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HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
Regular Monthly Meeting No. 305
Wednesday, November 5, 2008

MINUTES

This regular monthly meeting of the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) was convened at 7:30 PM in the Multi-Purpose Conference Room in Borough Hall. Jeanne Perantoni opened the meeting in accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Section 5, Chapter 231, P.L. 275 by reading the following statement:

In conformance with the requirements of the Law, Notice was provided of the date, time and location of this special meeting by posting a copy of the adopted Schedule of Regular Meetings in the Borough Hall, by mailing copies to the Trenton Times, Princeton Packet, and by filing a copy in the Office of the Clerk of Princeton Borough. Adequate notice was provided to the public and to all parties concerned.

PRESENT: James Constantine (*recused himself from Stonerose Associates' application*), Jane Faggen (*left at 11 p.m. prior to last business item*), William Howard, Jeanne Perantoni, Carolyn Robertson (*recused herself from Princeton Theological Seminary*), Celia Tazelaar, Kirsten Thoft, and Regan Tudor

ABSENT: Nora Kerr

ALSO PRESENT: Derek W. Bridger, Historic Preservation Review Officer and Danielle A. Britton, Recording Secretary

HEARINGS (*continuation*)

25 Library Place, Block 37.01, Lot 14
Princeton Theological Seminary/Applicant & Owner
Renovation and Expansion of Princeton Theological Seminary Bicentennial Library
E1 & E2 Zone/Mercer Hill Historic Overlay Zone
Concept Site Plan Review
Historic Preservation Plan Review

In attendance for the second meeting of the continuation of the concept site plan and historic preservation review were the following applicants: Dr. Steven Crocco, Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) Librarian; Mr. David Fixlar, Architect, Einhorn, Yaffee and Prescott (EYP); Mr. John Gilmore, PTS Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer; Mr. German Martinez, PTS Director of Facilities; Dr. Iain Torrance, President of (PTS) and Ms. Ann Reichelderfer, Attorney, for the applicant.

Derek Bridger, Historic Preservation Officer, began the meeting with a brief summary of the proposed development to demolish Speer Library to reconstruct a new 98,000 square foot addition with a basement connection to Luce Library. The construction of a new courtyard and high-density-storage book stacks is proposed. The height of the proposed building is three

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stories or *59 ft. 6 inches*. The existing tower located on the northeastern corner of the Luce Library would remain.

The subject property is located in the E1/E2 district zone and the Mercer Hill Historic District Overlay Zone. D. Bridger noted that the applicant would be addressing the concerns of the Committee regarding the demolition and proposed replacement structure for the Speer Library that were outlined in a memorandum from the Chair of the HPRC to the Planning Board. The memo was the subject of a planning board meeting on September 9, 2009. The planning board instructed the Seminary to return to the HPRC to address the Committees concerns regarding the proposed development.

The proposed demolition of Speer Library must be reviewed in accordance with the standards and criteria of Section 17A-193A, of the Borough of Princeton Land Use Ordinance. The ordinance requires the applicant to prove that the building cannot be put into reasonable use and its preservation will impose an undue hardship on the applicant *and* (or) that the replacement development will comply with the standards and criteria of Section 17A-193A.

Ms. Reichelderfer informed the Committee of a Mercer Hill Neighborhood meeting to be held on November 11, 2008 at Speer Library. The Seminary called the meeting as part of their effort to seek neighborhood input concerning the demolition and proposed redevelopment of a new library. A. Reichelderer reiterated that the proposed development is a preliminary concept review. The Committee will review the official development application again once a major site plan and historic preservation plan are filed.

Mr. Gilmore informed the Committee that on December 11, 2008, the Seminary would return to the Planning Board for a (second) concept review. The review would be a follow-up to the September 9, 2008 planning board meeting. J. Gilmore briefly described the decision path taken by the Seminary concerning their intent to demolish Speer. He noted that S. Crocco and D. Fixlar would provide additional information. J. Gilmore recognized the concerns a demolition in an historic district might set and expressed the desire of the Seminary to work with the HPRC on this issue. He noted the current Speer Library would not accommodate the mission and future needs of the Seminary and renovations to Speer library would present a hardship for the Seminary. He concluded that the proposed development of one new library in conjunction with Luce Library would better serve the mission of the Seminary.

