

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Barry
Robert Musgnug
Naoji Moriuchi
Melissa Arcaro Burns
Christopher Keating
William Wesolowski
Joe Maguire
Lisa Petriello
Alfred Driscoll
Kevin Aberant
D'Arcy DiSpirito

STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Wieliczko, Board Attorney
Patricia Muscella, Land Use Administrator

Absent: Rudy Thomas

Robert Musgnug called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of Town Hall, 111 West Second Street by reading the Open Public Meeting Act statement. The Pledge of Allegiance followed a moment of silence. Roll call was listed as above.

Approval of Resolution PB#2024-22 Lenola Wellness LLC

Adopted as written.

Aberant made a motion to approve Resolution PB#2024-22; seconded by Wesolowski. Keating recused himself, the roll call of eligible members was unanimous in favor.

Ordinance No 2-2025– Bond Ordinance providing for the 2025 road overlay program in and by the Township of Moorestown, in the County of Burlington, New Jersey, appropriating \$2,170,000 therefore and authorizing the issuance of \$2,061,500 bonds or notes of the Township to finance part of the costs thereof

Ordinance No. 3-2025– Bond Ordinance providing for improvements to Paddock Path, Nixon Drive and Harper Drive in and by the Township of Moorestown, in the County of Burlington, New Jersey, appropriating \$616,000 therefore and authorizing the issuance of \$340,140 bonds or notes of the Township to finance part of the costs thereof

If the Board finds these Ordinances consistent with the Master Plan, adoption of Resolution No. 2025-10 A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING TO TOWNSHIP COUNCIL ADOPTION OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ORDINANCES NO. 2-2025 AND 3-2025 APPROPRIATING MONIES AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS OR NOTES OF THE TOWNSHIP TO BE USED FOR 2025 ROAD OVERLAY PROGRAM (2-2025) AND FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO Paddock Path, Nixon Drive & Harper Drive (3-2025)

Maguire made a motion to find Ordinance 2-2025 and Ordinance 3-2025 consistent with the Master Plan; seconded by Moriuchi. A roll call vote of eligible voters was unanimous in favor.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

New Business:

PB#2024-26 Historic Preservation Element Plan of the Master Plan Public Hearing and adoption of the Historic Preservation Element Plan- Brian M. Slaugh, PP, AICP of Clarke Caton Hintz

This proceeding is a continuation of the January 16, 2025 meeting. Maguire was absent for the January 16th meeting but has watched the recorded meeting and reviewed all material and is eligible to vote tonight.

James Miller, Professional Planner, was sworn in. Appeared to comment on draft element from 2002 which relied on a 1989 survey of historic properties. 2002 recommended two preservation phases. Phase I – the central business district and Phase II- the balance of the historic district. The 2024 plan expands the scope and proposes third phase. 65% of dwellings in Moorestown date before 1975 and could be classified as historic based on that criteria alone. If demolition controls are implemented in the Township, funds would be needed to cover the costs of acquisition or preservation fees, to pay the staff administering the program, and owners of historic properties would be subject to Historic Preservation Commission reviews involving substantial costs for application and professional fees. The 2024 plan does not provide any details of the scope of historic district standards or their economic impacts. The Historic Commission reports its actions to the Planning Board and planning board members may also serve on the Historic Commission, so the Board has a stake in the process. The Board's review of the 2024 plan should include an assessment of time and the resources the Board will need to commit to the Historic Commission including added costs and added tasks of Historic Commission reviews and reports. Miller's focus this evening will be related to the Main Street Business District. Wieliczko clarified that Miller is actually referring to the January 16, 2025 report. Miller feels that historic Main Street may be the most vulnerable element and that Main Street businesses are fragile and possess a 19th century layout and must compete with 21st century commercial districts. Main Street is impacted by long block lengths, a high concentration of institutional uses and other constraints identified in the Master Plan Subplan Element which focuses on the central business district. Main Street has adapted to the more modern times of traffic, more box stores and the evolution of supermarkets that contain many of the services once provided by Main Street. Main Street has adapted by converting and retrofitting residential spaces into commercial store fronts and off-street parking has been created. Planners call this practice adaptive reuse. Should the district be preserved as is, or should it be enhanced? Is the cost and time of the Board justified? Are the scope and boundaries of the district appropriate? Does the district have the uniformity and character that justify historic district controls as opposed to the typical and conventional design and zoning controls that exist? Is the preservation necessary and in the best interest of the district?

