

**Minutes of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee Regular Meeting
August 24, 2023**

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

Chair Nancy Zerbe called the August 24, 2023, regularly scheduled meeting of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) to order at 7:39 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: Brian Keenan, Alex Malvone, Bill McDuffie, Steve Patrick, Nancy Zerbe; and Tyler Kandel (council liaison attended via Zoom)

Public Guests: Guests from the public present: Frank Lemire, Sarah Polakowski, Sarah Teti, Liz Murray, Deb DeSantis, Susan Kleiner, Berney Hazel

Review of Minutes: The minutes of the July 27, 2023 & June 22, 2023 were reviewed; Brian Keenan/Alex Malvone M/S/U to approve.

Nancy read resignation letter from Suzanne Andrews who has moved out of Metuchen.

Nancy reviewed historic district sign history and current status:

- Two signs in budget
- Oak & Hillside locations preferred
- Brian offered to photograph locations

Frank Lemire introduced himself and shared his background:

- Interior design design/build experience
- Specialized in historic preservation construction
- Experienced stone carver & woodworker

Nancy reviewed background of HPC and proposed Draft Historic Preservation for the benefit of guests.

Guest Comments:

- Walkability of Metuchen a plus
- Concern regarding teardowns
- Concerned about increased bureaucracy & pushback from public regarding implementation of standards
- Ordinance will help protect property values
- Ocean Grove HD standards are too strict & limiting for homeowners restricting color & architectural style (Nancy remarked that the Metuchen Ordinance is striving to be less so. Metuchen's draft does not involve review of interiors.)
- Old houses are expensive to maintain
- Ocean Grove type standards may not be practical for older homeowners (may restrict alterations for accessibility - ADA)
- N. Plainfield HD ordinance is a "pain in the butt" but helps preserve the neighborhood.
- N. Plainfield HD home buyers are apprised of standards & responsibilities before they buy.
- It's easier for sellers of derelict properties to sell to a developer.
- How is fair market value established?
- Old houses have survived because they were well built.

- It's easier for a developer to build poor quality replacement housing than to restore older good quality homes
- Qualified restoration contractors are difficult to find.
- Standards already exist in many communities.
- Would ordinance affect commercial properties? (Nancy replied that the focus is on residential, but they could apply as in the case of the Metuchen Inn)
- HPC should get realtors involved.
- Some young homebuyers only want new construction which would likely only be possible with a teardown.

Alex clarified why ordinance could not be voluntary.

Brian mentioned that McMansions were pricing out young people.

Frank mentioned that being in a HD does not adversely affect home values.

Bill said that discussion of Edgar Field could be tabled to a future HPC meeting.

Nancy thanked the guests and meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

Steve Patrick