

**TOWNSHIP OF WYCKOFF
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
APRIL 9, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

The April 9, 2024 Historic Preservation Commission meeting was held in the Conference Room in Memorial Town Hall. Doug Swenson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Ms. Mitchell read the Open Public Meeting Notice: The April 9, 2024 Open Public Meeting of the Wyckoff Historic Preservation Commission is now in session. In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting appears on our annual schedule of meetings. A copy of said annual schedule has been posted on the bulletin board in Memorial Town Hall; a copy has been filed with the Township Clerk, The Record, The Ridgewood News, and the North Jersey Herald News – all newspapers with general circulation throughout the Township of Wyckoff. At least 48 hours prior to this meeting, the agenda thereof was similarly posted, filed, and emailed to said newspapers.

Roll Call

Present: Patricia Constance, Richard Lynch, Curtis Bajak, Beth Van Emburgh, Joseph Haftek, Rudy Boonstra, and Maureen Mitchell.

Absent: Doug Swenson, Steve Zmuda, and Joseph Cestaro.

Ms. Constance chaired the meeting in Mr. Swenson's absence.

Old Business

Approval of the March 12, 2024 meeting minutes.

Mr. Lynch made a motion to approve the minutes. Second, Ms. Constance. Voting in favor: Mr. Lynch, Ms. Constance, and Ms. Mitchell. Abstained: Mr. Haftek, Mr. Bajak, and Mr. Boonstra. (Ms. Van Emburgh arrived shortly after the vote was taken)

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
NO ONE FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENTED
CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

New Business

Ms. Constance said the main focus of the meeting is to finalize the list of homes for historic preservation as was discussed at the March 12th meeting. It was determined by the Commission members that a few of the structures could be removed from the list either because they have been heavily renovated, or they are protected from imminent threat of demolition.

A question was raised about the Brick House. Ms. Mitchell said that while the building has been heavily renovated, the original brick structure still exists.

Ms. Van Emburgh said she believes the Commission members determined that there is no threat of that building going anywhere so it does not need immediate attention.

Mr. Haftek said that it is his understanding that the owners did everything they could to preserve the original section when they renovated and added on.

Mr. Boonstra said he does not feel it needs to be a priority because there is no threat that the building will go anywhere, however he pointed out that the building sits on a large piece of property. He went on to say, what we have found recently is that developers are cobbling together two (2) pieces of property which ordinarily would not be on the inventory for affordable housing because they are not big enough, but if you put two (2) or three (3) of these properties together, you have a different story. He explained that the Township recently rezoned a couple of properties for single family, affordable housing to try to avoid higher density housing on those sites.

Ms. Van Emburgh said the Commission members were mindful of that when we looked at this list of properties. Any older home, on a large piece of property, was marked as a priority.

Mr. Bajak mentioned the fact that the Town Hall building is on our list however it was decided that it does not need to be a priority. He went on to say he recalls that at a previous meeting Mr. Boonstra voiced the opinion that the Town Hall should be a priority for historic designation in order to preserve the look of the roof which now needs to be replaced. He suggested that the Commission look at this specifically for that reason.

Mr. Boonstra said there is an engineering feasibility study being performed for the roof as we speak. In addition, our Police Department is beyond outdated and needs work, so it is also part of the study. In light of that, we should probably have a conversation about keeping Town Hall on the list.

Ms. Constance said we would like to finalize the list this evening so that we can move forward.

Mr. Haftek suggested it would be best to put as many structures on the list as possible. It was decided to keep Town Hall on the list for historic preservation designation.

Mr. Boonstra asked if anyone ever looked at placing Coolidge School on the list. Ms. Van Emburgh said it should be on the list.

To confirm the final decision as discussed, Ms. Mitchell said Town Hall will be kept on the list, the Union Cemetery, Cobbler/Barber Shop (Historical Society Museum), and the Old Rail Station (Economy Shop) are not priorities at this time because they are protected.

Ms. Constance asked for a motion to approve the amended list. Ms. Van Emburgh made a motion to approve the amended list. Second, Mr. Bajak. Voting in favor: Mr. Bajak, Mr. Lynch, Ms. Van Emburgh, Mr. Haftek, Mr. Boonstra, Ms. Mitchell, and Ms. Constance.

Ms. Constance said the next step is to decide how much information we need to gather on the structures, and if we should use the original base form that the County used to designate the homes on their list.

Mr. Boonstra pointed out that there was no dispute over the original list of homes that were incorporated into the Master Plan. Those homes had already been listed on the National Registry of Historic Structures, so there was no question that they should be on a protected list.

Mr. Bajak asked if the strategy should be to go to the Planning Board with a short list of the homes or the entire list. Mr. Haftek suggested doing them all at once because his fear is that someone who is against having their home designated for historic preservation may react quickly with some type of renovation or demolition once they get wind of the HPC's intentions.

Mr. Boonstra said letters will have to be sent to the homeowners and the Commission will have to hold a public meeting to discuss the HPC's intentions with those homeowners. He added that having such a large group at the public meeting may be difficult. Ms. Mitchell suggested splitting the list of homeowners into two (2) separate public meetings. Mr. Boonstra agreed with that suggestion.

Ms. Mitchell suggested that the HPC gather as much information as possible about the historic homes on the list prior to holding the public meeting with the homeowners. That way, we can provide the homeowners with the information about their homes to show why we wish to preserve them. Mr. Bajak said he is sure that many of these homeowners will be very flattered and honored to be on this list.

Mr. Lynch said the County did some of the work back in 1982 and 2000. Ms. Mitchell agreed saying that the 1982-83 and the 2000 Bergen County Historic Sites Surveys contain information on almost all of the homes on our list so those are a good starting point.

Regarding sources of information, Ms. Van Emburgh recommended the Bolger Center at the Ridgewood Library. Mr. Lynch said we should also find out what is available in the Wyckoff History Room.

Mr. Bajak suggested trying to trace historical information through deeds to find out about the families that actually lived in these homes, and maybe adding some color from the genealogical history. He said the deeds are all available in large volumes at the County offices. Mr. Lynch said that as someone who tried this about twenty (20) years ago, it was an arduous process.

Ms. Van Emburgh asked about using census records. Mr. Bajak said before 1880, they very often did not have street names or house numbers, however that is something that can be looked at as well. Mr. Bajak offered to teach the Commission members how to search those old records by using the large screen TV in the conference room, as long as someone could handle the technical details for setting it up.

There was a discussion about how to split the list of homeowners into two (2) separate meetings. Ms. Van Emburgh suggested having a group of some homeowners that we know will be excited about the historic designation along with some who may not be as excited about it. Mr. Boonstra suggested adding the homeowners names to the list, instead of just the property address.

Ms. Constance will work on splitting the list of properties up between the HPC members.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. The meeting concluded at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen Mitchell
Commission Secretary