

**Historic Preservation Advisory Commission Meeting  
Regular Meeting of June 21, 2010 7:00 pm**

The regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission took place on the above date. Ray Storm read the Open Public Meeting Act and requested Board Secretary Mrs. Citterbart called the roll. Board Secretary Citterbart stated there was a quorum.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Storm, Mr. Wright, and Mr. Becker

**EXCUSED:** Mr. Read, Mrs. Schulte and Chairwoman LeFrois

**FLAG SALUTE**

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

None

**APPLICATION**

**Applicant: #HPC-08-2010 – Northern NJ Endoscopy Center, LLC**

**Property Location: 18 Church Street**

**Block: 708, Lot: 8 & 9**

**Carried to the next meeting**

**Applicant requesting to amend previously approved plans. Applicant not present tonight.**

**Mr. Becker made a motion carry this to next meeting. Mr. Kaplan seconded the motion.**

**AYE:** Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Storm, Mr. Wright, Mr. Becker

**DISCUSSION**

**#HPC-05-2010- James Sakellaropoulos/Waldmere Hotel**

**Property Location: 144 Spring Street**

**Block: 711 Lot: 27**

Mr. Storm stated: I would like to have Mrs. LeFrois here. They appealed our decision to the planning board. Mrs. LeFrois and I went to the planning board as representatives of the Historic Commission. Mrs. Schulte was there also. The two council members said they would rather see someone put the money into the building and not follow what the ordinance says. I asked, even though the vinyl siding is not an approved material, if in the future we have an applicant that comes in front of us and wants to put vinyl siding on their house, do we refer them to the planning board? Mr. Ricciardo stated: If you feel you cannot make the decision than refer them to the planning board. Maybe we should not have a Historic Commission. That is what he said. Mr. Elvidge stated before we take the vote, "I think we need to revise the Historic Ordinance". I agree 100% and I even offered that the Historic Commission would sit down with the council

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and we could revise it. Our hands are tied with the cards we were dealt with. They did not say yes or no but Mr. Elvidge said it needs to be revised. I think before the decision that they made it should have been revised. I think they broke the law because there is an ordinance against it and they went above the ordinance and made their own decision. That is just my feelings. I know Mrs. LeFrois was pretty annoyed that night and she said she would have a conversation with the council but I do not know if that happened yet.

Mr. Wright stated: It upsets the principal of the whole thing.

Mr. Storm stated: Absolutely. What are we going to do because they have set precedence?

Mr. Wright stated: Now they will put hardiplank on the front.

Mr. Storm stated: That is what Mr. Ricciardo offered first. Mr. Sakellaropoulos said we will put in on the second floor where the balcony is. The ground level already has wood. Then they are going to put vinyl on the two sides in the back and vinyl soffits too.

Mr. Wright asked: And hardiplank on the front of the building?

Mr. Storm stated: Just the second floor because the rest will be shingle. And they are going to put all vinyl windows back in. We approved wood windows up top.

Mr. Wright stated: So everybody else in town who wants to do will say you let them do it.

Mr. Storm stated: That is right. We do not allow vinyl windows where they can be seen from the road. We have allowed it in the rear of the building in the past. Now what is going to happen? Is the church going to coming back to us?

Mrs. Citterbart stated: So do we want to think about this and wait until Mrs. LeFrois comes back to discuss this further?

Mr. Storm stated: I think we need to continue the discussion.

Mr. Kaplan stated: I think it is a huge mistake. I think the Historic Commission in over 25 years has made a notable improvement to this town. Not only on Main Street but all over town there is an ethic of realizing the architectural interest is best preserved by historically appropriate materials and methods of restoration and keeping it. I know that we are in an economic down turn but I don't think that means that we should look past what has been done. I don't think this is an improvement. I think the thing that has to be said about vinyl siding apart from whether or not it is historically appropriate which it is not, I don't think it makes a building look attractive myself. I think most of all what the technical information that is provided by the National Park Service of the Secretary Interior strongly indicates that it is not good for wooden buildings. My understanding is that 65% of the moisture that transpires through a building in from the interior to the exterior, this traps it. It runs to the sills, it rots the corner posts, it hides the

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condition of wood siding and it does not fix anything. It does not cure anything. It covers it up. Personally I would not buy a building that has been covered with vinyl siding because you have no idea what is going on underneath that skin.

