



CITY OF PLAINFIELD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
 515 WATCHUNG AVENUE, ROOM 202
 PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07060



Sharon Robinson-Briggs, Mayor

Sandra Gurshman, Chairwoman
 John Favazzo, Vice Chairman

Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2013, 7:30 PM, City Hall Library, 515 Watchung Avenue, Plainfield, New Jersey

Name, Class Designation (Term Duration)	1/22/13	2/26/13	3/19/13	4/23/13	5/28/13	6/25/13	7/23/13	8/27/13	9/24/13	10/22/13	11/19/13	12/17/13
Vice Chairman John Favazzo, Class A (5/10/10 - 12/31/13)	X	X										
Lawrence Ferrara, Class C (1/18/11 - 12/31/14)	X	X	X									
James Galvin, Alternate #1, Class A (1/3/13 - 12/31/14)	X	X										
Bill Garrett, Class B (2/3/12 - 12/31/15)	X		X									
Chairwoman Sandra Gurshman, Class B (1/18/11 - 12/31/14)	X	X	X									
Jan Jasper, Class C (1/3/13 - 12/31/16)	X	X	X									
Patricia Turner Kavanaugh, Class C (1/3/12 - 12/31/15)	X	X	X									
Elizabeth King, Class C (1/3/13 - 12/31/16)	X		X									
William Michelson, Class B (1/18/11 - 12/31/14)	X	X	X									
David Westlake, Class A (1/3/13 - 12/31/16)	X	X	X									
Alternate Member #2 VACANT (2-year term)												
HPC Consultant Gail Hunton		X	X									
HPC Secretary Scott Bauman	X	X	X									

Call to Order and Public Notice for Regular Meeting

Chairwoman Gurshman called the regular meeting of the Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission to order at 7:35 PM and read the following into the record: *“This is a regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Plainfield, Union County, New Jersey. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act in that a notice was published in the Courier News on January 4, 2013, and the notice of this meeting was posted in the City Clerk and Planning Division offices.”*

Adoption of February 26, 2013, Meeting Minutes

Commission Secretary Scott Bauman informed the Commission that the 2/26/13 meeting minutes were not ready and requested that the Commission carry this agenda item to the 4/23/13 meeting. Ms. King made a motion to carry the 2/26/13 meeting minutes to the 4/23/13 meeting. Mr. Michelson seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Unfinished Business

- Carried from 2/26/13: Certificate of Appropriateness: HPC 12-20: 134-136 North Avenue; Block 314, Lot 8 North Avenue Historic District / Applicant and Owner: 134-136 North Ave., LLC**

Project Manager Gabe Bailer of Landmark Developers (675 Garfield Avenue, Jersey City) introduced himself and informed the Commission that he is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of new wood frame windows on all facades of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors. Vinyl windows were installed without permission, and the

Applicant has agreed to remove the vinyl windows and install wood frame windows. Mr. Bailer said the windows are 34" x 59" and he brought a window sample for the Commission to inspect. Mr. Bailer requested color suggestions for the window. The new windows will fit all existing openings. It will take 6 to 8 weeks to manufacture all the windows needed for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors.

Ms. Hunton informed Mr. Bailer that the Commission doesn't regulate color schemes, but said that sashes were typically painted dark which was common in the Victorian era. Ms. Hunton said she would send color scheme information to Mr. Bauman who can forward it to Mr. Bailer.

Chairwoman Gurshman opened the meeting to the public. No one from the public commented. Chairwoman Gurshman closed the public comment portion of the meeting. Ms. Turner Kavanaugh made a motion to bifurcate the application, approve the removal of vinyl windows with wood sash windows at front and rear elevations per elevation drawing A200 prepared by Jose Carballo Architecture dated January 18, 2012. All windows will be solid wood 1/1 double-hung sash windows, sized to fit existing openings on both front and rear elevations. Mr. Michelson seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by voice vote.

