

BOROUGH OF RIVER EDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTESJ

JULY 16, 2015

Anthony Suarez, Esq.

ROLL CALL PRESENT: Lou Grasso, Mayor Moscaritolo, Ms. Boland, David Glass, Dr. Gewirtz, Vito Acquafredda, James Arakelian. Chris Casler, John Monroe also Ms. Bogart

Absent Mr. Behrens.

Mr. Glass - called the Planning Board meeting to order at 8:00 PM.

Salute to Flag

Sunshine Law (Open Public Meetings Act)

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by sending notices on December 5, 2014 to the Record and the Ridgewood News. By positioning on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of the Borough Hall and filing a notice of the same with the Municipal Clerk.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF 6-18-15 (with correction)

Motion to approve the minutes made by the Mayor, seconded by Ms. Boland.

All in favor say Aye – All say Aye.

Abstain: Vito Acquafredda, John Monroe

Motion is approved.

OLD BUSINESS

The Historic Element of the Master Plan

Phyllis D'Angelo – Chairman of the River Edge Historic Commission and this is Mary Donahue Vice Chair.

Mr. Glass – Any questions?

Mayor – There is a study prepared for the Historic Element with the Master Plan Prepared by our Planner Bridgett Bogart and is dated June 30, 2015. I believe this is the final draft. Have you reviewed that document?

Phyllis D'Angelo – We reviewed it at our formal meeting.

Mayor – Was it reviewed at a advertised meeting of the River Edge Historical Commission?

Phyllis D'Angelo – Yes.

Mayor – Is this the Historic Element that you would like to see approved by the Planning Board this evening?

Phyllis D'Angelo – Yes.

Vito Acquafredda – What kind of rights are we taking away from the homeowner if we adopt this into our master plan. Their rights by being placed on the National Historic District or in an Estate Historic District because I want to make sure we avoid a litany of homeowners coming in front of Mayor & Council and start complaining about how strict this document is.

Ms. Bogart – Having a property located on the Federal or State Register means nothing. When you go to a property located on a local register then it can affect the property rate. This document does nothing to that, it identifies the first 13 properties that have been identified in 2002.

Our Zoning Ordinance does not restrict the further development of those things. It doesn't put any burden on other properties. It does allow a municipality to enact zoning regulations that could possibly burden private property owners if their identifying this property, but the goals and objective in this document are no where

near that. This document suggests that these are important clients we want to make sure the public is aware of them. We want to make sure that any further development is done and generally that is it. I think that is consistent with the commission's goal.

Phyllis D'Angelo – In the document you will see that there are 13 designated sites. Those sites have the limitations on them, but most of the sites are New Bridge Landing, which actually New Bridge Landing came to use 10 years ago and asked us to designate because as Ms. Bogart has suggested is having something on the State and National Registry does not guarantee anyone from knocking it down. The local designation is the strongest form. Also, this document does not have anything to do with what you are talking about. The powers that have to do with designation comes from the Historic Commission and the Mayor and Council who have the final say.

Vito Acquafredda – Once you have a historic designation as these 13 sites, some of these 13 sites are residential.

Phyllis D'Angelo – Only one.

Mr. Acquafredda – What limitations are we placing on that one residential site.

Phyllis D;Angelo – Any historic site that is designated as a home from the outside of the house, the exterior, and only the side of the house that can be seen from the street there is a restriction. The inside of the house has nothing to do with anything.

Mary Donahue – You can do anything you want to the inside of the house, just the outside of the house can't be changed.

Phyllis D'Angelo - If they want to make an addition to the house it would have to be within keeping with the outside of the house.

Member – For purposes of the record, 13 items from property listed on page 9 of Ms. Bogart’s Report, the inventory of historically significant sites, numbers 1 – 12, are not owner occupied residences. The only residence is 13 at 788 Kinderkamack Road.

Phyllis D’Angelo – That was a Jacob Demarest house, I don’t have that with me right now. We do have all of the criteria that we admit, all the historical people that lived in it, the age of the house, the style of the house, etc. That was researched, at the time, by Kevin Wright who was also the town historian. He is the expert in River Edge. At this time I don’t believe that there is anyone living.

Mayor – Was that house used as a hotel or anything like that?

Phyllis D’Angelo – No. It was a private residence by the founders of Bergen County. It is the Elkin Demarest House, but there was so many Demarest’s in Bergen County.

Member – There are a bunch of additions here in the back that could be added to the document is that correct?

Lawyer – Yes.

Member – What would the procedure be for those houses to go from not being specifically part of the historical element to becoming part of the historic element?

What is the procedure?

Ms. Bogart – It is like adopting an ordinance. the same procedure. It could be recommended by the Historic Commission to the governing body and the governing body would do an inspection and refer it back to the Planning Board for a review of the Master Plan and then go back to the governing body.

Mayor – My answer is different from our planners, if the Historic Commission wants to add another property to the designated inventory they have to study it first. Make sure it satisfies certain criteria. Once it does then they have to send official notice probably through the borough attorney to the property owner telling them that the property is being considered. The property owner has a right to appear before the Historic Commission and present their case. Then the Historic Commission votes on whether or not to include it in its inventory. If that vote passes, then that goes to the Mayor and Council to approve that designation and we have to hold another hearing and then give the property owner another opportunity to present his case. Then the council votes whether or not to amend its ordinance to include that additional property. That is the way I understand it.

Mr. Gewritz – Are we approving this entire plan?

Mayor – Yes.