Miller states that the 1989 survey is outdated and will begin by reviewing historic designation criteria. Most important criteria are those in the New Jersey Administrative Code at 7:4-2.3(a)(1) which establishes the criteria of listings on the New Jersey historic places. The criteria for evaluation include the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture is present in the district sites, buildings, objects and structures that possess integrity of location, design, settings, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and: (Criterion A) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or (Criterion B) that are associated with the lives of persons significant to our

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

past; or (Criterion C) that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual direction; or (Criterion D) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. Wieliczko interjected to state that there is already in place a historic preservation plan element and the Board is charged with deciding if this element needs to be updated. Wieliczko would like them to focus their testimony on what they are objecting to in the amendment. The point that Miller wants to make is there isn't sufficient detail or materials in the studies that underwrite the 2002 study and is even more outdated than it was in 2002 when it was used as the basis for the plan. Those studies have to provide information that must be used if we ever wanted to adopt historic zoning and what their criteria is. If you have a governmentally funded project that involves a designated historic structure, you have to go to the state and get their review of the project to make sure it is consistent with the guidelines. An honorary designation and a plaque on your house that says its historic doesn't have the same implications as an ordinance that says you have to have historically appropriate shutters, etc. The historic survey done in 1989 encompassed 417 buildings, the district is listed on both state and federal levels in 1990. Even though it was appropriate to support the 1990 listing, an examination of the document shows it would be inappropriate to rely on that document to justify the imposition of historic district zoning in the central business district. The fieldwork was conducted 36 years ago, predates current standards and lacks essential details, much of the state enabling legislation for historic properties was adopted after 1989. Asks that ten slides are shown and will be labeled "O-1" (Muscella clarified that we have 9 slides). Slide 1 is a photograph from the 1989 survey (221 and 217 Chester Avenue) and it shows one photo with two buildings. Current practice would require 2 separate pictures for these structures. The next slide shows 2 short blurbs about the properties as to why these structures are historic. The lack detail and both were classified as contributing but doesn't say why other than age. They have modernizations to them. Slide 3 is the same structure (different angle) in its current state. Wieliczko interrupted to remind everyone that the Board is not there tonight to discuss zoning. Miller stated he understood. Miller's point is that the current plan under review should be based on contemporary analysis. Slides 4-7 is an example from North Jersey showing how much information should be provided for a historic site and what a contemporary evaluation looks like. Slides 8 and 9 show current businesses on Main Street. Mr. Keating asked for clarification regarding slides 4-7 as they are a public building and therefore interior photos were easy to obtain versus if it's a private residence that may not want interior photos included. Miller wants his concerns about that type of zoning put on the record: "It imposes additional steps in the development review process which has an economic impact, it emphasizes preservation over adaption which is at odds with the historic patterns that have shaped that district, it creates design standards that require historic materials for exterior improvements which may not be readily available and may add significant cost to a structure, and it regulates demolition. But preservation zoning delays demolition for up to 12 months but it also involves the Township making commitments to the funding in many cases." Miller quotes the Cox book "Once reserved by the Planning Board, pursuant to the statute, the governing body must within a one-year period must enter into a contract to purchase the property or condemn, otherwise the reservation expires and the municipality must pay just compensation for the temporary taking and the deprivation of the use during the time of reservation." Miller feels the cost of implementing the plan should be looked at.

Brian Slaugh crossed examining Mr. Miller asked if he had ever prepared a historic preservation

