

APPROVED

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
Regular Monthly Meeting No. 308
Wednesday, February 4, 2009**

MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting of the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) was convened at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Room in Borough Hall. Jeanne Perantoni, Chairperson, opened the meeting in accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Section 5, Chapter 231, and PL 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 regular 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 (Quorum): Jane Faggen, Nora Kerr, Jeanne Perantoni, Carolyn Robertson, Celia Tazelaar, Kirsten Thoft, Regan Tudor

ABSENT: James Constantine, William Howard

ALSO PRESENT: Derek Bridger, Historic Preservation Review Officer;
Janice Most, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Draft Minutes of December 3, 2008 were carried to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE WAIVERS

**20 Nassau Street; Bloc, 19.02, Lot 19 and 20
20 Nassau Street Professionals, LLC, Owner
P.S. Nayer – The Wireless Shoppe, Inc., Applicant
CB Zone/Central Historic Overlay District
Illuminated Main Business Sign
Approved January 7, 2009 – Jeanne Perantoni**

**14 Alexander Street; Block 41.01, Lot 9.01
Tom Chapman, Owner/Applicant
R3 Zone/Mercer Hill Historic Overlay District
Installation of Metal Stovepipe Chimney
Approved January 29, 2009 – J. Perantoni**

HEARINGS

**25 Library Place; Block 37.01, Lot 12
Mercer Hill Historic Overlay District
Princeton Theological Seminary, Owner/Applicant
Renovation and Expansion of Princeton Theological Seminary Bicentennial Library
Continuance of Concept site Plan Review and Historic Preservation Plan Review
Previously heard September 9, 2008; November 5, 2008**

Derek Bridger stated that Member Robertson had recused herself from this portion of the meeting.

Nora Kerr stated that she had disclosed her involvement with the Mercer Hill Historic District Association (MHDA), a group of which some members are opposed to the new Seminary Library. N. Kerr had discussed the issue with Allan Porter, the Planning Board Attorney who had determined there was no need for her to recuse herself from this application.

Representing the Applicant was Ann Reichelderfer, Esquire. A. Reichelderfer stated that this presentation was a continuation meeting for demolition and replacement of the Speer Library and to answer the four requests of additional documentation and support materials the Committee raised at the November 7, 2008 meeting; this was a concept review and not a formal application. She also stated that neighbors within 500 feet were notified of the meeting and meetings took place with interested neighbors and residents. From these meetings, resident suggestions were incorporated into the design.

A. Reichelderfer restated the additional documentation and support materials requested by the Committee:

1. The Seminary was asked to continue conducting research into historic significance and to prepare a report that summarizes the history of the original project development and that notes the building's architectural, cultural, and historic features.
2. The Seminary was asked to meet with the State Historic Preservation (SHPO) Office staff and to receive a written commentary about the continuing nature of Speer Library from SHPO.
3. The Seminary was asked to 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.

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4. The Seminary was asked to provide a feasibility cost assessment that summarizes the financial impact of the different design options explored. This request was to include 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, remediation and rehabilitation work necessary to make Speer a viable library facility in the future.

A. Reichelderfer also stated that, most importantly this parcel of land was deed restricted to Library use only. Since the last meeting, the Seminar has continued to work on the design recommendations from the last hearing.

A. Reichelderfer introduced Iain Torrance, President and Professor of Patristics for the Seminary, who stated that the Seminary was committed to this project and working with the HPRC, the neighbors, and Borough representatives.

David Fixler, Architect stated all calls to the State Historic Preservation Office were unanswered; he has been trying since December 2, 2008. D. Bridger stated he has had the same response. Celia Tazelaar stated that phone calls to State agencies will not do; you have to write to a State agency. D. Fixler spoke to the hardship of this application as it relates to the Cost Feasibility Study and stated the hardship is not based on finances alone, but also on the programmatic needs of the Seminary.

Jane Faggen questioned the Deed of 1843 – would the requirements of a Deed from 1843 hold for year 2009. J. Faggen read into the record a section from the Deed and felt it seems to read that it can be used for other activities.

“It being expressly understood and agreed that the premises herein first above described upon which is now erected the building intended to be used for the library to the said Seminary shall at all time or times hereafter be appropriated for the use of the library belonging to the said Seminary and not as a place of residence or of carrying on any trade or business or occupation not connected with the said library establishment, but any spare ground being part of the said premises not wanted for the said library establishment may be used for the erection of any other public edifice or building connected with the said Seminary . . .”

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There was discussion concerning the construction of the Luce Building and how it relates to Speer. D. Fixler stated that Luce is a modern library and can operate in relation to current standards. The Speer has low floor to floor height, and lacks natural light.

A. Reichelderfer stated that New Jersey enforces donor intent – if it can – and clear donor intent can be enforced. The language is clear to have a Library on site, if there is additional land – that can be used for other intentions.

J. Faggen stated that if the Constitution can be changed a Deed can go to a higher Court to be changed.

C. Tazelaar commented on the Cost Estimate submitted in the Response. There are two schemes, each completed in early 2009. The cost of preserving the Speer will be approximately \$15 million more to complete interior hand excavation and reengineering of floor levels.