New Business

1. **Certificate of Appropriateness: HPC 13-05: 1216-1218 Putnam Ave / 800-808 Webster Pl; Block 635, Lot 5 Crescent Area Historic District / Applicant & Owner: Keith Miller**

Secretary Bauman informed the Commission that the Applicant provided adequate notice to property owners within 200' of the subject and that the Commission has jurisdiction to hear the application. Ms. King recused herself from the proceedings since she is a property owner within 200' of the subject site.

Keith Miller (1216 Putnam Avenue, Plainfield) introduced himself and informed the Commission that he is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a 4 foot high wooden picket fence with five (5) fence posts 4' in height, and two (2) gates. The fence shall begin at the foundation of the bay window facing Webster Place, run east to front yard boundary line facing Webster Place, run south along Webster Place to the intersection of the property line shared with adjacent Lot 4 as shown on the attached property survey prepared by Robert L. Cigoi, LS. Signed and dated 9/17/2003.

The fence shall contain five (5) finials placed on the 4' high posts at the following locations: 1) east side and west side of the gate perpendicular to Webster Place, 2) intersection of the fence running east to west and north to south, and 3) north and south side of the gate parallel to Webster Place. The design of the fence and post finial shall be:



Chairwoman Gurshman opened the meeting to the public. No one from the public commented. Chairwoman Gurshman closed the public comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Michelson made a motion to approve the proposal as submitted. Ms. Turner Kavanaugh seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by voice vote. Ms. King abstained from the vote.

2. **HPC 12-19: 161-167 Crescent Avenue; Block 832, Lot 7: Crescent Area Historic District Applicant: Luis Windows /Owner: 165 Crescent Avenue, LLC**

Secretary Bauman informed the Commission that the Applicant provided adequate notice to property owners within 200' of the subject and that the Commission has jurisdiction to hear the application.

Mr. Habib Khan of 6 Big Ramapo Road, Saddle River introduced himself as a representative of the property owner 165 Crescent Avenue, LLC. Mr. Luis Moncada of 1463 Frances Lane, Plainfield introduced himself as the contractor hired by the Applicant to perform the window installation.

Chairwoman Gurshman asked Mr. Khan what he is proposing; Mr. Khan said he was not aware that he was in a historic district and he changed out 138 of the 200 wood windows with new vinyl windows, he is requesting an exception since new wood windows are too expensive. It is beyond his means to do anything else at this time - in the

future he could use wood window replacements. If he was aware that he was in a historic district he would not have done this project. Mr. Khan referred to a written letter he addressed to the Commission. The letter was included in the Commission's meeting packet.

Mr. Michelson said the only thing before us is what would be appropriate to the property; he understands the problem that Mr. Khan got into. Mr. Khan said nothing he has for the property informed him of what zone he was in- not the deed, the zone is not mentioned. Mr. Michelson asked if he had anything that told him what the zone is of the property; Mr. Khan said he didn't but he could show him all of the papers that came with the property. Mr. Michelson said he couldn't imagine buying a property without finding out what zone it was in.

Chairwoman Gurshman asked Mr. Moncada what happened at the Building Department when he got permits to do other work - was there a discussion to replace windows at that time? Mr. Moncada replied no. Mr. Khan added the only other permit was for lead paint abatement.

Ms. Turner Kavanaugh said that she couldn't approve vinyl windows. Chairwoman Gurshman said to Mr. Khan that we have a real problem here - if you have the exception then everyone has an exception- your case is no different except for scope and size, it is very difficult for us to do that because we have standards we are upholding.

Mr. Michelson asked wouldn't Mr. Khan had to have filed for a Certificate of Continued Occupancy? HPC Secretary Mr. Bauman said he was not sure but he does know when there is a change in ownership that there is a walk through by inspectors. Mr. Bauman asked Mr. Khan if he has a Certificate of Continued Occupancy. Mr. Khan said he applied for it and he would look for it. Mr. Michelson said the significance isn't in whether it was granted, but that it would show on that form what the zone is. Chairwoman Gurshman said the information about the districts is available- it is on the website, at the Planning Division, it's not a secret; the fact that the Applicant did not know is unfortunate.