Mr. Storm stated: He complained that his building is leaking like a sieve so I said if you are any kind of contractor and you are so concerned about that you should rip everything down to the sheathing and see what is there. That is not his game plan. His game plan is to rip the aluminum off and I guess it has been shimmed out so much and then just put the vinyl siding over the existing clapboard. He is not going to rip any clapboard siding off to see there is sheathing damage. He is not planning on doing any investigating.

Mr. Becker stated: They should have told him that if he takes the aluminum off and he sees damage, he should fix it.

Mr. Storm stated: That is common sense. You would think he would do that. I suggested if he could afford to do it properly, he could do it in stages. They did not like that suggestion. The presentation he gave was like he under hardship. It was way out of budget.

Mr. Wright stated: I think what people have to understand is whatever the economic moment is Newton will come back because its day will come again. The reason the town existed in the first place was because it is an intersection to the two most important roads in Northwestern New Jersey which still continue and the wave will reach here. I think what we have to remember is in my life time I have been here 58 years and nothing that has been put up in Newton that equals in the quality in materials, quality in architecture, in quality of design, what survives in this town from its golden age. From a manufacturing center as a railroad town, nothing has been put up to equal what has been lost. We would be fools to allow another splinter of the evidence of this town economic grandeur in the past to fall. It is foolish and short sighted, if that is what people want to do they can go ahead and do it but I think to have come this far with this Historic Preservation Ordinance and to make a mistake of this quality on a building of this importance right in the center of Spring Street it is in my mind short sighted.

Mr. Storm stated: I just think you are going to find a run of applicants before something else changes especially the bigger, older homes on Lawnwood Avenue. They are going to say, "I am not going to paint this anymore, let's put vinyl siding on while they are letting us. "

Mr. Wright stated: I would emphasis with window sash, window sashes are like time markers you can date a building, you can date changes to a building by the size of the panes, the numbers of the panes. It would be like buying an antique cupboard and tearing the glass panes out of an antique. These are the fabrics that make these buildings valuable as a piece of antique furniture. It is a huge mistake. The materials that are in these buildings cannot be reproduced today. Some things we cannot prevent. When you stop and think about the loss of slate in this town; that slate comes right out of the hill in the town. The brick that is in these buildings is from the meadows

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down by Memory Park. The wood is from the surrounding hillsides. These are organic pieces of architecture as all the native talent, all the native craftsmanship in them, this is a huge blunder. If they turn this town into a generic America town there is no reason to come to Newton.

Mr. Storm stated: We are going to lose all our history.

Mr. Wright stated: I think these memories are well worth keeping. They are cultural landmarks. I think in the 1980's we were able to reverse what I think was tantamount to cultural vandalism. The war against the people of this county against the people of this town the lost of the monuments, memories and landmarks and I think this unconscionable to return to that path. Don't make Newton something other than Newton. Keep Newton, Newton.

Mr. Storm stated: We don't have any control anymore.

Mr. Wright stated: We don't have any control. If this is an epitaph, let it be an epitaph. But I am going to say history is not pictures, it is not nostalgia, and it is a living value to the present and to future generations. Forget the lessons of history; it is a fool's game.

Mr. Storm asked: Is there a certain section in our Historical Ordinance that clearly states that vinyl siding is not allowed. I know it is not an approved material by the Secretary of Interiors.

Mr. Wright stated: Under the ordinance we can only allow replacement in-kind.

Mr. Storm stated: Well he was not going to rip aluminum off and put aluminum back on.

Mr. Wright stated: We have had cases where additions have been made to buildings where they were post 1950 or 1960's where we allowed materials typical of those periods of construction to exist. The purpose of the ordinance is not to return Newton to one particular moment or era in its time but to preserve the diversity of architecture of different methods of construction and materials of construction. So what you have to do under the ordinance and this is objective, we don't have in my opinion, I think this is what makes the ordinance work is that it is objective criteria that are applied objectively. It is not saying, I like colonial better than Victorian or I like this better than that. It is not an ascetic judgment. It is the application of objective criteria. So if a material is not appropriate to the period of significant of the building that is should not be applied. Visually I think anybody who thinks that you can look at a building wrapped in vinyl siding and think it is a landmark of the past you are mistaken. He is covering about 80% of the building. If he tears out the windows, it becomes like Daniel Boone's hatchet. The museum says it's the original hatchet but it is not. This building visually is a component of Newton. I think we have waiting for over 25 years for some of the most important buildings in this town to come up for review. We have no compulsory power. We can't tell somebody you have to fix something or restore something. But as these buildings have come before us over time, we have been able to make significant improvements to some of the key buildings in the town of Newton.