N. Kerr noted that, although the Seminary has cited the misaligned floors of the Speer and Luce libraries as a programmatic hardship, the proposed new library will be organized around an atrium with balconies connecting it with Luce library. The floor levels of the two buildings need not align, exactly, but can be ramped. There was a brief discussion concerning the existing and proposed structural bay sizes, book storage and modulating shelf depths.

Audience Comments

Wendy Benchley, Boudinot Street, asked what the concept was of a 21st Century library.

D. Fixler stated the library will house a large collection of books – digital and paper with duplicates, space for each media and interaction space. W. Benchley questioned the “book box. Instead of an auxiliary structure, can the box be buried? D. Fixler noted that to bury the box a building within a building will be needed. W. Benchley restated the Architect’s comment: currently there are 500,000 on site books with a plan to add 1.5 million more.

Ross Wagner, Professor at the Seminary, spoke to the Deed restriction and noted there is value to having everything in one place in one building.

Elizabeth Brown, Edgehill Street, stated the Speer/Luce Library is the premier center for religious research in North America. Taking the structure off site would reduce its intended usefulness.

Steve Crocco, Seminary Librarian stated there currently are 500,000 books. Many are digitized. The Seminary has researched space-sharing with the off-site Princeton University Warehouse but other institutions now make use of the remaining storage space.

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Rob Robertson, Mercer Street, read from a publication he researched about historical significance of a library and questioned the Master Plan as it relates to the library. John Gilmore stated a Master Plan was started three-four years ago – and it was decided the library renovation would be completed first.

Adrian Backus, Mercer Street, stated the library was a learning hub with communication systems answering to the Master Plan.

Tom Chapman, Alexander Street, questioned the floor differential between Luce and Speer. D. Fixler stated that Speer's second floor was 18" lower and the basement was two feet higher. The floor differential presents a hardship for handicap accessibility. Ramps need to be created according to Code. The basement would then be useless defeating the intent to have a working basement area.

Arch Davis, stated he has been involved with computer systems at the Princeton Firestone Library and asked if a sub-basement could be created with ground drainage.

Bob McClellan, Edgehill Street, stated he was a frequent user of the library and the current space is not comfortable for research. He feels the issue is not to preserve the building, but to have the best possible space for scholars to do work and meet and for the Seminary to be open to the community.

N. Kerr stated that a library of the 21st Century could have a whole array of uses.

Richard Finn, Edgehill Street, questioned the criteria the HPRC uses to determine if Speer is of historical significance; where does the committee get criteria of significance – where is this information published. C. Tazelaar noted it is available on the Borough website. Jeanne Perantoni stated that whenever historic districts are established the basis includes historical significance.

A. Davis stated the design illustrated in the proposed rendering does not fit with the contiguous historic district of the Seminary and the surrounding buildings.

D. Fixler gave a Power Point presentation that included:

- building mass comparisons to Luce;
- Lenox Library cross axial relationship;
- view from northeast;
- sketch view from east;
- view from southwest;
- view from southeast;
- photomontage from Morven;
- first floor main floor plan;
- northeast sidewalk building section;
- southwest sidewalk building section;
- atrium from northwest;

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- reference room layout;
- context building comparisons;
- photomontage from Library Place and Morven;
- the replacement of Speer with photo, circa 1940;
- demolition of Lenox and building of Speer;
- Luce, circa 1992-04 by Hiller Group.

D. Fixler stated the building would be stone, with copper roofs and they are still looking into window treatments.

C. Tazelaar requested that hard copies of the concept review be sent to the Committee prior to the hearing.

W. Benchley questioned the “book box” as it relates to the Master Plan, and stated that the parking lot should remain a parking lot. Does the Ordinance note anything about the length of a building without windows? This proposed building design looks like a warehouse.

D. Fixler pointed out that the design depicts a lot of wall – but, the wall is not straight – there will be greenery – if these themes do not work, something else would be done to camouflage the length of the wall.

D. Fixler also spoke to the atrium and walkway. To connect the atrium would present a hardship; the building is too “squashed” floor to floor.

Robert Robertson questioned D. Fixler about the theme of the proposed building. D. Fixler responded that the theme of the design is “light” – to bring light into the structure.

R. Robertson stated the “book box” is bigger than Nassau Hall, is inconsistent with the theme, and faces Trinity. He also stated that Harvard has remote book storage; offsite storage is more economical, better for books and better for visitors.

William Storrov, Director of the Center for Theological Inquiry, stated his office currently looks over Speer. He finds it unattractive and noted the proposed treatment of the book box would be a vast improvement.

John Heilner, Library Place, questioned proposed landscaping. D. Fixler stated there would be landscaping.

R. Finn requested a clear position of the HPRC Regulations – what is being preserved, and why something cannot have more freedom if the public wants it. The proposed rendering can be accomplished fulfilling its mission.

J. Perantoni explained the process and task set to the HPRC.

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J. Faggen noted that the decision to demolish must first be made, than the decision of what type of building replacement is suitable would be considered.

There being no additional public comment, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice S. Most
March 26, 2009