

TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes

September 20, 2006

Meeting called to order by Chairman, James Van Hooker, at 7:28 p.m. with the reading of the legal notice at the Main Meeting Room.

ROLL CALL

Present: Steve Boshart, Robert Kochka, Samantha Vaughan, Alice Dusenberry

Absent: Kristen Koerner and Harry J. Rescigno

Also Present: Robert Sparkes, GIS Specialist
Wayne McCabe, Consultant
George Chidley, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office

MINUTES

None.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE GRANTS

Discussion of the proposed Designation of Main Street Historic District. Wayne McCabe explained that the meeting tonight is the first one of two. The purpose of the meeting is an on going effort of the Commission to meet with the people of the community especially the area they are considering a historic district to explain what their thinking is about it and to answer any questions that may be asked of the property owner pertaining to their building and questions in general about the Commission. The project itself and this presentation and next week's presentation are funded by a grant from the State by the Historic Preservation Office, Department of Environmental Protection.

This project covered a series of workshops and seminars. The first part of the year a joint training session with the Board of Adjustment, Planning Board, Township Council, Environmental Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. Included in the training sessions discussions ensued regarding the ordinances and reviewing applications.

Wayne advised the public if they have any questions that cannot be answered tonight, we would research them and have an answer for them at the September 28th public meeting.

The historic district is running along Main Street, it encompasses 31 properties. Wayne explained there are three types of properties. There are key buildings, contributing buildings and non-contributing buildings. A key building is one that would be individually eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. A contributing building is one that has architectural or historic significance but individually doesn't make it on the Register but as part of a whole it contributes to the district and its overall appearance as part of the district. A non-contributing building is constructed in the last 50 years, it doesn't fit in with the community or neighborhood, and it has not built up a historic significance within the community of the neighborhood. There are a total of 16 contributing and 15 non-contributing properties and 5 are vacant lots that can be developed but are dispersed throughout the district. There is a total of 11 residential and 11 commercial properties; 4 that have the combination of residential over commercial. There are also 4 other properties that are not residential or commercial. They are the municipal building, library, the church and the museum. The Commission is trying to establish a method to preserve what historic resources we have within the boundaries of this district. The boundary was established because they represent the properties that do have contributing buildings with non-contributing buildings. This is a unified district area. Wayne explained the process of designation. The Commission inventories the area, documents and will call for a public hearing so that it may be discussed in an open session with the property owners that might be affected by this. Once that process is complete, the Commission will make a determination from the information gathered by the property owners. The Commission may decide to proceed if so, the Commission will make a recommendation to the Planning Board, which in turns go to the governing body (Township Council) to adopt an ordinance which will establish a historic district and where it would be. Wayne explained this is a long process. The Commission wants to hear what the concerns and questions are from the property owners. If it goes forward does the ordinance meet what the property owner needs or does the ordinance have to be modified in order to accommodate the needs of the property owners.

Wayne explained the Highlands Act. One of the primary issues was the preservation of historic resources. They developed a scenario for different strategies to preserve. Wayne contacted the Highlands Council and asked about the 5 vacant lots that are in the proposed historic main street. Wayne asked Rich Kunze if the Township petitioned for a center or some sort of area for the highlands. The MP3 Grant Highland Council's criterion identified the process but is not official yet. There is a review of them now. Wayne explained that if so the district would be protected.

Wayne stated that the owner is not required to do anything to his property unless the property owner wants to. The property owner can undertake repairs, for example replace stairs and the general maintenance. The property owner would not have to go before the Commission. If the property owner wanted to put up an addition, he would have to go before the Commission. If renovating the façade example a window, it would go before the Commission. The front of a contributing building has to remain in its original material. The reason to regulating non-contributing buildings is so that it does not create a negative impact on the district.

Wayne explained it also establishes a point of interest. A resident asked if the Commission is coordinating this effort with Bill Drew, Passaic County, and the grant that Congressman Garrett received. Wayne replied yes. The man explained that he owns stores in five buildings in the proposed district and they all have stores on the bottom. If you bring people in, the public won't park at Shop Rite and walk up sidewalks. There is limited parking. The resident is concerned of the overall scope. Wayne explained with the plan of the Visionary Planner Tony Neillsen the designation would be taken into concert with that. The resident inquired if the Commission would proceed before Passaic County and Tony Neillsen's plan would be in place. The reason he brings this up is that he has three buildings that the planning Board made him put in Belgium block curb and sidewalks back in 1988. He was told he had to do it because in two years there will be sidewalks up and down the street. It has been twenty years and he is at the point where trees are uprooting his sidewalks and he will have to do repairs. He has very little faith in municipal government following through. Richard Kunze, Township Administrator explained that there is more certainty here because the money is tied to a grant. The money that will be received will not cover the whole plan. The Council is still looking where it would use the grant money.

A resident asked about his residential property. The things he can and cannot do. Wayne explained that when replacing/repairing in-kind, you do not go before the Commission.

A resident asked if there is a permit in the process would the designation effect it, Wayne explained that it would be grandfathered.

A resident spoke that he was totally against the designation, but after seeing Tony Neillsen's presentation he is feeling more favorable of it.

The whole concept is to preserve the resource in the area and create a point of designation.

A resident asked when the decision will be made from the Commission for designation. Wayne explained that it probably will not be done in the immediate future.

ADJOURNMENT

Wayne thanked everyone for attending. Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Van Hook,
Secretary