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If they reverse this now, in 25 years we will be right where we were 25 years ago. It will trash to town.

Mr. Strom stated: I heard a conversation that one of the council person's is on a campaign to eliminate the Historical Commission. And that is a fact.

Mr. Kaplan stated: What I am concerned about is all of our time and effort meeting with these people and trying to come up to a half way point where if something is not visible from the street we can meet you half way and we go through all this time to come to some conclusion and then it gets thrown out the window what good is it?

Mr. Wright stated: I have the long view. I was here when every road into this town was a stream of highlights. You couldn't find your way down Spring Street; you couldn't find a parking spot. The movies were full, the banks were full, and the library's and they built the Rockaway Square Mall and the anchor stores left and they went through a period of urban renewal. It was a mistake. It tempted to make Newton into something that it never was and never will be and think of the devastation that was caused to Spring Street alone by the construction of all those commercial buildings between Water Street, Trinity Street up to the brick row. All they created is a crater and that crater in the ground stood there for 30 years. All those commercial ratable buildings some of the finest buildings ever built in the town are gone. The simple fact is urban renewal in a place like this is a mistake. I thought in the 1980's when this commission started that at least Sussex County had the advantage of seeing what happened in Bergen County. If they think taking the short cut, if they think the Historical Commission is the problem they are mistaken. They can get rid of it if they want. I have been coming here for 25 years crossing the state at my own time and expense that is neither here nor there. The fact of the matter is I think history will prove in the end it will not work. We will be right back where we were in the 1980s with no vision of the future and with no reason for anyone to come to Newton because you can go to any cheap façade strip mall anywhere from here to California. I would say if they hold out I say to everybody in 1977 the greatest commercial attraction on the East Coast was Disney World with a reproduction of a nineteenth century down town main street. That is what we have here. We have the real things. It requires a great deal of organization. I don't know how because I not here on a regular basis the main street program has done but I do know from places that I go and I go frequently to stores downtown. I can't tell you the last time I went to a shopping mall.

Mr. Becker stated: If you want a retail space, you have to fight for it.

Mr. Storm stated: There is still a lot of empty retail spaces.

Mr. Becker stated: The ones that are empty are the ones that can't be rented or the landlord is not fixing up the building. They are putting up an ordinance in place to force the landlord to fix the building so you can rent the store.

Mr. Storm stated: How about the drug store, it has been sitting empty for 5 or 6 years.

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Mr. Becker stated: The spaces are being filled in. They are not filled in yet but they are taken.

Mr. Storm stated: Well that is good news. You would think 3 or 4 people would try to go into Sussex County Drug.

Mr. Becker stated: Someone had tried to buy it but it didn't go through. It is hard to get money from the banks now.

Mr. Wright stated: That is what I mean. Everything is at a dull drum right now. It is part of the cycle. To blame it on the Historical Commission or to think vinyl siding is going to save us that is a mistake.

Mr. Storm stated: I thought we were pretty reasonable with him during the application. He seemed pretty happy with what the decision was. I was surprised when I got the notice from Mrs. LeFrois that they were appealing. I said what are they appealing and she said everything we approved. I was so surprised.

Mr. Wright stated: In my opinion this decision was very shortsighted. This is a very important building.

Mr. Storm stated: Let's continue this conversation at the next meeting when Mrs. LeFrois and Mrs. Schulte will be here.

Mr. Storm opened this portion of the meeting up to the public.

Anwar Qarmout, 45 Woodside Avenue. I can appreciate you spending 25 years go get to this point but I think you need to realize one thing. Every time somebody mentions Historic Commission you have to go in front of whole Historic Commission you may not see it on their point of view when someone tells a developer or building owner or a potential buyer and they say you have to go in front of the Historic Commission you may think everything nice, nice new windows, it is going to be the dream of the block you know what they think money. So with that being said you can probably understand that because the developer, builder or landlord only has one language. He could care less what the property looks like. He could care less what you think of it and he could care less with what you want. What do does know is money. If we communicate with the developer, with the property owner and his language and we could succeed and then you can get everything you want. Aluminum siding, stucco, hardiplank regardless of what anybody would say is basically around the same figure of sq. footage. It actually gets cheaper the more you have. So a building that size you are referring to is basically the same price. They still have to put up scaffolding; they still have to do the same amount of labor. It is only the material so if he comes in here and cries hardship they are just pulling your leg. What they really want you to say is give us an incentive to give you what you want. As a property owner, I have several properties I have millions of dollars in real estate in this town. I only speak the language of money. Don't give me your wish list; I really don't want to know. But if you give me an incentive you have my attention. Tell me Anwar let's talk money then I will talk to you. Now say

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Anwar let's make a deal, the deal would be to use a certain amount of money let's see where we can have some tax breaks, let's see some incentive.

