

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of April 16, 2008

Present: Bill Beute, Dale Blum, Caryl Brackenridge, Paul Krylowski, Susan Penney, and Eileen Stokes.

This regularly scheduled April meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, having been advertised in the *Observer Tribune* in January, 2008, and posted on the Municipal Building bulletin board and on the Township web site, was called to order at 7:38 p.m. in the Senior Citizen Center. Location change was posted on the Municipal Bldg. door.

Chairman Stokes announced that Walter Hollien, Keith Hayes and Barbara Rossi were absent and Alternates Bill Beute and Susan Penney would be voting.

Minutes

Paul Krylowski made a motion, seconded by Bill Beute and unanimously approved, to accept the February 20, 2008, and March 19, 2008, minutes as written.

Old Business

CLG grant - a professional contract is being awarded to Wayne McCabe & Assoc. to review and revise the current Preservation Ordinance. HPC Commissioners should think about changes they would like the consultants to consider.

Zion Public Notice - although not required, the Zion Lutheran Church is arranging the publication of a notice that their COA application for an addition was approved.

Hackettstown Seminar - Dale Blum attended an historic preservation seminar on 3/29/08.

Public Hearing

Applicants: Morris County, represented by Brian Caruso; and Medina Consultants, represented by Stefan Eskesen and Steven Panay. Project is the proposed replacement of structure No. 1401-202, Middle Valley Road Bridge, over the South Branch of the Raritan River. Project is located in the Middle Valley Historic District.

This public hearing was properly advertised in the *Observer Tribune* and letters were sent to property owners within 200 feet of the project. However, the letters were not sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, so the applicants did not present a certification of service of such notice.

Mr. Caruso of the Morris County Engineering Department began the hearing by explaining that the bridge replacement is a federally funded project and is in the scoping phase during which the need for the project is established and viable alternatives for implementation are developed. The next phases will be final design and construction.

The original structure was a steel Pratt truss bridge built in 1928 and supported on stone abutments. It was replaced in 1981 with a temporary Acrow panel truss bridge which is

now classified as “functionally obsolete” and “structurally deficient.” Following an “officials meeting” in February, the following proposal was developed: The new bridge would be two lanes, 26 feet from curb to curb, with a 5 foot sidewalk on the south side. The approach roadways would flare to meet the bridge, current drop-offs would be eliminated and modern structural standards would be met.

The consultants displayed three alternatives that had been considered: a steel pony truss, a steel multi-girder, and a prestressed concrete box beam bridge. The later two were rejected as the deeper superstructures required would encroach into the existing hydraulic opening and neither one would be consistent with the district’s period of significance. (1740- 1900).

At this point, Chairman Stokes pointed out that while there is no evidence of the first bridge on that site, there is photographic evidence that the 1928 bridge was a through truss bridge braced at the top. While the replacement does not have to replicate this exactly, it should replicate the historic character of that bridge.

The consultants then passed out a sheet showing examples of four truss bridges. They also explained that they had talked to two bridge manufacturers about a through truss bridge with bracing across the top. Both would be willing to fabricate such a bridge but one company would not engineer it. The bracing would be cosmetic and would add a few more weeks to the construction schedule.

Commissioner Krylowski noted that the Greystoke Bridge in High Bridge had been taken down by Hunterdon County and placed into storage. He asked if that bridge could be refurbished and used on this site. Mr. Caruso said he would talk to Hunterdon County.

Secretary Brackenridge explained that HPC recommendations made at the March meeting were for paint color of “foliage green,” bridge railings of tubular steel painted the same color, weathering steel guide rails on the approaches, no pylons on the approaches, an asphalt surface on the roadway and metal grating for the sidewalk decking. Since that meeting, the consultants were informed that the County considered metal grating a safety issue in inclement weather.

Commissioner Stokes opened the meeting for public comment and the following discussions ensued:

Q. Why won’t one company engineer a through truss bridge? Is this a liability issue?

A. Consultants explained that it would be more costly for the company and they weren’t willing to incur that time and cost.

Statement, Want whatever bridge will slow down traffic and keep big trucks off the road - which is impassable for large trucks. Also concerned about approach changes causing more flooding downstream.

A. Consultants do not think approach changes will affect flooding.

George Cassa of Historic Hamlets stated that he was concerned about the road width and engineers are not always correct about ASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) standards. He noted NJ Title 27-13-1A which states that municipalities govern road widths. He said that ASHTO standards would allow 9 foot lanes versus the 13 foot lanes proposed. He said the roadway approaches are only 20 feet wide and the crossing is a central feature of Middle Valley.

A. Consultants replied that they would check the ASHTO standards but believe that 9 feet is for the lowest amount of traffic, which is not the case here. They also agreed that municipalities can control the road widths but this is a federally funded project and 13 foot lanes are the minimum allowed by the federal DOT.

Q. Has a traffic study been done?

A. 2006 study showed 500 cars per day.

Q. When will construction begin?

A. Plan is to begin construction in 2011.

Q. Why does the current bridge have to be replaced? Can it just be fixed?

A. It was a temporary replacement in 1981, and after 27 years is “structurally deficient.”

Statement: The current bridge is not being supported by the original stone abutments but is resting on concrete abutments behind the stone ones. The stone abutments are historic and should not be disturbed. A photo was given to the consultants showing the stone abutments and behind them, the concrete abutments which are supporting the bridge.

A. Consultants agreed that it might be possible to leave original abutments undisturbed.

Q. Where will the construction vehicles park?

A. There will be an off-site staging area with a trailer and equipment.

Statement: Please try to minimize the width of the bridge.

Statement: According to the drawings, the current bridge is 30 feet wide now and proposed bridge is 33 feet wide. Reducing the lanes from 13 feet to 11.5 feet would make the new bridge the same size as the current bridge.

After more public comments about keeping the bridge as narrow as possible, the meeting was closed for public comment and most of the public left. The HPC requested the following information before issuing a COA:

1. Medina Consultants will check the ASHTO standards again to see if the lane widths can be reduced. They will send a letter to Chairman Stokes outlining their findings.
2. Brian Caruso and the consultants will investigate the possibility of using the Hunterdon County bridge.
3. Medina Consultants will prepare three to-scale drawings from the side and from the front so the HPC can compare a steel pony truss (alternative 1), a truss bridge with taller steel members like the So. Carolina bridge example, and a through truss braced at the top.

HPC emphasized the importance of preserving the original stone abutments as they are the only remaining historic element of the 1928 bridge. Commissioners asked that the sidewalk width be reduced from 5 feet to 4 feet and that the sidewalk decking be timber. They also agreed on a picket sidewalk railing (with crossing members added if the So. Carolina bridge design is the one approved.)

New Business

Preservation Award Nominations -

Eleanor Taormina for her efforts to preserve the church ruins on Fairview Ave.

DelTufo house at 137 E. Valley Brook Rd.

Evans at 19 Heath Lane

Preston-Ermanis at 155 Old Turnpike Rd.

Peck Farm barn on Parker Rd., being rebuilt by new owner - decision was that barn may not be old and construction being done does not qualify as historic preservation.

However, HPC should send a letter expressing appreciation that a barn is being saved.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be April 22.

This meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Caryl R. Brackenridge, Secretaary