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

plan element to the Master Plan? Miller has not. Wieliczko swore in Slaugh. Slaugh apologized for his lateness to the meeting. Slaugh asked if Miller if he has ever assisted in preparing a nomination to a state or federal historic petition? Miller stated that he had years ago and Slaugh asked in what context and for what municipality? He stated what he prepared in the past was on a voluntary basis and he also assisted in the preservation of Barclay Farmstead in Cherry Hill Township. Slaugh asked in what capacity? Miller was the Township Planner on the municipal staff. But that wasn't involved in creating a nomination petition for that historical resource, correct? Miller stated that Slaugh was correct. Slaugh questioned Miller for quoting a portion of the state code. Miller agreed. Slaugh confirmed with Miller that Moorestown is on the state's register of historical places. So Moorestown met the criteria in 1990 when it was added. Slaugh asked if it no longer met the criteria for being on the state register. Miller stated there are numerous buildings in the central business district that that is correct. Slaugh asked if Miller was a historic architect? Miller replied he is not. Slaugh asked if he had any certificates in historic preservation not related to architecture? Miller stated, he does not. Slaugh asked what the basis of him making that determination is then? Miller stated that he is a professional planner and has taken seminars on historic preservation and planning, he has represented clients in other jurisdictions where historic plans were proposed. He spent three years representing Lafayette University regarding a proposed historic district that unfortunately didn't move forward because of several different reasons. Miller stated he has also had clients where he needed to work on historic plans but given the character of those municipalities and the resources that they had, they only talked about them in concept. Miller believes he has significant experience with historic designation and as a planner he looks at case law and applies to whatever circumstance he has been asked to evaluate and that is what he has done here. He has studied the survey and plans from 1989 and feels comfortable providing expert testimony. Slaugh questioned how Miller could evaluate buildings to determine historic significance without any credentials related to historic architecture. Miller states that is untrue as he has taken urban design classes, has done plan review his entire career and is familiar with different types of historic architecture. Miller has been to many hearings involving historic preservation and has reviewed many cases; he has reviewed numerous Master Plans and the criteria they use. He has attended meetings in Haddonfield where Historic Preservation commission reported to the Board. Slaugh stated the fact is that Moorestown is on the state registry and also, the more difficult to obtain, national register of historic places. Miller states that Slaugh is correct but maintains the opinion that it doesn't mean it is detailed enough or current enough to support further planning. Slaugh is asking if Miller is trying to un-ring that bell stating it no longer meets the criteria and therefore does he think the study should be discarded? Does Miller know of any other locations where state and national historic districts have been delisted because they hadn't done through this same process? Not that things have changed in those districts but because they no longer met the standards for inclusion that you would do today. Wieliczko interjected to state this is cross testimony and needs to be just question and answer.

Board Comments on Testimony:

Moriuchi asked Miller if Coldwell Bankers was in the historic district and if it was deemed contributable. Miller said it was considered contributing in the 1989 study and his issue with that is that even though its an old building, does it really have an historic significance? Moriuchi clarified that Miller is saying the 1989 plan is outdated and therefore the Planning Board should not approve? Miller said that is one of his points, yes. Maguire questioned Slaugh if there would be a required survey as part of Phase III and Slaugh responded that additional studies would be required.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

DiSpirito agrees with Miller that all aspects of downtown should be evaluated but questioned if there was a specific rejection to the language that is being voted on this evening. Miller replied that he would like to see the Board step back and update the subplan element for the entire district because it is more comprehensive. He feels of the subplan element was updated it could be applied to additional steps to make the area more stable or create different design standards. In our zoning we have setbacks and he would like to see a street wall created to create a more uniform appearance and that would include the evaluation of what a building's contributing factors are. Some businesses that were viable years ago just aren't viable anymore. DiSpirito feels they could move forward tonight and then address what Miller is referring to. Miller feels it would be better planning to do the comprehensive plan first and then if that plan says there is a need for this, then look into it. Wieliczko brought up Aberant's point that this is just an update to the plan- what, if any, significant changes were made. Slaugh had a prepared memo with the changes. It continues with the same goal and objectives. It has three phases instead of two (splitting Phase I into two- one for downtown and the other for the remainder of the properties) and former Phase II will now be Phase I. Slaugh questioned Miller about his assertion of this meaning added expense, but that depends on what processes are established and what is covered by any ordinance and feels that Miller made false allegations that cannot be backed up at this time.

Public Comment on Testimony:

Fred Young 7 West Prospect Avenue- his property is on the historic register. Asked who Mr. Talty and Mr. Miller represent. They do not have to disclose that but since it was said at the prior meeting, Talty replied that they represent Joseph Ventresca and Robert Hill. Questioned Miller about having the interior of historical properties inspected- is Miller asserting that Board cannot act until a complete resurvey is done? Miller replied not entirely.

Gary Ell 106 Lois Lane- Ell wanted to clarify the slide 9, the building is contributing because of age and architecture but also because of who lived there and went into the history. Wieliczko asked Ell to ask his question. Ell asked if Miller researched the property or if he just found it somewhere? Miller stated that historic personage is not enough to justify a historic designation.

Julie Maravich 660 Chester Avenue- stated that everything that Miller said is in support of historic preservation, so she thanked him for that. Asked Miller why he stated a building's age would make a building become a contributing property? Miller feels it was misconstrued and what he said was that if we use age as a sole criterion... (interrupted) Miller went on to say that if that was the sole criteria, there would be more...(interrupted) Maravich states that isn't how it works and does not want it to go down in the record as fact. Miller previously read into the record all the criteria- not just age. Maravich feels he is scaring people.