Mr. Storm stated: This advisory commission has no authority to make that decision.

Mr. Qarmout stated: You are not encouraging me to speak.

Mr. Storm stated: I am trying to give you the facts.

Mr. Qarmout stated: You are interrupting me.

Mr. Storm stated: I am going to interrupt you because you are giving us a scenario that we have no control to do.

Mr. Qarmout stated: You need to hear me out.

Mr. Wright stated: Please continue.

Mr. Qarmout stated: We are in an economic struggle but if you notice something the people who have money don't want to spend it unless they want to or they have to or there is an investment opportunity for them. I have money but I do not want to spend it foolishly but if there was an incentive if there was a way to convenience me it is better in the long run that my values would go up or it is because it will set a precedent you can set the town off. This is a very important building. It is one of the key points of the block. I would do everything possible to see what we could do that we can do our wants and needs of that building because if you can fit that building to be what you have done for the past 25 years doing this should be the legacy for the Historic Board if anything do the building you have wanted for the past 25 years. Don't sit there saying you are losing our authority. Take back your authority, take back the commission and say listen now let's talk. Let see what we can do to help these homeowners so property owners. You could paint that building pure gold but they are not going to make any more money on the inside. Doing the outside is only for the future of Newton not for the present of Newton. It is only for the resale of Newton not for now. Don't disregard what I am saying. I know what I am talking about that is all I do is real estate. Let's be real about it if you can't show me how I can make money there is no since talking to me. I understand the Historic Commission's point of view but I am also a businessman and if you can bring the two together and have a marriage you will be able to do what you have wanted to do for the past 25 years. It will come to a reality. But if you sit there and you say we are not going to allow this, we are not going to allow that than you just wasted 25 years. If you get together, bring in the county, bring in the Advance and bring in the other agencies and bring in every applicant and see what you can do for them to save them money because the future of Newton depends on it. From one historian to another all we have is our history. Our future hinges on our past. So that is my recommendation as a concerned citizen I am concerned about your Board, I am concerned that there are commissioners who want to abolish the historic board but if you want me to support you, you need to come up with new strategies. The mindset of your commission needs to change. It is not a father son business anymore it is just a whole different animal. Investors, landlords and only a hand full of merchant owner

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operated businesses. They are no longer passed on through the families. Your committee should have one person do research for grants and what is available for that particular applicant. Someone could be a materials expert.

Mr. Wright stated: I appreciate what you are saying. I think what you are saying is correct. I would point out that I was reading the Wall Street Journal and right on the front page was an article discussing whether artificial ivy should be allowed on the façade of a building in a historic district. This was on the front page of the Wall Street Journal not because the Wall Street Journal understands money and they understand historic designation and heritage tourism are valuable components of a living thriving economy. These people who own properties in Newton if they are in Brooklyn are living under stricter landmark ordinance that we are here so they should understand it and they should understand why it is in place in Manhattan not because there history is greater than our or they are not nostalgic than we are but because they understand the economic benefit of these things. The other thing I want to point out for myself is my wife is the art director who works in marketing at the largest real estate company in New Jersey. She designs work for malls for highway signs for marketing in every media imaginable including digital media all over the place. She deals with properties on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. I am not some kind of rinky dink person lost in the past I run as a volunteer not even as my profession a historic site in Bergen County for 30 years I recent not a cent in public grants or money I don't want it. I use the web I use the events I pay every event that I put on and I am operating even tighter than you are here in Newton because I am nine miles from the Washington Bridge. I am competing in a cultural market place that includes the cultural capital of the world, Manhattan and I survive. We make it profitable our events thrive. So I know I have done market studies what attracts people to public places. I can tell you what the market is for Newton as well as it is for my Historic site it is baby boomers. Baby boomers are returning to a sense of community. Many of them I have seen in Bergen County are returning to the places where they grew up. This is the largest demographic blub in the population. They are the wealthiest people with the most leisure time in the history of the world. This is the market for downtown Newton and it is the market for where I go. I can show you surveys from the national park service from the heritage tourism. I was involved with the heritage tourism task force trying to influence them on places like this. What I want people to understand is I am not a historian of nostalgia I understand the marketability of nostalgia there is a very great marketability in nostalgia but if I was primarily involved in that I would be selling old Beatle records not windows from the 1850's. I think it is important to understand the history of Newton. The history of Newton is the history of entrepreneurship. It is not the history of grants, not the history of commission making this town what it is. I am here to save the town. We are up against the entrepreneurship. All I can hope to do is to preserve the wealth that was invested in buildings when that wealth was manufactured in this town. I believe that when the price of gasoline when up to \$1.50 it reeked havoc on this county. Mr. Qarmout, you are exactly right. The entrepreneurs do need to come to us they need to make this town a designation make it what it was. You have a college here make it a college town. We need somebody to put a Starbucks in. We need people to find businesses that will awaken this street but what we have to do is find a way to preserve the structures until this happens.