Mr. Gewirtz – On Page 6 there are 2 paragraphs about McMansions, which I don't understand.

Ms. Bogart – That portion on page 6 comes from the borough are from documents that say they are concerned about McMansions. I can enhance the language and recommendations to address that. That was one of your Master Plan issues.

Vito Acquafredda – McMansions are built on the exact same footprint where the \$300,000.00 ranch that use to be there. There is a reason why McMansions never appear before the Zoning Board. There is no concern with additional information. They are built on the same footprint. The ratable is on an \$800,000.00 home versus a \$300,000.00 ranch. They were all reclassified 2 years, they lost 25 to 30 percent of their value. We have to tread very lightly when it comes to that. They are ugly McMansions they try to blend in with the streetscape. There have been efforts where ranches have been capped; they have to pay one level even though they are going for substantial renovations. The home owner has to be cognisant of the fact to hire an architect first not a contractor.

Mr. Gerwitz – Under the ordinance if you look at the purpose section to stabilize and improve property values within the borough. The current ordinance with what is offered there I don't see the effect. I do have a concern in general if that statement where you consider, what could be potentially added to a historic element and the number of properties, which could create a problem because if you suddenly have a large amount of available homes within this town that are designated that can't undergo a substantial change because they must keep the same heritage and historical element I worry if that could destabilize or decrease property values because you could have areas in town that are not desirable because they are not able to make modifications.

Ms. Bogart – I think the exact opposite of what you are thinking is that the reason that is in there is so that regulations are not to destabilize. It is to stabilize the economic growth of the homes.

Mr. Gerwitz – I was thinking you are not allowed to build something that changes the visibility from the streets so if you have a low house and somebody wants to put an addition on and the original house had 7 foot ceilings and new code is 8 foot ceilings you can't put an addition on behind that is going to raise above the front facade of the house or not.

Ms. Bogart – I think you are four steps ahead of this document.

Vito Acquafredda – Just keep the exterior facade, make sure that it is well supported. Knock everything else down and build a new house.

Ms. Bogart – There are several ways to go about this, we only have one resident.

Member – Where did this list of properties on the last 2 pages, where did they come up from?

Ms. Bogart – Bergen County. Everything is included in the Bergen County Historic Survey.

Member – This is just a streetscape not the houses?

Phyllis D'Angelo – Inventory and what is pending it is not identifying these sites as historic.

Member – These properties that are inclusive on these last 2 pages those are just potentially correct? Why is just about every house on Elizabeth considered potentially historic? What is historic about that street?

Phyllis D'Angelo – The age, the time, it's just the streetscape. The reason all of these things are included is because we are a Certified Local Homes. If you would look at the criteria we have for designation there are so very few that would actually qualify.

Mayor – Are you sure that this list of Elizabeth Avenue is not the vacant marshy land behind Elizabeth Avenue that runs along the river that is owned by the county?

Phyllis D'Angelo – I don't believe so.

Mr. Arakelian – Elizabeth Avenue does not come up as existing on the map in River Edge. Is that Elizabeth Avenue, have you been to the site?

Phyllia D'Angelo - We walked every single street.

Mr. Arakelian– Ms. Bogart, that needs to be changed, because I don't know of any Elizabeth Avenue in town. If this is adopted with those 14 properties and let's say the Borough of River Edge wishes to change the façade on Borough Hall would they have to go before the Historic Commission?

Phyllis D'Angelo – They already have.

Mr. Arakelian – Have those addresses been noticed for this meeting?

Phyllis D'Angelo – It is not a requirement.

Mr. Suarez - We did a publication in the record, with regard to the hearing today.

James Arakelian – You have specific addresses.

Mr. Suarez - Any individual person on this list was not noticed?

Phyllis D'Angelo – Right because we are not designated.

James Arakelian – If this is enacted tonight that gives the Historic Commission permission the opportunity to possibly designate these sites? Or if it is not adopted tonight do they have that same power?

Mayor – No.

James Arakelian – If we are passing a document tonight that even remotely changes the rights of the home owner, shouldn't they have been noticed to come up here?

Phyllis D'Angelo – No one has been notified.

Ms. Bogart – If this is adopted, you don't have to notice those properties.

Phyllis D'Angelo – It has been passed before, we are only here because you lost the document.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Arakelian makes a motion to OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, seconded by John Munroe.

(No one stepped forward)

CLOSE TO THE PUBLIC

James Arakelian – Makes a motion to close to the public, seconded by John Monroe.

All in favor say Aye – All say Aye.

James Arakelian – I will make a motion to adopt the Historic Preservation Element to the Borough of River Edge’s Master Plan that is in a document dated June 30, 2015 prepared by Bridgett Bogart, the reason why this is necessary is because it was an administrative error, in some prior administration where the Historic Element did not get adopted by the Planning Board. Once the vote is taken on this, if it is approved by the Planning Board, there will be a formal resolution approving this document with the revisions that have been mentioned. Vito Acquafredda seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Acquafredda, James Arakelian, Ms. Boland, Dr. Gerwitz, Mr. Glass, Mr. Grasso, Mr. Monroe, Mayor Moscaritolo, Chris Casler – All vote Yes.

The motion passes.

DISCUSSION

All members present participated in a discussion about what might be coming up before the board in August & September.

ADJOURN 9:00PM

James Arakelian makes a motion to Adjourn, seconded by Vito Acquafredda.

ROLL CALL

All in favor say Aye – All say Aye.

Respectfully submitted by,

Marijane Brandau