noted she's been accepted as a Lead NJ fellow Class of 2025. Some Lead NJ sessions conflict with the commission's meetings held on the second Thursday of the month, so arrangements should be made for those dates.

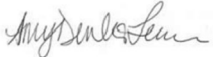
The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 7pm.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Russell 2nd: Arnold Ayes: all present Nays: none

Adjourned: 8:41 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Denholtz Lewandowski, RMC
Recording Secretary