



**Meeting Date:** February 22, 2021

**In Attendance:** Maria Boyes (Chair), Jacqueline Brevard (Vice-Chair), Carol Tener (Town Historian), Kelly Kessler, Jennifer Jaruzelski, Katie Spikes, Alison Carey, Linda Habgood (TC), Greg Blasi, Matthew Ceberio (PB), Kathryn Reed (A2), Tom Jardim (Town Attorney)

**Absent:** Mary Anne Healy-Rodriguez (A1)

The meeting minutes from January 25, 2021, were reviewed; Ms. Kessler made a motion to approve, Ms. Brevard seconded. The minutes were approved by the Commission.

#### Building Blocks for Working Together Presentation & Overview of the Ordinance

Chair Boyes welcomed everyone to the Meet & Greet, and the Commission members introduced themselves. A power point presentation was given to provide an overview of the updated ordinance. The revisions of the ordinance have been talked about since the 2002 Master Plan. The 2002 Master Plan recommended the Town apply to the Office of New Jersey Heritage to receive Certified Local Government Status (CLG). As a CLG, Westfield would be eligible for special Historic Preservation Fund Grants. The Certified Local Government program offers municipalities the opportunity to participate in state and federal historic preservation programs, and participation requires that a municipality has a historic preservation ordinance and a historic preservation commission conforming to the specifications of both the Municipal Land Use Law and the National Park Service Approved New Jersey Certified Local Government Guidelines. As a CLG, the community is eligible to apply for Historic Preservation Fund grants for a variety of local government activities.

The 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report Survey showed 80% of respondents surveyed agreed that historic preservation is a worthwhile goal for the town. The reexam also included that preservation of historic properties strengthens neighborhoods by raising home values, creates positive economic benefits by building on the existing and unique assets of an area, and that historic preservation is an excellent agent for managing growth and change. One of the most concerning trends that came up in the reexam survey is the teardown of older homes which are replaced by larger homes on the same size residential lot. According to the Zoning Department from 2000 to 2015, there was a net loss of 643 housing units due to demolition, and in the next four years from 2016 to 2020, there was an additional 259 demolitions. Another concern was the abundance of overdeveloped lots. The previous ordinance was created in 1984, with revisions in 2008, and it was approved by the Town Council in 1986 in an effort to protect the town's history. The previous ordinance was also in direct conflict with the MLUL, as it included a voting procedure for the creation of any historic district, and it contained inadequate wording regarding what kinds of changes would trigger a minor versus a major submission for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Tom Jardim went over the changes to the new ordinance. He stated the historic preservation ordinance that was created in 1984 has stayed the same up until the recent changes in 2020. The ordinance is an extension of the municipality's zoning laws and should be tailored to the community's character and historic preservation goals. Only the elected Town Council is able to designate historic districts and sites. The HPC is strictly an advisory board and zoning by referendum is not allowed in the State of New Jersey.



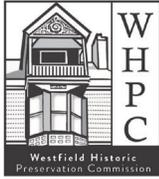
Chair Boyes stated based upon feedback from homeowners who have designated their property, other changes to the ordinance include the removal of the requirement to submit exterior paint colors to the HPC for approval, and the fees associated with submitting an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for minor work have been removed. Other changes to the ordinance include an informal review process which was added to expedite the understanding of proposed plans, and the ability to waive nonrelevant items when a Certificate of Appropriateness submission is reviewed. This amendment was created to allow the administrative officer to act in place of the full Commission for purposes of issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness without holding a public hearing. Such action shall occur as soon as practicable after submission of an application by the property owner, but no later than 45 days after the application is deemed complete. The benefits of the revised ordinance include a demolition provision review process which has been added for homes built prior to 1930 which provides visibility into demolition before destruction of historical assets.

Additional research from the presentation cited that there are economic benefits to historic preservation as rehabilitation offers a higher return on investment in terms of job creation than new construction or manufacturing. For every \$1 million spent on rehabilitation 14.6 jobs are created, and preservation work depends more heavily on the work of craftsmen than the purchase of raw materials. Preservation more directly benefits local businesses than new construction. Community preservation attracts visitors, new residents and investment. Nearly all millennials (97%) feel it's important to preserve and conserve buildings, architecture, neighborhoods, and communities. Restoring older commercial and residential buildings is environmentally responsible. Historic preservation reduces reliance on environmentally unfriendly building materials and energy intensive production of new building materials, and historic downtowns have \$252 in sales per visit compared to \$157 for non-historical towns. Chair Boyes stated the public can email any questions and there is a FAQ page regarding the updated ordinance on the town website.

#### Examples of Working with the HPC and Architectural Guidance

Linda Habgood spoke about an application that came before the Planning Board for a subdivision which involved tearing down an older home and building two new homes. During the course of the discussion at the Planning Board meeting, it was discovered that the home which was to be demolished was built in 1757. The applicant agreed to allow representatives from the HPC to tour the home and by the end of visit the homeowner reconsidered demolishing the home and decided to preserve and renovate it. An approval was given by the Planning Board to create a flag lot which allowed the property to be subdivided and preserve the existing home with a new home to be built on the same property. This is a great example of people working together to preserve rather than tearing down and starting over. All this was before the updated ordinance went into effect and this exemplifies how we hope the ordinance will work.

Kelly Kessler spoke about a homeowner who purchased a property in Stoneleigh Park which is on the national register of historic landmarks. The home is not one of the original homes in the neighborhood, but the Commission met with the buyer and helped to envision what could be built there which would fit in with the character of the neighborhood by providing the history of Stoneleigh and architectural examples of the original homes. Another homeowner on the historic



block of Kimball Avenue, wanted to rebuild their garage. The Commission worked with the homeowner and architect to design a garage that would be consistent with the architectural details of their historic home and would be built to scale and proportion of other carriage house type structures in the area. Greg Blasi showed photos of the garage and went through the different variety of home styles and the natural materials used in the Stoneleigh Park neighborhood.

Ms. Jaruzelski spoke about the Devlin Awards. The awards honor property owners for restoration, expansion, alteration, and maintenance of older properties. Residential, commercial, professional and institutional buildings are considered, but the work must be visible. The categories include an addition or alteration sensitive to the original architecture, restoration or an adaptive reuse of a property, and period appropriate painting and residing. The deadline for consideration is March 31st.

Meeting open to members of the Public.

Evan Topilow (355 Orenda Circle) stated the use of natural materials can be expensive compared to synthetic materials. There are a lot of builders in town who like to know what new homes should look like, the input of the Commission would help to let builders know what to do to make a new home fit in better within the neighborhood. Mr. Topilow also spoke about the property at 1481 East Broad Street and how the listing should include the history of the home.

Christina Bass (20 Stoneleigh Park) stated she strongly supported Stoneleigh Park becoming a historic district and asked what tax incentives might be available that could encourage those in the neighborhood who were not in favor of Stoneleigh becoming a historic district to reconsider.

Courtney Schael (511 Summit Avenue) asked about the accuracy of the designated historic landmarks and districts shown on the historic preservation map on the HPC page.

It was clarified by the Commission that the current map reflects the Preservation Plan element from 2002 and that is in the process of being updated.

Closed to public comment.

Meeting adjourned: 9:12 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Linda Jacus.