Keating advised he wrote a quote that Miller said "buildings could be historic based on their age alone" and asked Miller if that was factually correct. Miller stated it was not, the "alone" is the mistake.

Joseph Chiacchio 260 E. Main Street- asked Miller about getting his dry cleaning done at the place in the slide and does that mean he is a Moorestown resident. Miller stated he was. Chiacchio asked if he ever lived in a historic home? Miller has not. Asked if he represents Ventresca and Hill? Miller

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

answered yes. How many properties do they own in the downtown area? Miller does not know.

Karen Kinsey Massey non-resident but grew up in town- Why is the rest of the makeup of the rest of downtown business district relevant to its historical zoning? She is asking because that in the period of time since 1989, Moorestown has started allowing alcohol and downtown is not the same as it used to be. And wants to know if the two buildings at the corner of Church and Main were in the current historic district? Miller stated they were included in the 1989 survey and also are listed in the 2002 plan. She asks why the type of business is relevant? Miller responded that you have to go back to the context of the remark, he was advocating that the Board focus on the district in its entirety and as part of that you would analyze the change in use pattern of the uses within the district. Asked why if there is a business district and a historic district, they are two separate uses. Miller, as a planner, is looking at land patterns from a comprehensive perspective, not just the aesthetic of the area but the economic character, functionality and liability of the area. Massey asked that the Board look at Hudson Massachusetts and how they handled their Main Street.

Sharon Murray 108 S. Church Street- Questioned Miller if he knows how many properties Hill and Ventresca own. And if Miller knows if Ventresca is a developer. Miller stated he knows Ventresca owns real estate in the Main Street area but never asked about his other activities or the nature of his developer practice.

Greg Newcomer 235 Fellowship Road- Asked Miller the specifics of why he thinks the Planning Board vote would be a pathway that would not hold up a historic town places or character. Newcomer has seen many historic buildings come down and then be challenged for use. The element the Board is voting on tonight is a small step to protect that character. Why does Miller object? Miller says it's not a small step as it involves the entire central business district. Secondly, it only focused on one element of the community- the assumed historic distinction of the structures and by extension the aesthetic importance of that. Miller is concerned with the overall character of the district and wants it to remain a viable district. The Main Street businesses have had to modify with the changing times because there were no restrictions on those modifications which has allowed them to adapt. Miller gave the example of the Shell Station on Main Street being torn down and a bank being built. Do you want to preserve it or enhance it. There is a danger in putting restrictions on because it eliminates options the owners might have in the future so they can keep their business viable. Newcomer questioned the exhibits and stated there were three that were not from this town. Newcomer asked if Millburn (location of one of the pictures) has a historic plan. Miller replied yes and stated it was litigated. Newcomer asked if it has been removed and Miller said no. Newcomer asked if that plan was put in to preserve the historic character of Millburn. Miller stated it was.

Frederick Klawunn 196 Highland Avenue – Klawunn asked how, as a tax payer, it benefits him to have the two buildings removed from the center of town. Wieliczko stated that this question does not pertain to Miller's testimony. Keating asked him to target his question towards demolition since Miller did testify about that. Klawunn questioned what is Miller's proposal and how does it benefit him as a tax payer? What are the structures he intends to put up and are there better areas in town? Miller responded that he never testified about a specific structure and what his testimony was addressing was a plan that Slaugh prepared and spoke about what should and shouldn't be included in the plan. He continues to believe it would be a better option, from a planning perspective, to look at the district in a more comprehensive manner.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

Keating motioned to approve PB2024-26, seconded by Petriello. A roll call vote of eligible voters resulted in 7 for and 2 against.

Public Comment:

Wieliczko opened it back up the public and stated the questions and comments are limited to five minutes per person and should be relative and probative to the issues to be considered.

Gary Ell 106 Lois Lane- As a descendant of Moorestown's founding families of 1682, historical preservation is a way to understand the struggles and triumphs of those that came before us. Moorestown's history has many facets. Moorestown Quakers helped shaped the town and there are no historical quakers in the country. The American suffrage movement was ignited at town hall in the 19th century. A noble prize winner, a professional opera singer and a grammy winner all lived in town. We have evolutionary homes from the 17th and 18th century. Homes that were occupied by the British or the Hessians and patriot militias, a home that hosted Lafayette, homes that were owned by founders, famous doctors and persecuted quakers, abolitionists and famous athletes. We are all just temporary stewards of our collective history and our greatest legacy is to preserve what still exists today.

