



# The Borough of Hightstown

## Historic Preservation Committee

156 Bank Street, Hightstown, New Jersey 08520

Phone – (609) 490-5100

### Historic Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes October 21, 2021

#### Call to Order

**Who:** Historic Preservation Commission

**When:** 10/21/21 at 5:30 PM

**Where:** Historic East Ward Street Bridge

#### Attendees

John Hostetler

Phillipe Cardoso

Rich Teller

Amanda Rosenberg

Ray Cabot

Joshua Jackson, Council Liaison

**STATEMENT:** Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, pursuant to Public Laws 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was advertised in the Trenton Times and Windsor-Hights Herald as required by law, and is posted in the Borough Clerk's Office.

This meeting took place on location at the Historic East Ward Street Bridge to discuss the pending bridge reconstruction plans. Others in attendance included Gregory Bitsko, Engineer, Patrick Harshbarger, Architectural Historian, and several members of the Historic Society and the public.

Patrick Harshbarger and Gregory Bitsko presented background information and prospective building alternatives. Here is a summary of the points:

- Bridge is owned by Mercer County. Ward Street roadway is owned by Hightstown
- Bridge was built in the 1890's. Structural issues that have occurred over time have resulted in the need to bring the bridge up to safety and geometric safety requirements, as per federal requirements.
- In order to make the bridge heavier and thicker to manage the increasing weight and speed of vehicles, steel beams and gusset plates have been welded onto the structure. These additions have added to the structural breakdown, and the bridge is still not up to road capacity. The current safety rating is at the lowest level, which will likely lead to the spread of micro cracks, critical fractures, and a need to close the bridge.
- Bridge was built for wagons; not 30-ton vehicles traveling at high speeds. The design of the truss is a "Double Intersection Warren" architectural pattern, which was used on bridges from 1890-1905. It was manufactured in Trenton. This bridge is historically significant, and the engineer and historical architect assured HPC that the truss will be restored and retained.
- Due to the regulatory framework with this project, additional permitting requirements, such as DEP and Wetlands permitting triggers NJ Historic Preservation involvement in a consultative role.
- Mercer County is using available NJDOT funding, provided minimum requirements are met, such as bridge width (at least 28 feet) and other safety regulations.
- There are several reconstruction options, and the paramount decision-point is the bridge's width. Current alternatives include keeping it the same width, which would result in loss of the funding, increasing the width to 28 feet (it's currently 21 feet wide), or increasing the width to 32 feet. Another discussion point is about including bicycle lanes for cyclist and motorist safety.
- As stated earlier, this bridge is historically significant, and the engineer and historical architect assured HPC that the truss will be restored and retained. Restoration includes removing rust and old paint, refurbishing the metal, reversing years of damage, and repainting. The truss will also be widened in accordance with the bridge width.
- HPC will submit an opinion letter which will include recommendations on all of the discussion points as well as on paint color and lighting.
- Gregory Bitsko and Patrick Harshbarger are offering a public hearing on the evening of November 8. Details and Zoom link available on [Hightstown Borough](#) website.

**Next Meeting – Thursday, 11/18/21 at 6:30pm virtual thru zoom**

**Useful Links:**

**Hightstown Master Plan: [Link to Master Plan](#)**