



MINUTES

Thursday, August 20, 2015
7:30 pm @ Hightstown-East Windsor
Historical Society



Hightstown
Historic Preservation
Commission

Call to order:

2014 Chairman Pratt called the meeting to order at 7:39pm.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement: Rick Pratt read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Cardoso (PC):	Present	Commissioner Egan (DE):	Absent
Commissioner Carney (WC):	Absent	Commissioner: Honsel (JH):	Absent
Commissioner Pratt (RP):	Present	Commissioner, Mair (JM) Alt. #1:	Present
Commissioner Teller (RT):	Present	Commissioner, Alt. #2: (Vacant)	--
Commissioner von Riegen (RvR):	Absent		

Council Liaison C. Montferrat (CM): Absent

Planning Bd. Liaison F. Montferrat (FM): Absent

Minutes: July, 19 2015 minutes were moved and approved.

Public Comment: None.

Guests: Mayor Larry Quattrone

Opinion Requests:

326 Stockton Street – Mike and Lori Fabian. On August 11, 2015 Chairman Pratt noticed that the Fabians had removed their front steps and railing balusters, and were in the process of replacing the steps with man-made material. The owner was approached and asked to come to the HPC meeting 8/20/15. At 6:45pm on the 20th an email was sent to the HPC email address as follows, with photos:

To the members of the Hightstown Historical Preservation Commission:

Recently, we decided to repaint our porch. When the painter began scraping and sanding, it became clear that the slats that were serving as balusters for the handrails were completely rotted and had to be removed. The steps themselves were warping and buckling and we also decided to replace them with composite planks.

It did not occur to us to contact the HHC about this because the steps, porch railings and newel posts are not part of the original historical elements of our house. As you can see from the attached photo, the pressure-treated posts are not original and were likely added recently, probably in the 90s, shortly before we took ownership.

From our own research, Italianate porches like the one on our house did not usually have railings at all either on the porch or the steps, so if we were to undertake an accurate historical restoration, we would likely remove all the railings and balustrades. In any case, we removed the balusters and replaced the steps, but kept the railings. See second photo to see how they look now. (The porch painting is incomplete.)

A short walk down Stockton St. in the historic district revealed that many of the houses do not have railings at all on their steps. Others have open railings with no balusters or pickets, including the

Byrne house next door to ours. Even the Methodist Church, which is a public meeting place, has open railings. (See third and fourth photos for examples.)

In conclusion, in light of the fact that numerous others in the HHD have either no railing on their steps or open railings, we do not believe that having open railing on our steps should present a problem, either for safety or historical appropriateness. We appreciate your consideration and hope that this will satisfy any requirements.

Sincerely,

*Michael and Lori Fabian
326 Stockton Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520
609-448-7101*

The HPC deliberated and determined that however unfortunate, the composite treads and new 4x4 newel post are not detrimental to the historic fabric of the house and can be removed later and restored to a period situation. However, removing the railing balusters is a building code violation. Thus the building department will address this separate from the HPC Opinion.

208 Stockton Street: Chris and Holly Moraitis plan to build a freestanding garage. They submitted a loosely drawn sketch for review by the Commission. Mr. Moraitis attended the meeting. Chairman Pratt built a 3D computer model based on the sketch so that the commissioners could fully understand the shape of the structure, and this was approved by Mr. Moraitis with the exception that the front garage doors will be sliding “barn” doors.

Mr. Moraitis has not settled on exterior materials yet, but the color will likely be natural weathered cedar. The cedar may be shingles, clapboard or board and batten; or a combination. The shape is a 20' x 30' rectangle with an A-frame style roof shedding water to the sides. On both sides there will be a shed dormer approximately 2/3 the length of the garage. There will be a man-door on the yard side and windows on both sides. Mr. Moraitis stated that there had been a large carriage house on the property in the late 1800's, as shown on historic maps and Sanborne Fire Insurance maps, but no photos or design are available.

The Commission felt that the garage would not be detrimental to the character of the existing house or the neighborhood, and it was approved unanimously.

245 Stockton Street: Chairman Pratt asked in a previous meeting that commissioners review the porch columns and railing at Mr. Ordonez's house, 245 Stockton Street. In a past opinion the commission asked that the railing be installed and the columns have paint removed from the brick. RP thinks that maybe the paint looks okay when viewed alongside the other houses in the district. The Commissioners will review and discuss at the next meeting.

Commissioner Vacancies. JM was appointed before the meeting and is now listed as Alternate #1. Chairman Pratt has invited Keith White to sit in on the September meeting towards becoming Alternate #2.

Old Business:

Certified Local Government:

Post Meeting: JM made the revisions, forwarded to RP, and RP sent off to Jonathan Kinney for review.

Historic District Descriptive Sign: Commissioner Honsel passed around a shortened draft. Mr. Carney who was the latest commissioner to review the language was not able to attend the meeting. JH and WC to review and report back at the next meeting.

Preserve America Community: On 7/22/15 Hightstown officially became a Preserve America Community. One sign will be shipped and the Mayor would like to have the HPC buy three more to post signs at all major incoming roads.

Walking Tour Brochure / Phone App: Topic was not discussed.

Classic Towns Program (DVRPC): The dvrpc said that the HPC should see comments back from them by mid-August. This is the temporary link <http://www.classictowns.org/hightstown/> All Commissions and council people have been given the link to respond. Councilman Stults and RP made significant edit requests. *Post Meeting: The above link is the latest, but the dvrpc has refused to make most of the changes. This will be discussed with the Mayor and Planning Board chair to see if it's still worth pursuing.*

Grants: Chairman Pratt noted that he would like someone to create a spread sheet and track grants. Post Meeting: *RP asked Jean Mair to create a spread sheet example to review at the meeting.*

New Business:

None.

Adjournment:

The meeting was moved to be adjourned by RT, 2nd by PC at 8:45 pm.

Next Meeting: September 17, 2015 – 7:30pm, HEWHS