Lenny Wagner 182 Foxwood Drive- President of the Historical Society. Wagner came to express the Historical Society's overwhelming support for amending the Master Plan. They firmly believe the people of Moorestown find the historical aspect desirable and often cited as one of the reasons they live here. It's also why so many residents and visitors come to Main Street to dine, shop and gather. The ghost tour last year brought over 1,000 non-residents to town. The historic homes tour sold over 500 tickets. This and more demonstrates the public's desire to experience the living history of Moorestown and it deserves all the protection that the Municipal Land Use Law can offer. Moorestown is already on a slippery slope if some of Moorestown's most cherished properties are demolished. You would have a hard time convincing the people of Haddonfield, Collingswood or Princeton that historic preservation is having an economic impact. There is no economic benefit study that shows that property values are negatively impacted by historic designation. In fact, studies show that designation can stabilize property values and increase desirability. In large cities and small towns, the most successful strategy was to identify, protect, and reuse historic properties and differentiate downtown from a mall.

Katherine Shipper 126 Union Ave- She just recently read about, and hopes others are aware of, Ordinance 32-2006 and it says a builder or owner of a property in Moorestown has to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness. And they have to apply for this to the Moorestown Board. The Board has to determine if the project being proposed is appropriate for the town. She would argue that another real estate office is not appropriate for the town.

Joe Ventresca 46 E. Second Street- Wanted to clarify that its not Ventresca Brothers, its JVS Properties. He has 45 years of experience in real estate. 20 years ago he was involved in the 2002 process. He has 15-16 properties in the district being voted on. It can take 6-7 months to get a tenant approved in this town. Putting another layer of government and expenses, it will make it harder. 20 years ago downtown was dying, he was on the Economic Board. They didn't want more

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

attorneys or financial advisors. They wanted restaurants and dining. Ventresca lost a lot of tenants and money to change the buildings to accommodate more retail and more seating. He has been involved in keeping downtown Moorestown alive and it's hard. The mall died, to Mr. Miller's point, it needs to evolve. The Coldwell Banking building was historic, but the front isn't and that's what you see on the street. He doesn't want handcuffs while trying to adapt to the marketplace. Ventresca is also against demolition, but the Weichert Building is going to end up with another attorney or financial investor. There are plenty of other layers of government- the Appearance Committee and Historic Preservation now. The last thing you want is empty retail buildings on Main Street. Everyone in the room has property and that's the number one asset in your portfolio. If your highest and best use is to do X and you're at Y and you can't get to X- but no one told you when you bought it you couldn't do X and now you can't improve your property value- that is most people's retirement plan. You are affecting people's livelihoods and retirement.

Melissa Young 12 W. Close Street- Thanked Mr. Ventresca for maintaining Main Street. Ventresca said if we put another layer of government, its going to devalue to town but that is not what's happening in other towns- Cape May, Haddonfield, the Hamptons. It's raising values. As a real estate agent, people want to live in Moorestown.

Robert Hill 662 N. Saratoga Drive- has been a resident for 32 years. Hill has served on the School Board, the Economic Development Committee, ran the Education Foundation, and was president of the soccer club. He wants to add to the town. He is a real estate developer and most recently purchased the old PNC on Main Street. He spent a substantial amount of money to renovate the property. His business is representing retail tenants and finding them locations. Hill says you have to be careful about keeping a building the same and hoping the tenants will show up. They don't care that much about the town, they want to serve their customers. By adding a layer of government, you are going to limit your pool of tenants. The mere age of a building does not denote its contribution to downtown. Tonight's adoption will lead to council adopting an ordinance which will lead to a series of forming historical commissions and regulations. The public needs to know what the regulations are before ordaining a commission. Property owners and citizens have a right to know what the regulations will be before adopting. The sole focus is to stop change and if you stop the town in a certain time period, it will die. Everyone loved the Starbucks- but it left because it couldn't accommodate a drive through. We need to be cognizant that just because we want things to stay the same doesn't mean it will.

