

Historic Preservation Committee
Meeting Minutes – February 18, 2016

A meeting of the Mountain Lakes Historic Preservation Committee (“HPC” or the “Committee”) was held on February 18, 2016, in the basement meeting room of the Mountain Lakes Library. In attendance were Vice Chair Tom Dagger, Pat Rusak, Mike DeWitt, Alex Gotthelf, Sima Chowdhury and Borough Council Liaison Bill Albergo. Absent were Chair Lesley Karczewski, Ginny Cassidy, Margaret DeWitt and Katy Roberts.

Approval of Prior Meeting’s Minutes

The minutes of the January 21, 2016 meeting were approved.

Treasurer’s Report

Tom Dagger presented the report:

Opening Balance as of 1/20/16: \$30,801.70

Debits:
 \$388.40 Erie Landmark for 2 Plaques

Credits:
 \$350.00 Two Plaques

Closing Balance as of 2/17/16: \$30,763.30

Archivist’s Report

No Report.

Bill Albergo asked about the progress of the digitizing project. Pat Rusak estimated that the “first decade” had been completed, which represented about 50% of the project.

Bill also asked if the digitizing technology would allow the documents to be searchable and Pat said that she would ask Digital Imaging about that. At the moment the images are organized by street.

The Committee would like the images to be published on the website as our next priority after digitizing and Bill suggested that we use technology to reduce the size of the images for the website to avoid exceeding data storage limitations. Users could still gain access to the full size (high resolution) images by contacting the Archivist.

Borough Liaison Report

Bill Albergo reported that the architect has been selected and the design has been approved for new bathroom facilities at Island Beach and Birchwood Lake. The new bathrooms replace 1950’s era buildings that are not contributing to the historic character of the Borough. Bill described the approved design as “understated elegance” and in keeping with the character of the Borough. The Committee did not believe that the demolition of the existing buildings would be detrimental.

The Committee asked Bill Albergo to reiterate to the Borough Council that HPC should be notified proactively or better tied into the process for development of all public building or capital projects affecting the historic district. Bill indicated he would pursue this request.

Bill will email an image of the new bathroom building designs to the Committee for our information.

Old Business

302 Boulevard: Michael DeWitt reported that the house (a contributing dwelling previously cleared for demolition) is now on the market again for approximately \$2 million. It is unclear if the house is being marketed as a 2-acre lot for new construction or if there is still a possibility of saving it. The Committee needs to check with Rita Sharp about the date the demolition permit was issued to see if it has gone beyond the 1-year limitation of the ordinance.

A question was raised on sub-dividing the lot and Tom Dagger does not believe the lot is sub-dividable.

The subject needs to be added to the agenda for the March meeting.

129 Pollard: Bill Albergo reported that the plans are to demolish the existing home and build a new 4500 sq. ft. house. Bill found the realtor (Vin) to be responsive when he called and provided his cell phone number. The house is technically a Belhall but was not listed as such in the 2005 HDA and therefore is not a listed contributing dwelling subject to the provisions of the ordinance. The Committee would like to be allowed to go in and document the house before it is demolished. Tom Dagger will follow up on that.

130 Pollard: The Committee would like to determine why this house (a contributing dwelling/Hapgood) was almost completely demolished without triggering the provisions of the ordinance for a 90 day waiting period. Following up is required with the zoning and building departments. A Committee member needs to be assigned for follow-up.

HPC Website: Michael DeWitt reported that he is very satisfied with the website development and encouraged the Committee to log on to the development server to check it out. He will look into getting additional log-in credentials to the Committee. The new website will have a more seamless experience for the user so they feel like they are never leaving the site when searching for information.

Michael DeWitt would like to propose:

1. private log in capability for Committee-only access the website
2. relocating HPC content like oral histories, historic photos, introduction to Mountain Lakes etc. to the About Mountain Lakes tab of the website.
3. Consistent classifications of things on the site (e.g. contributing dwelling database)

Tom Dagger noted that the 2005 Historic District Application has disappeared from the ordinance website and he would like to see it restored. He will provide a digital version to Mike.

Ordinance Update: Review of Modifications Proposal prepared by Tom Dagger.

Tom Dagger responded to a question from Bill Albergo, that the time frame for updating the ordinance would be "this year." Bill agreed to make the Borough Council aware that

this is in the works. He will make sure it receives their attention so it can happen this year.

1. **Street-facing façade:** The Committee discussed the proposal and Pat Rusak was in favor of using the front door as the over-riding feature for determining which façade is protected. Alex Gotthelf felt that the determination of the dominant façade should not be written into the ordinance and that cases with 2 or 3 street-facing facades should be handled individually and take advantage of the Committee's advisory role and expertise. Alex Gotthelf agreed to contact Cindy Shaw to determine how the Zoning Board of Adjustment determines the front façade for variance applications.
4. **Minor alterations:** Bill Albergo presented the case where the addition of an air-conditioner condenser pad in the side yard could trigger a variance requirement. In the case of contributing dwellings the ordinance could be properly used to by-pass the requirement for a variance. The Committee agreed that this would be a positive application of the intent of the ordinance.

Misc. The Committee discussed the proposed change to the two-part demo permit process. All agreed that clarifying the ordinance to require 100% of the \$500 fee be paid with the notice of intent to demolish application for contributing dwellings rather than with the later demolition permit. This change would assure that the Committee is not expending resources for "preemptive" (not imminent) notices of intent to demolish.

The Committee agreed to discuss all proposed updates in depth at the next meeting.

New Business

Plaque Pricing: Discussion that the price of the plaques needs to be increased to cover the true cost of manufacturing. The current pricing does not cover the costs. Ordering multiple plaques helps reduce the costs but increases the delivery turnaround time to accumulate orders. The Committee discussed increasing the price to \$200 from \$175 as well as having pricing tiers/options. A final decision was postponed until the Committee gets Margaret DeWitt's input. The Committee agrees that the plaques should cover all costs and if possible generate a small profit.

HPC on Zoning Board of Adjustment: In order to improve the effectiveness of the Committee a suggestion was made to include a member of the HPC on the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Bill Albergo will inquire and follow up with the Committee on the requirements and process.

Engaging the Construction Office: The effective implementation of the ordinance requires the support of the zoning official, construction official, and zoning board administrator. Alex Gotthelf suggested that the Committee establish regular but informal contact with these officials to maintain an open friendly dialog. This will improve the HPC's awareness of pending projects and its ability to help the community to take advantage of the ordinance.

Date for Next Meeting

March 16th (Wednesday) at 7:30 pm in the small meeting room in the ground floor of Borough Hall.

Minutes prepared by Alex Gotthelf.