Mr. Michelson commented that at bankruptcy, execution or foreclosure sale you take your chances and you do your due diligence; he asked Mr. Khan if he used an attorney- Mr. Khan responded yes. Mr. Michelson asked if there was an actual closing with him- Mr. Khan responded yes. Mr. Michelson asked if there was an attorney on behalf of the bankruptcy trustee- Mr. Khan responded yes. Chairwoman Gurshman said all of this doesn't change what the Commission needs to do.

Ms. King said our hearts go out to the Applicant, but we are bound to follow the regulations and the ordinance of the City. The application before us is for vinyl windows- not for wood windows. Mr. Westlake said the building is "H" shaped- parts of the building are recessed, there is one area where windows cannot be seen from the street: the south side of the building (the side that is visible looking north on Crescent Avenue) where it only has partial ornamentation- it wraps partially around. Mr. Westlake suggested that if the Commission were inclined to make any kind of a concession this would be the area to do so. Mr. Michelson feels that this would set a bad policy- Chairwoman Gurshman said the Commission has no purview over what we can't see. Mr. Michelson doesn't agree, Ms. Hunton said the ordinance is interested in the public view shed. Mr. Michelson said the ordinance's intent is not to split parts of building- he feels it is a slippery slope and is against it.

Mr. Westlake took pictures of the building; he passed around his pictures and narrated to the Commission which sides were viewable from the street. Mr. Westlake suggested that the Commission could take our cues from the building itself and permit vinyl windows on the façade that is more utilitarian- it almost looks like that portion of the building was concealed by another building at some point. Mr. Michelson said he can see all of the windows- there is no way to separate the building.

Mr. Khan wanted to know what the timing would be if changing to wood. Chairwoman Gurshman said that is an issue because the application is for vinyl not wood; the Commission would have to deny the application as submitted and then the Applicant would have to come back with an application for wood windows, or a combination of vinyl and wood. Chairwoman Gurshman added that the Commission cannot change your application tonight, all we can tell you is where we are headed.

Mr. Westlake said when one specifies a replacement window you are leaving the frame in place as opposed to removing everything within the opening. Mr. Khan said the wood frames are still intact.

Chairwoman Gurshman opened the public comment portion meeting. Ms. Carol Bicket of 1083 Hillside Avenue asked what makes this building so historic- it doesn't look anything like a historic building. Ms. Hunton said the historic district is the Crescent Historic District, it is near a group of buildings that is turn of the century; it is a 1925 Georgian Colonial Revival building. Jan Massey of 1410 Evergreen Avenue said no concessions were made to the previous applicant Landmark Developers why make concessions to this Applicant? Ms. Massey implored the Commission to apply the ordinance evenly.

April Stefel of 935 Madison Avenue said the first floor windows on the Crescent Avenue side are not yet touched- they are they are 8/8. The replacement windows installed are 1/1- they aren't even the right style. The new windows change the visual characteristic of the building. Ms. Stefel said she doubts that the replacement windows are equipped to accommodate snap in muntins. If the Commission approves the vinyl windows they are setting a dangerous precedent. Ms. Stefel cited the previous applicant: 134-136 North Avenue who asked approval for previously installed vinyl windows and you denied that request and made him go with wood windows. How many windows really can't be seen- 8 or 10 out of 200?

Chairwoman Gurshman closed the public comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Michelson made a motion to deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for "after-the fact" approval for the removal of one-hundred thirty-eight (138) "8 over 8" wood frame windows and the installation of one-hundred thirty-eight (138) "1 over 1" vinyl windows at above-cited address, and that any new proposal would require the Applicant to reapply. Ms. Turner Kavanaugh seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by a roll call voice vote.