Julie Maravich 660 Chester Avenue- Thanks Ventresca for all his work. Maravich read from the 2018 Reexamination Report (page 9) there is broad support for preservation of historical and cultural resources in Moorestown but also noted the level of governmental involvement in that preservation has been controversial and goes on to talk about the 2006 ordinance, which was overturned because it was subsequently invalidated and it was unsupported on technical grounds and to address the procedural defect the report made a recommendation to create a historic commission and district as well as designating individual properties outside the district as historic that are worthy of protection. The impotence for an ordinance adoption is if the public comes to believe that historic resources are in peril. Currently there are 8 historic buildings in imminent danger of demolition. We have a very narrow window to get this accomplished. It is incumbent of the board members to follow the direction of the Master Plan. Wants to discuss protections, not restrictions of the historic buildings. There are 190 towns in New Jersey that already have historic preservation. She urges the board to

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

adopt the update to the Master Plan. The township received a grant, and a survey was done to show the public is overwhelmingly in favor of this.

Sharon Murray 108 S. Church Street- Lives right behind 210 and 202- the empty Weichert Buildings. They are part of this preservation. Weichert had inquired with her and her neighbor about buying their lots, she thought they just wanted it for parking. Was surprised they wanted to build a building with 4 retail spaces and 16 apartments above it. There would not be enough parking for any of it. What about deliveries or ambulances? If preservation is not enacted to protect the buildings, it will impact her, her neighbors and the community as a whole with regard to the congestion it would create at that intersection. Fully supports the historic preservation element. Moving forward she does not feel that the protection of any historical building is not nearly as restricted as is being perceived. These properties bring aesthetic, historical, and economic value to our town. Reiterated that none of this would apply to the interiors of homes and hopes everyone votes yes tonight.

Fred Young 7 West Prospect Avenue- In 1989 the Moorestown Improvement Association completely funded the historic district. The purpose was to preserve the buildings. On the Main Street corridor, there is a slow growing modernization. Wants to point to the building two doors down from Wawa, the law office, it is an adaptive reuse, and it looks just like it did when it was first built and that is what the target should be. Wants to preserve the town center, 355 buildings.

Wes Duffy 110 S. Church Street- Supports the preservation of the town and thanked previous people that have worked to save the town and protect historic buildings.

Lauren Rowello 110 S. Church – Pointed out that her children (age 12 and 15) are in attendance to support this (Wes Duffy is her son). When young people understand the choices made to protect preservation they want to be involved more. Lives two doors down from Weichert and supports the adoption. Her home is also historic and is at risk to be purchased and demolished. It is not included in the district at this time. Developers have inquired about purchasing her property. Historic corner would change if the two Weichert buildings were not protected. Wanted to note that it's a street that welcomes people into Moorestown. Also concerned about the trees that will be taken down if a developer purchases the property and it will change the charm of Moorestown. Urges the Board to adopt.

Virginia Carson 207 Pleasant Valley Avenue- She at one point lived overseas and lived in a village that was 1200 years old. And when they come home to Moorestown, they are appreciative of their town. Looking at Cape May or Haddonfield, they are doing well there is no economic impact. In the 1200-year-old villages, they cannot build onto historic places without the supervision of the historical society. She thinks the old buildings should be repurposed.

Bruce Carson 207 Pleasant Valley Avenue- asked for clarity of what is up for adoption this evening. Wieliczko explained. The 1989 document is not on the table, the 2002 document is not on the table. What is on the table is whether to approve the amendment. Miller is there because he is a paid expert there to represent two clients. Business folks do not want to be regulated but feels common sense would be applied and the buildings do not need to be frozen in time. Would like to advocate for adoption and stated that he did not have any objections.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

Greg Newcomer 235 Fellowship Road- States that we are talking about faith and fear tonight. The Philadelphia Business Journal two months ago put out an article about the Delaware Valley's richest towns and stating that Moorestown (and Haddonfield) were the only two New Jersey towns on the list. About 4 months ago the National Association of Realtors said that Moorestown was the 53rd most sought out town to live in in the country. Feels they are all there tonight based on faith because we should have faith in Moorestown. The Community House was built on faith, the 200-year-old church in town was built in faith. Feels that this should move forward.

Lawrence Friant 12 E. Close- Agrees with what has been said about historical preservation. Wants to make a general statement about government. Could bore you with 400 years of layers of government being added. At the same time, you protect individual rights and freedom, you do things for the common good. Fear of putting another layer of government should not matter. Layers are added to protect our environment, individuals and common needs. Adding another layer of government will be the first step of many steps to protect Moorestown.

