

**Minutes of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee Regular Meeting
April 27, 2023**

**Metuchen Borough Hall
500 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Metuchen, New Jersey**

Chair Nancy Zerbe called the April 27, 2023, regularly scheduled meeting of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) to order at 7:34 p.m. The chair announced that the Borough of Metuchen had posted public notice of the meeting in accordance with New Jersey's Open Public Meetings Act.

Attendance: Suzanne Andrews, Lori Chambers, Brian Keenan, William McDuffie, Steve Patrick, Nancy Zerbe; and Tyler Kandel (council liaison)

Public Comment: No members of the public were present.

Review of Minutes: The minutes of the March 30, 2023, meeting were reviewed; Steve Patrick/Brian Keenan (M/S/C, unanimous) to approve with edits.

Draft Historic Preservation Ordinance

Nancy Zerbe provided the following information regarding the draft ordinance:

- Nancy spoke with the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT) regarding deadlines for the grant agreement that funds our work on the ordinance. She reported that the work period ended on February 4, 2023, while related administrative tasks may be completed through February 4, 2024. Therefore, she has emailed Melissa Perilstein about applying for an extension to the work period.
- Nancy reported that the NJHT indicated quarterly reports on the grant work need to be submitted. Tyler Kandel noted that Melissa indicated the reports should be prepared by the HPC rather than the borough. Therefore, Nancy will provide to Melissa a brief status report including the fact that the review process is now on hold.
- Nancy asked Tyler if minutes are available for the closed executive session the borough council held in 2022 in which the ordinance was discussed. Tyler indicate this is unlikely.

Meeting with Mayor Busch

In response to an invitation from the HPC, a meeting with Mayor Busch has tentatively been scheduled for May 4, 2023, at 7 p.m. in Borough Hall. Nancy suggested that the meeting discussion be organized around the three goals of the Historic Preservation Element in the Metuchen Master Plan:

- To foster a public appreciation that Metuchen's historic resources significantly contribute to and define Metuchen's character;
- To develop measures to preserve Metuchen's historic resources; and
- To encourage new development that is compatible with—and minimizes damage to—Metuchen's historic resources.

Possible discussion points suggested by members include:

- Community concerns about recent and potential demolitions of high-profile historic resources as well as misinformation about who is responsible / what can be done;
- Community misapprehension that "nothing is being done" about the demolition of Metuchen's historic resources despite there being a draft ordinance in review;

- The possibility of introducing the draft ordinance to the Metuchen community earlier than the suggested late 2023 / early 2024 timeframe in light of current events and concerns;
- The potential for the ordinance to be promoted and perceived as a positive solution that addresses a community concern;
- Improved communication between borough administration and the HPC on preservation-related topics and initiatives;
- Clarification of the mayor's vision for the HPC and its contributions to the Metuchen community, particularly in relation to the draft ordinance; and
- A possible role for the HPC in the Forum Theater / Arts District project as well as other preservation-related borough initiatives.

The committee noted that this heightened community awareness comes from public concern about the demolition of several Jessen properties as well as development pressure in the Rose / Lake neighborhood. These current threats to preservation affect two of the three areas identified in the Metuchen Master Plan as containing "many resources that could be individually significant or could form historic districts with unified identities."

Promoting Historic Preservation

The following updates on our efforts to promote historic preservation in Metuchen were shared:

- **Facebook:** Two posts have been created by Lisa Anne Michaloski for the committee's review. The committee discussed options for increasing visibility for our posts, as traffic to the HPC's Facebook page is low.
- **Video:** Pending discussion with Tommy Mullins.
- **Historic District Signs:** Tyler has preliminarily discussed with Melissa the possibility of installing signage marking the Middlesex Avenue-Woodwild Park Historic District. The HPC will work to develop specifications of proposed signage to further discuss with Melissa over the coming months. Steve Patrick and Lori Chambers will take the lead on this project.
- **Plein Air Painting of Historic Homes:** Committee members discussed and supported a potential opportunity for the HPC to collaborate with the Metuchen Arts Council on this October 2023 event to be held at several historic homes in Metuchen.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Suzanne Andrews/Brian Keenan (M/S/C, unanimous) motioned to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Lori Chambers, HPC Secretary

2023 Meetings

May 18
June 22
July 27
Aug 24
Sept 28
Oct 26
Nov 30