

Westfield Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Monday February 28, 2018

In Attendance: Kelly Kessler, Neal Acito, Jennifer Jaruzelski, Doug Stokes, Joseph Biren, James Corcoran, Robert Wendel, Maria Boyes, David Hagan, Alison Carey, Jenn Czarnecki, Michael LaPlace

Absent: Michael Fisher

Minutes of 1/29/2018 meeting reviewed and approved by Commission.

The following agenda items were discussed:

1. Formation of Committees

- The Chair addressed email from James Corcoran expressing concerns about informal meetings earlier this month. It was clarified that the meetings were in preparation for tonight's discussion in order to provide a starting point for discussion about committees. James suggested informing all members of informal meetings with the option to provide input if not able to participate.

- Brief discussion regarding Asana, the project management tool Rob initiated for the Commission. Other options were discussed, including a town standard for such tools (this is an open question). Asana may or may not be continued but will be used for now.

- Initial committees to be formed. A hand out with descriptions was distributed to all members.

Comments about committees include:

Communications Committee: Create public awareness through news outlets & social media; utilize the Mayor's media team.

- Agreement that town should approve content. Discussion regarding Facebook: positives/negatives, static page with no comments, discipline with content. No decision made tonight.
- Suggestion regarding HPC email; a member suggested that it can/should be part of the town website Planning staff and can have an employee of that group monitor

Community Relations/Designations Committee: engage & educate property owners about HPC, develop positive relationships with them & provide assistance for preservation. Suggestions from Commission members and public comments included:

- Highlight awards for preservation
- Engage with public and encourage input
- Host coffees and other events to meet residents & start dialogue
- Create slide shows of historic properties lost and those close to demolition
- Highlight value proposition of keeping historic properties

Pam Wiaczek requested public comment and read the comments she made at the Town Council meeting last week (the need for HPC to be more involved and pro-active in preservation; need to review the ordinance, etc.)

Debbie Burslem made similar comments and reminded the Commission about vulnerable houses on Walnut, Ferris Place and 309 W. Dudley Avenue, as well as Mindowaskin Park.

Historic Preservation Plan Committee: collect town ordinances to determine what needs to be updated in the Preservation Plan, which will be included Mayor's Master Plan. Michael LaPlace endorsed idea and suggested partnership with the Planning Board. Discussion about referencing Union County Historic Inventory as part of the HPC Ordinance.

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Award Committee: goal is to reinstate the Harry Devlin Awards Program. Discussion included the following:

- List of prior recipients no longer exists
- Target May to launch
- Focus on preservation/not cost
- Start with 10 homes

Interns Committee: discussion regarding timing to get student project this year. Pam Wiaczek confirmed that program at WHS goes through May. Commission to reach out ASAP.

Kelly informed members that they must participate on at least one committee in order for HPC to fulfill its objectives for the year. Members can change any committees they have been assigned to already.

2. Certified Local Government Application

- Kelly updated members on resume submissions required for application. All members aside from James have submitted resumes.
- James committed to submitting his resume by next week but only to Don Sammet

3. 1481 East Broad Street

- Owners daughter wants to work with HPC and is seeking advice before listing
- Currently, no more than 2 houses will be built to avoid variances
- Questions to Michael L. re: zoning and he suggested that she meet with Don Sammet (Town Planner)

4. Walnut Street house:

- Dumpster in driveway, sign on property; neighbors reluctant to get involved
- The two neighbors should be first contacts made by Community Relations Committee to discuss designating the block and alleviate reservations. Suggestion to have a coffee for them.
- Additional discussion involved the following:
 - o What is our demo permit process and how difficult is it? More difficult to demo in other towns.
 - o Ordinance changes required, including acceptance of Federal and State designations to carry over to local designation.
 - o Michael L. discussed Montclair, which pro-actively drove designations of 6 districts

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:18 PM