Dr. Torrance stated that the Seminary houses the largest freestanding theological collection in North America and second in the world, behind the Vatican Library in Rome. The Seminary holds over a million bound volumes, pamphlets, microforms, and currently subscribes to over 2,000 journals and related materials. Dr. Torrance further explained that the Seminary houses a vast amount of digital films, rare books, manuscript materials, archives, antiquities from biblical periods and research centers. Collections and services are housed in two connected library buildings, but inadequate interior space has become a hardship preventing expansion. He stated that the changing nature of theology and the growth of Christianity in South American and Africa would lead the Seminary in new directions and would change the traditional mission of the school to promote more diversity programs (i.e. the Hispanic Leadership Program). Moreover, the Seminary desires to support the mission of the school by the development and consolidation of the Luce and Speer libraries, better serving the needs of the school for the next century.

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Dr. Crocco, Seminary Librarian, explained to the Committee the thought process as to why a programmatic and operational one-library perspective is critical to the mission of the Seminary. He noted the population of the Seminary's library collection continues to grow at a rate of 15,000 to 20,000 volumes per year. These collections and services contribute heavily toward the work of graduate students, faculty, and a large number of scholars from Princeton, North America, and abroad.

Dr. Crocco noted the initial option reviewed by EYP was to retain Speer Library; however, it became apparent that the overall space of the library did not solve the pressing functional needs of the Seminary. He described the relationship between the Speer and the Luce libraries and the difficulty of making the two libraries one. He noted that Speer is low, vast and spread out while Luce is taller and more compact. The next option (Scheme A) was to retain the front of Speer and to construct a new building behind the facade. The third option (Scheme B) was to construct a new building. He described the decision path of the Seminary as it attempted to retain the Speer and noted that the low and diffuse character of Speer made the goals of creating a more inviting space and providing more natural light difficult. Crocco described the structural problems of Speer, such as the floor-to-ceiling height and inadequate load-bearing capacities on the top two floors, which limits the use of Speer library. He noted that the floors of the Luce and the Speer do not align, thus increasing the challenge of renovation. Another issue complicating design efforts to retain or reuse the Speer was the configuration of the library entrance, the circulation desk, and the high-density shelving facility. The current Speer façade eliminates important adjacencies because the location of the front door and the circulation desk are essentially fixed.

Mr. Fixlar presented to the Committee a power-point presentation, which illustrated the interior renovation problems of the Speer Library analyzed by the Seminary faculty and there professionals:

- Speer Library has inadequate structural strength to accommodate modern-day library loads.
- Speer Library would continue to have inadequate floor-to-ceiling heights. Floor levels in a renovated Speer would not match the levels in Luce Library, which would make it difficult to form a well-functioning single library. It would be difficult to align new interior floors in a renovated Speer building with its existing window openings being too low to function adequately.
- Renovations to Speer Library would be costly and would not lead to good programmatic outcomes.

D. Fixlar discussed the effort to save the Speer and commented that the building lacked architectural and cultural significance and was in his opinion a sacrificial building. Mr. Fixlar then discussed the option of retaining the façade of Speer Library by inserting a new building to try and meet the programmatic requirements within the space carved out of the existing library. The schemes that kept the shell of the Speer as a façade forced new programs into existing spaces with dimensions mandated by the shape of the building rather than by the program needs themselves.

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Retention of Speer Library as either a building or as a façade connected to Luce Library, both resulted in a very large space between the two buildings that needed to be filled in. One possible solution was to create a large atrium simply to weatherproof the distance between the two existing buildings however this approach provided much more space than the Seminary wanted or needed. He stated that the Seminary Trustees had voted in favor of a new building in May of 2008.

