

Matawan Historical Sites Commission  
Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 7pm  
Matawan Municipal Community Center Conference Room

Call to Order: 7:00pm

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, Daisy Orr, John Lazar, Rob Rechten, Suzanne Reynolds

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve October 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Main Motion: Russell      2<sup>nd</sup>: Chester

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

Motion to approve November 14, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Main Motion: Orr      2<sup>nd</sup>: Yanny

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

The December 12<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes were not considered.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Roinestad introduced Rob Rechten, husband of Commission member Lori Arnold, expert electrician with experience working on various and diverse buildings and offering his expertise on Burrowes Mansion electric upgrade.

**Matawan Historic Sites: Property Reports**

Burrowes Mansion

Electric upgrade – Chairman Roinestad stated that even though HMR has historic accreditation and oversaw the work, the previous bid spec was subcontracted out to general contractors and subcontractors who didn't have any special training.

Jason Peist asked if HMR does it all. The chairman responded that HMR is the designated Borough professional but doesn't perform the work, just oversees it, and generally isn't on site project managing.

Discussion ensued about Rob Rechten being appointed as a volunteer consultant. His resume and credentials were shared with the commission at the time the meeting agenda was distributed. Ms. Arnold noted Mr. Rechten is her husband and he offered assistance as a volunteer with relevant professional expertise.

Jason Peist described the process as a straight line versus a triangle for an architect who designs and builds but certain things should go to a project manager.

Ms. Arnold asked for clarification on Mr. Roinestad fulfilling responsibilities of a project manager and whether the commission is the caretaker.

Mr. Russell noted that the commission is the landlord and the Historical Society is the tenant.

Mr. Roinestad confirmed that the commission is acting as the agent/property owner but the museum operations are handled by the society.

Jason Peist suggested the Historical Society appoints Rob as the caretaker.

Mr. Rechten noted he could be the owner's representative looking over the interest of the Historical Society. Ideally he would be involved and know what's going on. He noted he is semi-retired and has the time to be present and review the work.

Mr. Roinestad stated an additional potential benefit could be to provide documentation of services provided; namely, the donation of time for tax purposes. Acknowledged that the Historical Society Treasurer was present.

John Lazar agreed that he could provide such documentation.

Mr. Roinestad made a motion to recommend Rob Rechten to the Historical Society as the leaseholder representative to oversee the electrical service upgrade. Seconded by Ms. Yanny.

Ayes: Chester, Orr, Russell, Yanny, Roinestad      Nays: none  
Abstain: Arnold      Absent: none

Exterminator's report – no update.

#### Mt. Pleasant cemetery

No update on boundary marker installation or encroachment, Mt. Pleasant interpretative sign, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) involvement in marking graves, or Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR).

The Mayor approached the chairman about a \$100,000 State grant available to 250<sup>th</sup> participating municipalities, and asked for a grant proposal. Chairman Roinestad suggests an interpretative sign – which already has an estimate – be considered as part of the grant.

Mr. Orr stated that Ms. Arnold mentioned the fence along gas station boundary be considered. Still waiting on confirmation if the boundary markers were installed.

Mr. Roinestad referenced budgeting for the expenses based on the 2023 reenactment, and signs or other placemaking features should be considered.

#### Freneau Grave

No update.

#### St. James Zion Church/Johnson Avenue Cemetery

No update.

Chairman Roinestad noted that an interpretative sign here would be valuable and could potentially be included in a grant request, even though it's relevant to the Civil War and not the Revolutionary War.

Mr. Orr added that there's a meeting with the county and several MHS members and Ralph Phillips Friday 1/17 @11am concerning the transfer of the gift of Ralph's Native American arrowhead collection to the Historical Society and the role of the county taking possession. The Borough Architect, HMR, was also visiting the Mansion that same day regarding the electrical upgrade.

#### **Old Business**

##### Downtown Preservation District/Revised Ordinance

Chairman Roinestad noted that Borough Administrator Ryan Michelson shared the draft ordinance revisions with the commission. He suggests holding a special meeting specific to

ordinance revisions. Comments should be shared directly with Ms. Arnold, and not emailed via reply all.

#### Property Review: Fountain House/201 Main Street

Chairman Roinestad noted that there's general consensus about the commission's preference but it doesn't appear as though the Borough will take enforcement action. He suggested recommending maintaining the façade especially in the front and removing the front piece, which shouldn't be cumbersome. He emphasized that the commission isn't approving what he did, but improving the front façade concession is still a win for the commission and preservation. Ms. Arnold noted that the letter was already sent via certified mail by the borough, and Borough Administrator Michelson and others received a copy.

Mr. Orr commended Ms. Arnold for the very friendly letter and how she made it seem more palatable.

Discussion ensued about the steps and stones, the stunning interior, and insulation and using cellulose.

#### Property Review: 160 Main Street

Chairman Roinestad joined a video meeting with attorney Ron Gordon representing the Borough on affordable housing and hired to help the borough mitigate this builder's remedy lawsuit which was started years ago as a result of Matawan not being judicious in developing affordable housing. Mr. Roinestad noted that builder's remedy lawsuits essentially trump all other land use requirements, even historic preservation, because the State affordable housing mandate supersedes this. Mr. Roinestad asked the attorney if there were any statutory provisions or cases of affordable housing going into historic preservation districts, but he hadn't done that research and didn't believe it would change anything.

Suzanne Reynolds noted that the court recently shot down the injunction because the case was brought by 26 municipalities who tried to stop it for all municipalities, not just those 26 towns, so the affordable housing mandate remains.

Mr. Roinestad noted the new development was originally going to be a four-story 64 unit building with four or five affordable units but the settlement with the Borough added affordable housing, bring the total to eight affordable units and a decrease in total units to only 46.