Ann Matlack 107 Forest Road- there was overwhelming support for historic district from the survey. If this is a historic district, there will be tax abatements, grants, and rehab tax credits available to help offset the potential costs. She is a member of the Historical Society and will help residents navigate how to receive those credits. The historic district is special. Please vote affirmatively.

Brennan Duffy 110 S. Church Street – Fell in love with this town because of the downtown. She is from Tennessee and the neighborhood she grew up in is no longer there because it was not preserved and was filled with modern homes. She does not want to see that happen here. This is about protecting the soul of this town. This is not about stopping progress, this is about ensuring the growth is thoughtful, community driven and sustainable. This does not prevent development but rather lays the groundwork for clear guidelines. It is shown that historic districts have higher property values.

Brianna Maravich 248 Lawrence Drive- has spent her entire life in this town. It's concerning and hypocritical that an argument was made about historical buildings that have been updated, or added onto or changed in a way that does not uphold their historical integrity and are now disqualified or does not fit the criteria. Yet there is also this opposition to promoting historical preservation and effectively, more buildings will be modified to keep up with modern trend and perpetuate this cycle disqualifying them. This is a slippery slope in favor of profit.

Joseph Chiacchio 260 E. Main Street- Lives in a home that was built in the 1770's with records going back to 1740 when the land was purchased, and it was owned by 8 generations of the same family. He went through an interesting history of the house including how Hessian Soldiers walked past his house and how a Sycamore tree was but down in 2016 and he has pictures of that same tree from 1880. The historic preservation of these properties matters, they are not just people trying to dictate what color paint you can use. Commented to Moriuchi that the historical charm probably helps him sell more houses here.

Mary Porter 332 E. Central Avenue- Many great points were made today and Ventresca and Mr. Hill also made good points. They are helping keep Moorestown alive by bringing in business. We need people to help them be successful. They are working with the old buildings and are in competition

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

with the mall and strip malls. Something needs to help them get tenants in. We need preservation but also need to keep these businesses thriving.

Board Comments:

Maguire commented that if a historical building was potentially set for demolition, you have 180 days to appeal it. With the historic preservation, you have 360 days and he wanted everyone to understand that. Maguire's biggest concern is the expansion in Phase 3. The area he lives in is very residential with small houses and small lots and they need additions just to have livable space. Worried those homes would get a second review because they all go for zoning variances then they would have to go before the Historical Preservation Commission and he doesn't like that. He does have a concern with Main Street as well. Main Street businesses already have to deal with the Zoning Board and Appearance Committee. This town needs to know there is no silver bullet for demolition.

Moriuchi is pleased with how many people came out to the meeting and activism and this is what government is all about and people speaking respectfully and wanted to thank everyone. Moriuchi needs some things clarified: Why is the 2002 plan more relevant or better than the other updates or amendments? Slaugh stated he has been involved with Moorestown planning since 1988. The 2025 update is a longer document, and it clarifies some things and expands on some things- an example of that is what the regulations are from the state with creating a local historic district and the local commission. It really contains the same goals and objectives, it has the same geographic area, the prior document had two phases, and this one has three phases. Moriuchi asked how it works with amending/updating the Master Plan as there is a reexamination report dated in 2018. Slaugh responded that at least every ten years the planning documents need to be reviewed- it happened in 2018. The Planning Board determines if anything needs to be reviewed or updated or changed and also reviews zoning regulations. Moriuchi questioned why that didn't seem to happen in the 2025 planning element. Musnug responded that he was involved in the 2018 reexamination the historical part was there, and it was done and they were concerned with other zoning issues so it just wasn't picked up. Slaugh agreed it was not given emphasis at that time. Moriuchi asked what are the different ways to preserve properties of historical significance? Slaugh responded there is the persuasive method which is pretty much what is used now- relying on the goodwill of the community. Any kind of regulatory structure at the local level you need to follow the Municipal Land Use Law and have the structure of a commission and a plan. There are municipalities that use an advisory committee, and they review plans, but they have no authority. You do not need to have a district for a committee. That would be equivalent to our Appearance Committee. You can also put a deed restriction. Moriuchi asked if there are private ways individuals can protect their properties? Slaugh responded that you could put a deed restriction on the property or a façade restriction for example but then who would enforce it? It wouldn't address any community interest. Moriuchi feels there is an assumption that you would have to have an ordinance in place in order to protect a property and while it does help, deed restriction is an option if they are not in the district. Moriuchi questioned what makes one property more important than another? Why not extend the district out to Lenola where one of the oldest homes in the township is located? Slaugh responded that individual properties can be added. But why is the district so small when there are so many other properties? What was the thought process of limiting it to just the town center? Slaugh responded that the town center has always been the focus. But why are we limiting it to town

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

center? Why is the district not running down Chester and Kings Highway to encompass that many more properties? Slaugh said we are still basing this on the 1989 report which established logical determinations for the district boundary and there is a rationale for that backed up by historical research and you also see a change in the historic architecture and age of the buildings.