D. Fixlar addressed the Committee's September 17 memorandum and commented on the Seminary's desire to create a development that was compatible and appropriate to the Mercer Hill Historic Overlay zone. D. Fixlar stated that Rayford Laws, a designer at EYP had joined the project and that they were preparing new design sketches to take into consideration the concerns raised by the Committee. Although a final design had not been selected, he noted that the café would be moved from the Mercer Street façade to a less prominent location. D. Fixlar commented that the new designs would address the committees concerns about the proportion and height of the new building. The new designs would also take into consideration the Committee's comments about the massing of the new structure, the relationship of the structure to open space, roof shape, windows patterns, and rhythms. The new design would also attempt to provide a solution to the campus divide that exists between the older campuses located to the south of Mercer Street and the library area located to the north. The Seminary would attempt to reuse the more architecturally significant feature in the existing Speer such as interior stair rails, some of the exterior stone and bas-relief. He described the eclectic nature of the surrounding structures and noted that a wide range of architectural styles existed in the district.

The Committee discussed the presentation. J. Perantoni commented that the Seminary had provided some useful information and that this was what the Committee was expecting at the original concept review meeting. J. Faggen questioned the rationale for saving the Luce Library. He noted that there were "donor issues" involved with any demolition of the building. Celia Tazelaar cautioned against a repeat of history over fifty years ago when the two Lennox Libraries were demolished and stressed the need to document and understand the involvement of the architects Kilham and O'Connor, who designed the interior of the Speer as well as the Firestone Library at Princeton University. She suggested that the Seminary obtain a written opinion from the State Historic Preservation Office as to whether the Speer was a contributing structure to the district. The Committee was in general supportive of the Seminary's attempts to rethink the design of the replacement structure in the context of the concerns raised in their September 17 memorandum.

The Committee opened this portion of the meeting to allow for public comments:

- Everett Garretson, 14 Edgehill Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. Garretson stated that after listening to the concept hearing, he is still unclear as to what hardship there would be to renovate Speer Library. S. Crocco responded and cited the need for group study areas, the need for more natural light, and the changing nature of library science.
- Barbara Garretson, 14 Edgehill Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mrs. Garretson asked if there is another site on campus suitable to construct a new library.

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D. Fixlar responded that they had already covered this topic and it was the Seminary's position that this site best suited their needs.

- Adrian Backes, 43 Mercer Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. Backes stated that he attended the Seminary as a student, and now is an employee. Since he worked within Speer, he can testify from experience about the programmatic and structural issues the Seminary faces, such as lack of book space and overall operational challenges of Speer.
- Mimi Omiecinski, 98 Nassau Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Ms. Omiecinski stated she was reading a prepared response from the Mercer Hill Historic District. She expressed her appreciation of the borough's diverse architecture, which makes Princeton a special place to live. She categorized some of the demolitions made by the Seminary that had taken place near Speer, such as the Lenox Library, demolished in 1955. She presented a package prepared by Mercer Hill Historic District that detailed demolitions in the area and urged the Committee and the Seminary to reconsider the demolition of Speer. A. Rechelderfer noted that she had represented the PTS since 1979 and that they had not demolished a building since the early 1970's.
- Jim Pelham, 34 Edgehill Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. Pelham commented that he was struck by Dr. Torrance's comment of the desire of the Seminary to be a global institution yet the proposed designs were somewhat self-referential. Dr. Torrance responded that the design was still in its concept phase and that the Seminary wanted to design a building that was not out of context with its surroundings.
- Ann Dale, 28 Edgehill Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Ms. Dale stated that the testimony tonight seems to imply that the demolition of the Speer had already been determined. J. Perantoni responded that the HPRC is an advisory board to the planning board and that no decision had been made.
- Tony Klockenbrink, 22 Edgehill Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. Klockenbrink questioned whether there were any plans to change the façade of Luce. D. Fixlar noted that some blocked windows along the Stockton Street facade might be altered but that no major changes were anticipated.

Public comment portion closed.

ACTION. The Committee agreed that, while the Seminary had presented helpful and useful information, a decision regarding demolition could not be reached at this time based on the information presented thus far. The Committee requested the following additional information:

1. The Seminary is requested to continue conducting research into historic significance and to prepare a report that summarizes the history of the original

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- project development and that notes the building's architectural, cultural, and historic features.
2. The Seminary is directed to meet with the State Historic Preservation Office (*SHPO*) staff and to request written commentary about the contributing nature of Speer Library, which shall be submitted to the Committee.
 3. The Seminary shall continue to document findings and repackage their executive summary on 21st century library needs, which includes all research, evaluations, diagrams and conclusions that support their request for demolition.
 4. The Seminary shall provide a feasibility cost assessment that summarizes the financial impact of the different design options explored. It is requested that this financial analysis includes a breakdown of preliminary cost estimates involved in budgeting funds to demolish, clear the site, reuse materials, and provide new construction scope of work as needed to meet program needs. This budget sum should be compared to the analysis performed on alternative options. Financial analysis should include a breakdown of preliminary cost estimates anticipated in response to budgeting funds for adaptively reusing Speer Library, including all interior renovations, structural remediation and rehabilitation work necessary to make Speer a viable library facility in the future.