Chairwoman Gurshman asked Mr. Khan if he understood what happened; Mr. Khan said he did not. Chairwoman Gurshman told Mr. Khan he could appeal the decision to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, or submit a new application for wood windows. Chairwoman Gurshman thanked Mr. Khan. Mr. Bauman informed Mr. Khan that he would get the denial letter in writing within 10 days.

3. Consideration for the Review and Approval of the 2012 Year End Report

The Commission reviewed Secretary Bauman's draft report and had several suggestions to revise the report to include outreach efforts to the public. Mr. Bauman recorded the suggested changes and agreed to provide Chairwoman Gurshman with the revised draft prior to sending it to the Planning Board and City Council. After further discussion, Ms. Turner Kavanaugh made a motion to accept the 2012 year-end report to include additional language about outreach efforts to the public. Ms. King seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by voice vote.

4. Comments on Redesign / Revitalization of the Entry Landscape Area in Front of City Hall

Chairwoman Gurshman informed the Commission that the Architectural Review Committee met with Department of Public Works Director Eric Jackson and Supervisor John Louise in front of City Hall to discuss proposed landscape changes to the area in front of City Hall. Chairwoman Gurshman also informed the Commission that Plainfield resident and certified landscape architect April Stefel was present to give her professional opinion about the proposal.

Ms. April Stefel of 935 Madison Avenue introduced herself to the Commission; she is a certified landscape architect in the State of New Jersey. Ms. Stefel told the Commission that she just received a copy of the plan about an hour ago and that she was interested first in what Historic Commission consultant Gail Hunton thought of the plan. Ms. Hunton said she also just received a copy of the plan that evening and from the initial review it doesn't appear to be a bad plan; since City Hall is a historic landmark, and April has knowledge of historic landscape design. Ms. Hunton said she would prefer to see something that is historically appropriate; she cited the numerous photos and vintage postcards that were provided along with the plan.

Ms. Turner Kavanaugh said the City wants or hopes that the Commission will approve the concept tonight because they want to start work in April. The Architectural Review Committee met on Sunday morning and the city did not have their concept then; Mr. Louise felt that his design matched the recommendations made then by the Architectural Review Committee. Chairwoman Gurshman said that presently the railing is loose, there is staining on the steps.

Mr. Louise suggested bluestone where there is cement now; he suggested removing the “u” shaped shrubbery along the seating area and plant 4 Hawthorne trees in its place.

Ms. Stefel said a period of time of significance should be chosen, and then keep in mind that the building is the dominant feature, not the landscape, walkway, etc. The plan that Ms. Stefel reviewed is a very nice plan, but it is not appropriate to the building. Ms. Stefel suggests a green, formal plan- not a lot of color- highlight the building, not the landscape. Landscaping should be sparse; you can augment a design with perennials and annuals. The walkway should be brick with running bluestone pattern.

The city could approach this in one of two ways- 1) chose a period of time of significance, or 2) chose a modern interpretation, following the original plan, augmenting with different plant material. Ms. Stefel objected to the boxwoods- they are susceptible to burning and drying out; they are also intolerant of salt. There is a lot of landscape material that requires high maintenance and a lot of water usage.

After further discussion, the Commission requested Gail Hunton to compose a memorandum to Messers. Jackson and Louise. The letter composed and approved by the Commission consisted of the following:

The Historic Preservation Commission appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed landscape plan, and applauds the City's efforts to revitalize the entrance area to Plainfield City Hall, a historic landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also in attendance at the HPC meeting on March 19th were April Stefel, a landscape architect with broad experience in historic landscape design, and Gail Hunton, the City's historic preservation consultant. Below is a summary of our comments.

