

**Minutes of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee Regular Meeting
March 30, 2023**

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

Chair Nancy Zerbe called the March 30, 2023, regularly scheduled meeting of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) to order at 7:36 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, Alex Malvone, William McDuffie, Lisa Michaloski, 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 January 26, 2023, meeting, were reviewed; Alex Malvone/Suzanne Andrews (M/S/C, unanimous) to approve with abstentions by William McDuffie and Steve Patrick. The February 23, 2023, meeting having been cancelled due to lack of a quorum, there were no minutes to review.

Draft Historic Preservation Ordinance

Nancy Zerbe and Tyler Kandel continue to meet with borough council members and borough advisors to discuss the ordinance and answer their questions. In addition:

- Nancy raised the issue of whether an extension to the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT) grant agreement funding work on the ordinance may be necessary; Tyler indicated that the grant expires in February 2024.
- Nancy noted that review by the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJ HPO) and NJHT needs to be accommodated within the timeframe.
- Borough administration has suggested a late 2023 / early 2024 timeframe to introduce the proposed ordinance.

Promoting Historic Preservation

A subcommittee focused on using **Facebook** to promote historic preservation in Metuchen has formed and includes Brian Keenan, Alex Malvone, Steve Patrick, and Nancy Zerbe. The subcommittee reported on their work to date on biweekly posts for the Metuchen HPC Facebook Page:

- Content will be created by committee members from a list of curated ideas / source material.
- Posts will be reviewed and approved in advance by the full committee.
- Alex will be the liaison to Brandon Uhlig on implementation; Alex suggests batching several posts at a time rather than producing single posts.
- The first post will be Metuchen's selection for the 2023 Great American Main Street Award, which recognizes "communities whose successes serve as a model for comprehensive, preservation-based commercial district revitalization."

The full committee discussed other outreach ideas, including:

- ***Historic District Signs***

The HPC has for several years expressed interest in erecting signs marking the Middlesex Avenue–Woodwild Park Historic District. Committee members sought advice from Tyler on who / what local and state entities we should be coordinating with on this project.

- ***Forum Theater / Arts District***

The borough has acquired the historic Forum Theater as a centerpiece of a proposed downtown arts district. Although, to date, the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee has not had a role, we could be valuable contributors to the planning of this exciting, preservation-based development. Based on recent press coverage that indicated that Dawn Mackey, executive director of the Metuchen Downtown Alliance, is interested in renovating the Forum Theater, the committee discussed inviting her to attend one of our regularly scheduled meetings. It was also suggested that Mayor Busch be invited to meet with the full committee. Tyler indicated that Dawn Mackey has not expressed her interest in renovating the Forum Theater.

- ***HPC General Promotional Video***

A revised script / rough treatment for the HPC's short promotional video was shared on behalf of Tommy Mullins; discussion points included:

- Pros / cons of showing demolitions / razed historic buildings
- Pros / cons of showing the Forum Theater façade
- Identifying residents who would be willing to be interviewed about their neighborhoods and the overall character of the town

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Lori Chambers, HPC Secretary

2023 Meetings

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