HEARINGS

**12-14 Vandeventer Avenue, Block 27.04, Lot 24
Stonerose Associates/Applicant & Owner
Concept Review of Proposed Renovation, Expansion and Conversion
of Joint Occupancy Building to a Multifamily Residential Dwelling**

D. Bridger read from his memorandum describing an application for Historic Preservation Plan Review of a Concept Plan to permit renovations and the expansion of 12-14 Vandeventer Avenue. The applicant is requesting use variances for density, the maximum allowable number of units in a structure and the maximum allowable floor area ratio to permit demolition of an existing two-story rear addition of an existing joint occupancy building and the conversion to a five-unit residential building. The development proposes to construct a three-story addition to the existing joint-occupancy building. The applicant is requesting a concept review to determine if the proposed alterations and additions are acceptable to the Historic Preservation Review Committee prior to proceeding to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Mr. John Hatch, Architect, provided the Committee with photographs of the existing and proposed conditions of the subject property. Mr. Robert Powell addressed the Committee and provided historical background information for the subject property. He explained the goal is to eliminate the non-conforming office use on site and create a more compatible use of the structure and lot. Mr. Powell stated that he proposes to construct four market-rate apartments and one moderate-income affordable unit. The existing older front portion of the house would remain. The original windows existing on the front portion of the house would be retained and refurbished. The existing dormers on the Vandeventer façade would be restored and maintained and the existing garage would be upgraded and painted to match the house. The front elevation of the structure will be restored to its more historically accurate Greek Revival style, with the

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elimination of the large existing porch, and the installation of smaller Greek Revival porch. The existing large double-hung window units on the front façade would remain.

The Committee entered into Executive Session: C. Tazelaar expressed concern with regard to the size of the front porch. C. Robertson stated the porch is not an original element of the structure. K. Thoft expressed concern with regard to the bulk and height of the proposed addition. The Committee questioned whether a reduction in size of the proposed addition was possible. R. Powell commented that they would look at adjusting the design of the addition but that the size of the proposed addition was needed to support the construction of the additional residential units.

ACTION. C. Tazelaar made motion to support the concept review application. However, the Committee is concerned with the following: (1) demolition of porch, while probably not the original, is apart of a historic evolution (2) the new elevation on the south side should be stopped back to break up the expansion.

R. Tuder seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

**25 Palmer Square East, Block 20.01, Lot 83
CBD Zone/Central Historic Overlay Zone
Jazams, applicant
Palmer Square Management, owner
Historic Preservation Plan Review
Main Business Sign and Banner Sign**

D. Bridger read from his memorandum and described the request to place a banner sign on the front of the façade. He noted that the previous tenant (ETC Design) had a similar banner. The proposed banner encroaches into the public right of way and would require approval from Borough Council. The Committee discussed the proposed colors of the banner (yellow background and red letters) and was concerned that it did not match the color and font on the existing main business sign that was installed over the main entrance. The existing main business sign features white upper case Caslon Italic lettering that is illuminated by soffit lights. D. Bridger noted that the main business sign, while complying with the applicable ordinances, had never been presented for review by the HPRC. K. Thoft made motion to approve the application as follows:

1. The banner was approved with yellow fabric for the banner and red lettering.
2. The banner font shall match the font on the main business sign.
3. A subcommittee comprised of C. Tazelaar, R. Tuder, and W. Howard will review the banner and the main business sign.

There was no further public comment.

At 12:00 midnight, K. Thoft moved to adjourn the meeting. R. Tuder seconded. Motion

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approved unanimously (*by those present at the time*).

The next regularly scheduled Historic Preservation Review Committee meeting will be held on December 3, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle A. Britton, Recording Secretary