Unofficially, Matawan was told it wouldn't win this suit and needed to settle and the historical aspects were disregarded. On a positive note, Mr. Roinestad was hopeful that while the obligation is 46 units, there are other items omitted from the settlement that the attorney noted could be imposed on the development, such as setback requirements, access points, driveways, aesthetics, materials, etc. Mr. Roinestad also expressed that another component for recourse that might have some traction would be the County and fire safety concerns. He recommends making the case to the County as to why any building towering over Victorian homes and neighbors should be held to certain standards.

Ms. Arnold asked if it could be requested that they come before the commission and get approval on the façade, since it's within the preservation district.

Mr. Roinestad suggested the commission provide advice, whether it was asked for or not.

Mr. Russell agreed it would be beneficial to be on the record.

Mr. Roinestad added that the commission can provide information and letters to Planning/Zoning.

Ms. Arnold suggested that if Planning/Zoning recommends that property owners come before the commission then it's more official.

Mr. Roinestad stated a letter would be an initial olive branch to encourage the developer to do the right thing. However, the developer could say there's no legal requirements and could go to Planning/Zoning directly but Planning/Zoning could advocate it comes before the commission for review.

Discussion ensued about municipal affordable housing obligations and exclusionary zoning. Chairman Roinestad noted it's appropriate to send a letter, and while he understands that the settlement agreement was made on October 28<sup>th</sup> he believes the Borough hasn't executed it yet.

Mr. Orr asked if about the building's footprint curb-to-curb, and if it's conceivable that the size of the building and the unit-composition would change.

Mr. Roinestad noted that Ron Gordon said this obliges the borough to the total amount of units and stories and affordable housing units.

Jason Peist recommended asking about traffic studies and similar items. He also noted that zoning doesn't take precedence because the State supersedes this, meaning setbacks can't be enforced if it decreases the number of units.

Mr. Orr suggested finding modified renderings and showing design changes that are more palatable.

Chairman Roinestad reiterated his hope for the County leverage and fire safety aspect making this more palatable, especially because it's on a county road.

#### Vacant position

Mr. Russell noted that a resolution appointing Jason Peist was approved at the Borough's Reorganization meeting. He'll have the paperwork to swear him in at the next meeting, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

#### Aberdeen road/bridge naming

Mr. Russell noted that BA Michelson planned to come to this meeting and discuss this and the shark mural but was unable to attend. Mr. Russell will coordinate with him about council actions regarding this.

#### **New Business**

Chairman Roinestad noted that the Borough will be acquiring the Presbyterian church property, thanks to the work primarily done by John Lazar and Councilmember Deana Gunn and other individuals in part because of the Historical Society's researching the history of the church. The Borough received State Green Acres funding with assistance from the county. He suggests making the recommendation to the mayor and council to adopt that property as a historic site under this commission's purview and noted that it doesn't need ongoing maintenance like the cemetery. Mentioned this could be Settlers Cove since it's the site of the original Presbyterian settlers who originally settled in Monmouth County in 1686. Suggested holding a ribbon cutting.

Mr. Russell commented that a historic marker would be a nice addition to the property.

Mr. Roinestad specified that it's three lots adjacent to Franklin facing the lake on one side and road on the other. A 1959 book written by the church when it acquired the most recent church mentions the new 1959 building is actually at the location where the settlers arrived. This is relevant to Matawan and Monmouth County, as it was the first permanent European settlement in this area.

### Facebook Page

Chairman Roinestad mentioned there being limited knowledge of commission meetings, especially given some particularly trending topics, and offered that other commissions have a Facebook page and asked if there is a volunteer to manage a commission Facebook page and post relevant items, like meeting dates and relevant items.

Mr. Orr asked if the Borough would allow the commission to have a Facebook page.

Suzanne Reynolds noted a Facebook Group could be established instead of a business page, with every commission meeting listed as an event. This would also allow people to share posts.

Mr. Roinestad added that people follow social media and don't look at the Borough's website or know about this commission, so a Facebook page would enhance public awareness and offer the commission a platform to be advocates for the history of the town. Posts could also include relevant ordinances and meeting minutes.

Ms. Yanny asked how questions to the page would be answered.

Mr. Roinestad asked if there are any volunteers to administer a Facebook Page, if he were to make a motion to create it. Suzanne Reynolds volunteered to make it and moderate it is at the Page Administrator. Jason Peist agreed to help.

Ms. Chester and Mr. Orr expressed concerns about the commission operating a Facebook Page independent of the Borough.

Mr. Roinestad made a motion to create a Facebook page for the commission, to be administered by soon-to-be-commissioner Jason Peist and member of the public Suzanne Reynolds. Seconded by Ms. Yanny.

Ayes: Russell, Yanny, Roinestad    Nays: Orr    Abstain: Arnold, Chester    Absent: none

The Recording Secretary will check with Borough Clerk Karen Wynne on the motion and recorded vote of 3 affirmatives, 1 negative, and 2 abstentions, and whether to exclude or count the abstentions per Robert's Rules or if there are any other requirements related to a recorded vote, such as if Borough Code specifies how abstentions are counted or the commission has its own set of Bylaws.

### Public Comment

Suzanne Reynolds noted that the project to rename Aberdeen Road is for a road listed as county bridge, so the borough must apply to Monmouth County to change name from MA-11.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 7pm.

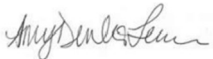
It was determined that a special meeting with Borough Administrator Michelson should be arranged to discuss the draft ordinance language proposed by the attorney.

### Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Roinestad    2<sup>nd</sup>: Yanny    Ayes: all present    Nays: none

Adjourned: 8:22 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Denholtz Lewandowski, RMC  
Recording Secretary