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Mr. Qarmout stated: What we are doing is passing the buck. You have the ability to do so much more. I am saying the mindset or the capacity of what you can do. You have to understand something we are in Newton, NJ we are exactly 45 minutes away from anything that is remotely important to the baby boomers, Manhattan. For every ten miles we drive out of Manhattan it takes a year for that to touch. For whatever happens in Manhattan it takes five years to hit Newton. In 2001 when Manhattan was bombed what did all the New Yorkers do they went across the river. When did Newton become at its highest peak in real estate 2005, 2006. In 2005 Newton was at its highest real estate market ever five years later. Manhattan now feels secure and people went back to Manhattan leaving everything empty some kept it some didn't. Now we are five years later 2010. It will be five years before the town will level itself again. There is another point I want to make in my apartment in Newton the highest I can get is \$850, if I go to Sparta it is \$950 if I go anywhere else it is a \$1,000. We are getting less money for our properties here so we need to understand that. Part of the historic commission is not the outside that sells apartment it is the inside. If I get better appliances I can get a better person. That is why the historic commission needs to be married to businessman so you can make it work and get what you want.

Mr. Wright stated: In 1873 the effect of the railroads reaching the Midwest flat open endless prairies suitable recognize agriculture real estate prices in Sussex County and other hinter lands of New City collapsed. They did not reach the values they had in 1873 until 1973, 100 years later and a complete change in the fuel base and the economy. I am not asking people to wait 100 years because I won't be here but the other point to make is what we are missing the point on is when I am at some of these other places people are looking for places of scale for places that evoke memories. Even in Bergen County, people buy in neighborhoods that remind them of where they grew up. They are looking for those elements of memory. I think if this town was marketed correctly it would hasten the day that all of this will prove its efforts. It occurred to me about five years ago that I could save every piece of material ever remnant of this town that I could possibly save but the people that made it live for me are gone. So I am not here anymore to preserve the town I knew because so many of those people are gone and I realize at my age I cannot reconstruct that. I do know that there is a living community out here forming memories of their own and that is the future of Newton and that is who we should be doing this for and that is why I am here.

Mr. Becker asked: Mr. Qarmout, do you have any buildings in the Historic district.

Mr. Qarmout stated: No I do not. I have a list of requirements to purchase property and one of them would be that it has to have suitable parking. For being in Historic does not intimate me or drive me away I am okay with that. I wanted to buy 189 Spring Street the four store fronts with the 12 apartments and investors who own it we were about \$50,000 difference in price. They wanted \$50,000 more than what I was willing to offer them so I said maybe I can get it from some other means not directly but maybe indirectly and I spoke to the Town Manager and I did exactly what I preached to you because I need to figure out a different way to get \$50,000 to be encourage.

Mr. Storm stated: How did you make out.

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Mr. Qarmout stated: I wasn't confidence enough from what I hear from this side.

Mr. Wright stated: I would like to give you one last quick end site. I went to Warwick to go to a farmers' markets and someone said to us why is your farmers market at the fairgrounds why not in downtown Newton.

Mr. Qarmout stated: We have a big enemy his name Mr. Hampton. He has all the box stores and putting our store boxes next to Mr. Hampton only helps him is doesn't help us. I am sorry if I talked to long, I am sorry if I offended anybody.

The Board thanked Mr. Qarmout.

Mr. Becker stated: The next time you go to a council meeting I want you to ask them for tax credits for people in the Historic District who want to fix their building up historical correct.

Mr. Qarmout stated: The town can do it. You see the incentives they are doing for Thorlabs.

Mr. Storm closed this portion of the meeting to the public.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Wright made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Becker seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned with a unanimous "aye" vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.**

The next regular scheduled meeting will be held on July 19, 2010 at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted,



Katherine Citterbart  
Historic Board Secretary