1. The overall form of the entrance plan respects the formal design of the Georgian Revival building. The proposed bluestone edge along the brick walkway, the form and treatment of the U-shaped seating areas, the retention and repair of the wrought iron fence, and the bluestone pier bases are all appropriate.
2. In order to create a planting plan that is more compatible with the building's formal classical design, and will also reduce maintenance, the HPC recommends the following changes to the plant schedule: (1) the existing overgrown English yew hedge, which is at least 50 years old, should be retained and severely pruned (alternatively, new English yew may be replanted in its place, taking care not to damage the walkway and fence during removals); (2) eliminate the rest of the proposed plant material except for the Hawthorns, which will provide needed shade at the seating areas, and the Stella de Oro daylilies, which will provide some color along the walkway. The general consensus of the HPC was that some of the plant material was not suitable for the entrance area (especially the boxwood and oak leaf hydrangea), and that the plantings proposed will require much higher maintenance.

Committee Reports / Staff Report

1. **Architectural Review / Minor Application Review Committee:** no news to report
2. **Community Outreach / Historic Preservation Awareness Committee**
 - A. Postcard notifying owners in historic districts / locally designated historic sites: working on final draft and for comments from city officials. Recommendations include having a Spanish version of the post card available on the Commission's website.
 - B. Sleepy Hollow Realtors newsletter insert: The insert was included in the March newsletter.
 - C. Revisions to City's Certificate of Compliance to reflect historic district / landmark status: no update.
 - D. Spanish translation of Design Guidelines: Commission members discussed the merits about Commission applying to the Culture and Heritage Commission for funds to finance this project. The Commission was advised to submit applications quickly. Ms. Turner Kavanaugh said she would work with Chairwoman Gurshman on this project.
3. **Ordinance Revision Committee:** no news to report.

4. **Replacement of Green Brook Park Pedestrian Bridge- Green Brook Park Historic District**

- **Background:** In June and October, the City informed Union County and the SHPO that Planning Board review and Historic Preservation Commission review is required for this project. In November, the County's consulting engineer Neglia Associates sent plans to Langan Engineering- the City's consulting engineer- to coordinate the bridge design with the NJDEP design standards for the Green Brook Walkway. Langan Engineering reviewed the plan and provided comments in December, 2012. In January, 2013, HPC Consultant Gail Hunton spoke to Union County Engineering Department (Paul Leso) about Langan's comments. The discussion focused on a wooden footbridge on sheet 29.02; the design does not meet AASHTO requirements and the County cited concerns over the durability and maintenance of timber bridges. Ms. Hunton agreed to prepare a letter for Union County citing the durability of timber bridges. In February, the Commission learned that the County has all of the plans and the specifications for all of the bridges are included in the plans. The HPC was asked to make sure that the bridge locations remain the same.
- **Update:** no new news.

5. **Replacement of Pemberton Avenue Culvert PL-75: Cedar Brook Park Historic District**

- **Background:** Ms. Hunton heard from the State Historic Preservation Office that Union County's consulting engineer agreed to make revisions to the culvert design- these revised plans have not yet been received by the City or the State Historic Preservation Office. Mr. Bauman will follow up with the County. The City and County are discussing the possibility of sharing the cost of the new culvert design by further sharing the costs associated with non-related roadway paving projects.
- **Update:** no new news.

6. **Properties in Historic Districts / Historic Sites with Code / Maintenance Violations**

- Mr. Bauman referred Commission members to the meeting packet which lists the properties of interest.

Discussion

Ms. Nancy Piwowar of 1121 Myrtle Avenue informed the Commission about a recent appellate court decision involving the Hillside Cemetery and a phone tower in Scotch Plains. Ms. Piwowar contacted the State Historic Preservation Office and plans to contact the FCC about the court decision.

Ms. Turner Kavanaugh left the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Adjournment of Regular Meeting

There being no further business, Mr. Michelson made a motion for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Garrett, all voted in favor, none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Bauman

Scott Bauman, AICP, PP
Principal Planner / HPC Secretary, Plainfield Planning Division

Prepared: April 17, 2013

HPC Approved: April 23, 2013