Keating asked if this would be subject to another expert going out and doing another round. Since a house does not just age into the district, it must be decided on another set of vetting criteria to determine if you want to have a new class of buildings from a certain decade added to the district. Slaugh confirmed that is correct. If Phase 3 is based on research undertaken by the Historical Society but it would need to be confirmed by a historic preservationist or historic architect to confirm those boundaries.

Moriuchi questioned some of the houses with plaques- the Burr House on Second Street... Slaugh said the plaque program is separate than that and so anyone with an older home (contributing or non-contributing) can have that recognition and that is done by the Historical Society to raise awareness about preservation. Properties like the Cowperthwaite House is individually recognized. There are 65 properties on that list. Slaugh stated that expanding the district to those properties would have too many non-contributing houses included and there would be no cohesive boundary.

Keating hopes the number of properties that are at risk of demolition around the town does not increase. He thinks that some of the concerns that were shared were the protections and regulations that are going to be rolled out, it needs to be done in phases and cannot encapsulate the whole town at once.

Aberant followed up on Moriuchi's comment by explaining why the district cannot be expanded in the proposed updated preservation element, it makes the recommendation for a first phase for a gradual introduction of Moorestown's historical legacy. If that is proven and supported, second and third phases could be added. But we don't want to bite off more than we can chew so it is incremental. The recommendation from 2002 was to establish a district where appropriate and also has language about the first part being incremental and only in the town's center area. The Board's task is do we want to update something that was done in 2002? What we are looking at here is not a great departure of what was intended. Mr. Hill's building is wonderful, and he did a spectacular job and it's a significant improvement to Main Street even if it's not a contributing structure. Aberant also appreciates Ventresca's improvements and understands his concerns. One of the concerns expressed is the additional layer of protection. Council has been very responsive in trying to address those concerns.

Keating asked Slaugh, if there is a historic property in town and there's a commission in place and a property is being neglected currently there are mechanisms to address unsightly yards etc. with fines but what is the mechanism if a building is left to sit and rot until they need to be demolished. Slaugh said it is difficult because it is done through fines and the court system and sometimes they aren't successful. Or a municipality has to take the step of condemning the property and taking it for themselves. It needs to be kept in mind that zoning still plays a roll in this. For example, just because developers want to put apartments where the Weichert building is, doesn't mean it will happen and that they will get through the zoning requirements for bulk and use variances.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2025

Petriello has a couple comments and wants to thank everyone for coming out. We pride ourselves on being a historic town and its appropriate to have a historic element in our Master Plan and it should be updated and is confused on why it took so long. There is language and sentiment throughout the decades supports this. Petriello thinks we should be focused on, and the town should have at its disposal, all the tools available to it in order to address the issues that it faces.

DiSpirito, following up to Moriuchi's comment, and the way it is designed breaking Phase1 into Phase 1 and 2, are we committed to two phases or can that be discussed and reviewed in the future. Wieliczko clarified this a policy document and if an ordinance is put in place then it can be addressed during a consistency review period. Slauch stated it says to establish at least a Phase 1 which means it could be combined with the other fazes.

Arcaro-Burns commented about the ways an individual could save their property and even though that's true, it does not consider the point that was made about the common good and their values even though those values affect all of us and our community and that important to her as a member of the community.

Wesolowski made a comment about the 2002 Master Plan had a preservation element but its 23 years old and a review is overdue and its time to move forward.

Wieliczko summarized what the task is for the evening about how this is not creating anything or making decisions about the Weichert Buildings, and this is a matter of the Planning Board being charged with if an element of the Master Plan needs an update.

Keating made a motion to find amend the Master Plan; seconded by Petriello. A roll call vote of eligible voters resulted in 7 for (Aberant, Musnug, Petriello, Keating, Wesolowski, DiSpirito) and 2 against (Maguire and Moriuchi).

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Arcaro Burns and seconded by Mr. Maguire. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 PM.

Next Meeting: March 6, 2025 at 7:00 pm