

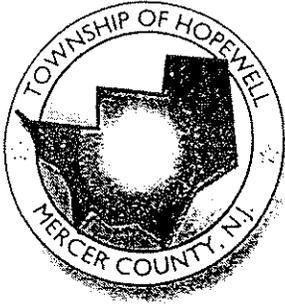
TOWNSHIP of HOPEWELL

MERCER COUNTY

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MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 8:16 p.m. Present were Max Hayden, Pam Crabtree, Richard Hunter, Barbara Wahlers, Marilou Ehrler, and David Blackwell. JoAnn Meyer was ill and unable to attend. The minutes of January 17, 2001 were approved as submitted.

CLG Grant

David recounted a conversation with George Chidley regarding the administration of the grant funds. There probably will be no formal seminar or training session for this task. George will work with us when the time comes. George further said that the grant work may proceed beyond the October 1, 2001 grant year, and that supplemental funds will be available as necessary to complete the scope of the work submitted for, if necessary.

Richard had a draft of the RFP with him, but was still very much in the process of developing the language and content with George. George's approach was to develop the agreement between the State CLG program and the Township, which will contain the requirements of RFP's for consultant services, while Richard and JoAnn have been writing the RFP for use by the township which should also contain the requirements of consultant services. The two documents will need to be consistent in listing what the consultants should do.

David had received a fax copy of George's work in progress earlier that day, and that document had been developed by George's staff and was unreviewed by him. David gave the draft to Richard for his use. Richard will develop a final draft for the next Commission meeting.

Master Plan

Barbara reported that the Planning Board prediction for when the master plan element for historic preservation will be discussed will be late summer or later. Barbara distributed a photocopy of two pages from the State MLUL outlining what should be in a master plan element.

Jacobs Creek Iron Bridge

Mercer County has recently begun to establish its next budget, including a program of bridge repair. Jon Edwards, Hopewell Township Committee, recently attended a county budget meeting, and asked the county to table the Hopewell Township bridge items until its next meeting, which was agreed. Among the projects proposed are the removal of the Bear Tavern Road iron bridge over Jacob's Creek, a new deck and guard rail for the Mine Road iron bridge, and the replacement of the Old Mill Road bridge with a minor realignment of the road. The first two iron bridges were mentioned in HAHG as probably eligible for State and National registration.

There has been interest on the part of the County Engineer, David Stem, in removing the Jacob's Creek bridge since the early 90's. David Blackwell spoke with David Stem in the week prior to this meeting. Mr. Stem described the bridge as near the failure point structurally. He said that its bottom chords had sagged noticeably, and that x-rays of its pins revealed cracking. Its use is currently limited to 3 tons, but a loaded farm pick up could exceed that weight. Mr. Stem had recommended the project at the time of the Janssen Pharmaceutica General Development Plan approval, in the hope that funding the replacement could be made a condition of the approval. This was apparently not done.

A location in Cadwallader Park has been proposed as a place to relocate the bridge. More recently, the Township has supported a grant application to the State to fund the relocation of the bridge to the crossing of the old Mercer and Somerset RR line over Woolsey Brook in Hopewell Township, as part of a recreational trail development. Several Township Committee members have described this proposal as a back-up plan of secondary interest to saving the bridge in place.

Marilou urged that we pursue saving the bridge in place. From her experience on the council of the State Historic Preservation Office that reviews proposals regarding registered and eligible sites, she has seen several historic bridges defended in the past year. She believes that the specification or performance standard that a bridge must meet can be reduced, and that limits on the use of a road can be established. David noted that Kathy Bird had said that the truck traffic on Bear Taver Road has been routed around the bridge for several years already, and therefore could continue.

Richard had determined that the State had found the bridge eligible for listing at two points, first in the early 90's and again in 1995, but apparently agreed to the removal of the bridge by issuing a finding of "no adverse affect" in 1995. Marilou and Richard said that Andrea Tingey at the State Historic Preservation Office was knowledgeable of the

background of these decisions, and could be contacted for insight into how we could proceed. Richard and Marilou were also aware of a State-wide survey concerning historic bridges, and Richard will attempt to obtain a copy and distribute it to each commission member by mail.

Language for a resolution requesting that the Township Committee pursue a new review by the State Historic Preservation Office was discussed. We determined to cite the State's two decisions of circa 1992 and 1995 as the first "whereas", then our own recommendation that the bridge be preserved in situ as the second "whereas", followed by reference to the changes in the requirements of the Section 106 review process, as the third "whereas". The resolution would end with a recommendation that the Township Committee formally request a new State review of the bridge removal proposal. Richard and Marilou felt that the review requirements had changed enough to justify the reopening of the process.

A vote was then taken. Commission members Ehrler, Crabtree, Hunter, and Blackwell all voted to proceed with the resolution and forward it to the Township Committee. Alternates Hayden and Wahlers were also polled and also concurred. It was also agreed that the Commission should nominate both the Jacob's Creek and Mine Road bridges to its Register of Hopewell Township Landmarks.

Hunt House

Michael Mills and Meredith Bzdak presented the FFM&G draft report concerning the Hunt, Rogers and Veblen properties to the County Historic Preservation Commission on Tuesday, February 13. David attended. Donna Lewis explained that in order for the County to offer a referendum vote to set aside Open Space tax funds for Preservation purposes, there needed to be a Commission and a preservation plan. The Mills study would become the basis of the plan. A chair and vice chair for the Commission were elected, so that Donna is no longer acting Chair. The report at present largely omits the Veblen "cottage" because a second Veblen house has been discovered, so that revised scope and intent discussions are taking place. Michael and Meredith presented slides of both the Rogers and Hunt Houses. A conceptual budget of more than a million dollars was proposed for each of these properties. The significant exterior and interior fabric at the Hunt House was discussed.

Green House

In recent weeks the preservation of the Green House has emerged once again as an issue in Ewing Township. This frame and brick house is owned by the College of New Jersey, and belonged to one line of the Green family who were very significant in New Jersey history. A group of "Friends" in Ewing Township has sought our support. It was agreed that the Chair is authorized to write letters of general support for the preservation of the house as might be required.

Back Timberlane Athletic Complex

There was discussion of the proposal for athletic fields in the block of land to the west of Timberlane Middle School. The development shows playing fields located near the Methodist Cemetery, with a landscaped and natural buffer of about 60' in depth. The Commission agreed that such a buffer was necessary and must continue to be included in this project. Barbara offered to make comment for us at the ARC meeting coming up, and was requested to do so.

Preservation Seminar

The SHPO seminar regarding implementing Historic Preservation at the local level is being held again, at Drew University on Saturday, March 31st. We should consider having someone in attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20.

Minutes prepared by David Blackwell