

MADISON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting – April 13, 2021

Meeting conducted remotely through Zoom

Attending: Madison Historic Preservation (“HPC”) Chair Janet Foster and Vice Chair Jill Rhodes; Members John Forte, Max Hart, Chris Kellogg, Mary Ellen Lenahan, David Luber, John Solu and Carmine Toto; Council Liaison Astri Baillie; and Recording Secretary Laurie Hagerich. One member of the public, James Turteltaub, was present.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Foster at 7:35 pm. She announced the meeting was called in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and the Open Public Meetings statement was read. A verbal roll call was taken by Ms. Hagerich.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the March 9, 2021 Public Meeting were considered and on motion made, seconded and unanimously carried were approved as written.

Sign & Façade Reviews:

There were no new Sign and Façade applications.

TCC Update:

120 Madison Avenue:

At a TCC meeting earlier on April 13, attended by Ms. Foster and Mr. Kellogg, plans were proposed by the new owner of 120 Madison Avenue. The site includes an 1880 Romanesque Revival/Colonial Revival style building, part of the Madison Avenue Streetscape and listed on the Cultural Resource Inventory of 2015. The plans of the applicant propose demolition of the existing building and construction of a mosque. Renderings of the new building were shown situated on the corner of Madison Avenue and Vinal Place. It was noted that a house of worship is a permitted use in any zone and the proposed plan would not require a variance. An alternate plan conceived by HPC Member Chris Kellogg, allowing preservation of the existing building alongside the new mosque, was shown. During the TCC meeting, applicant was reluctant to consider adaptive re-use of the existing building.

Ms. Baillie noted that Drew University will be working with Madison’s planner to consider a broader plan for the possible use or sale of other similar buildings east of 120 Madison Avenue, keeping in mind that this area serves as a visual gateway to Madison. Ms. Baillie recommended HPC write a very strong memorandum of all issues relating to preservation of this streetscape for consideration by the Planning Board when they review the application. The applicant should also be made aware of Madison’s history and past efforts to preserve the unique architecture and culture in the Borough.

Updates from Liaisons:

Planning Board:

Mr. Forte, Planning Board Liaison, reported there was no Planning Board meeting since HPC’s last meeting. The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for April 20.

Zoning Board Liaison:

Ms. Lenahan reported she has attended multiple Zoning Board meetings about the proposed new development at the Madison Theater, including on March 4, where detailed architectural plans were presented for the new building, and special meeting on March 12, when HPC’s January memo was reviewed Ms. Foster. The look of the replacement building retained the massing and bulk objected to by the HPC in its July, 2019 resolution and is not in keeping with other buildings

in Madison's Civic and Commercial Historic District. Ms. Lenahan showed renderings of the proposed new building and the existing building as they would appear to passengers in trains and from the Railroad platform. The Zoning Board continued the matter on April 8, focusing on parking, traffic and the effect of the new building on nearby properties. Two additional meetings are planned where testimony of planners will be taken with opportunity for cross-examination.

Open Space Liaison:

Dr. Rhodes reported the Open Space, Historic Preservation and Recreation Advisory Committee did not meet in March and the next meeting is April 14, when there will be a review of the Master Plan by the Parks Committee.

Madison Historical Society Liaison:

Mr. Luber reported the next Madison Historical Society virtual program will be on April 20 with speaker Larry Kitter on "The Battle of Princeton." The March program, "Stories of Slavery in NJ" was very well received with a good attendance. The Historical Society is continuing negotiations with the Borough on establishment of a local history museum in the East Wing of the Hartley Dodge Memorial and had a recent tour of the space with Mayor Conley and others.

Council Member Liaison:

Ms. Baillie reported the Council continues to work on the affordable housing project with interviewing of developers prior to the project going to the Planning Board.

Councilwoman Baillie, along with representatives from Susan Blickstein's office, the Planning Board attorney, HPC attorney Jason Hyndman and HPC members Janet Foster and Jill Rhodes met by Zoom on March 24. The Borough Council had concerns about the 180-day waiting period that was placed in the HPC ordinance revisions because they felt that it would draw out the process of demolition to the detriment of property owners. At the same time, the Council recognized that the loss of certain key buildings would be detrimental to the character of the Borough and their demolition should not be permitted. Attorney Hyndman suggested that the ordinance could be re-written to allow building-by-building review of the merits of a structure and the potential merits or demerits of demolition. This will require a detailed inventory and mapping of historic sites. Demolition review for historic properties would be conducted by a preservation professional, not the volunteer board from within the town, to make the decision judging individual building significance and conditions.

Luke Miller Forge Building update:

Ms. Foster reported on a special meeting regarding plans for the Luke Miller Forge Building, attended by herself, Dr. Rhodes, Ms. Lenahan, Ms. Baillie, Parks Advisory Committee Chairperson Tom Salaki, METC Director Deb Starker, and Susan Simon representing the Madison Historical Society. It was agreed the exterior bricks need to be re-pointed and a tree buffer is needed between the Luke Miller property and the new home recently constructed. The HPC assisted Mr. Salaki in identifying contractors and appropriate materials for the re-pointing work. At present there will be no work on the interior, but this can be re-visited in the future. The outside of the building and its immediate setting will be secured and visible to the public.

New Business:

Ms. Foster mentioned the NJ Preservation Conference will take place on June 3, June 10 and June 17 from 9 to 3 pm on each date. It will be a virtual event and details on the programs and speakers can be found at www.njpreservationconference.org She encouraged participation by all Commission members and asked that she be notified of those interested so that a group reservation can be arranged.

Preservation Success Examples:

Photos were shown of several new construction projects underway that fit well into existing streetscapes, including a new home on Chapel Street, a two- family home on corner of Brittin and Central Avenue and 14 Maple Avenue. These projects all benefited from HPC input before the Planning or Zoning Boards, although none are in registered historic districts. Positive discussions with anyone in town interested in developing historic sites is important to retaining scale, massing and character of the town.

Public Comment: There were no comments from the public.

Future Meetings, Adjournment:

The next meeting of the Commission will be on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, via Zoom. There being no further business, on motion made, seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Laurie Hagerich, Recording Secretary