

DRAFT
As of January 22, 2010
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting No. 319
Wednesday, December 2, 2009

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) was convened at 7:30 PM in the East Conference Room in Borough Hall. Nora Kerr, Chairperson, 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 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: James Constantine, Jane Faggen, William Howard, Nora Kerr, Jeanne Perantoni, Carolyn Robertson, Celia Tazelaar, Kirsten Thoft, Regan Tuder

ABSENT: none

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft Minutes of the October 7, 2009, Meeting Number 317, were reviewed. C. Tazelaar moved to approve as amended. K. Thoft seconded. The Motion was approved with an affirmative voice vote.

ADMINISTRATIVE WAIVERS

166 Nassau Street, Block 28.01, Lot 23
Fruity Yogurt & Café, Applicant
Towanda Retail Associates, Owner
CBD Zone/ Central Business Historic Overlay Zone
Main Business Sign
Approved-November 6, 2009-Nora Kerr

12 Spring Street, Block 27.02, Lot 40
Modern Nail Salon, Applicant
Donald and Ruth Moore, Owner
CBD Zone/ Central Business Historic Overlay Zone
Main Business Sign
Approved-November 18, 2009-Nora Kerr

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HEARING

25 Library Place, Block 37.01, Lots 14 & 68
Princeton Theological Seminary, applicant/owner (Block 37.01, Lot 14)
Center for Theological Inquiry, owner (Block 37.01, Lot 68)
Renovation and Expansion of Princeton Theological Seminary Bicentennial Library
Final and Major Site Plan with Related Variances and Historic Preservation Plan
Review
E1/E2 Zone, Mercer Hill Historic Overlay Zone

Member C. Robertson recused herself from this portion of the meeting.

In attendance for the site plan and historic preservation review for the applicant were the following: Steven Crocco, Princeton Theological Seminary Librarian; Darren Damone, Landscape Architect, Andropogen Landscape Architects; David Fixlar, Architect, Einhorn, Yaffee, Prescott (EYP); John Gilmore, PTS Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer; Brian Perry, Engineer, Van Note Harvey Associates; Ann Reichelderfer, Attorney, Stevens & Lee; Iain Torrance, President-Princeton Theological Seminary.

D. Bridger, Historic Preservation Officer, began the meeting with a brief summary of the proposed preservation application which calls for the demolition of the existing 62,000 square foot Speer Library and the construction of a new 92,000 square foot building in its place, which will connect with the existing Luce Library. The subject property is located in the E1/E2 Zoning District and the Mercer Hill Historic District Overlay Zone. The proposed library use is a permitted use. The proposed building consists of a basement, four levels, a new courtyard and high-density book storage. The basement area will be utilized for high volume book storage. The fourth level will house mechanical equipment. An entrance court on the Mercer Street elevation is proposed. The proposed design employs a series of curved accessible walkways to address the divide between the Mercer Street crossing and the entrance. Numerous landscaping improvements are proposed.

The proposed development must be reviewed in accordance with Section 17A-193A(c) which requires that demolition or removal of a structure located within a historic district shall be approved only if the applicant can demonstrate that the replacement development will conform with the standards and criteria set forth in Section 17A-193(a), or that the building cannot be put to a reasonable use and its preservation will impose an undue hardship on the applicant. The proposed development requires variances for parking space size, and the parking lot setback along Stockton Street. The applicant appeared before the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) three times in late 2008 and early 2009 and presented a concept review of the proposed project and addressed the HPRC's criteria for demolishing a building within a historic district. The applicant addressed the programmatic shortcomings of the existing library, and presented cost estimates pertaining to the reuse, reconfiguration and new construction of the project. The meeting ended without a clear consensus of the HPRC.

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A. Reichelderfer stated that a formal site plan application with related historic preservation plan was filed this past June and additional materials were submitted in August 2009. Since the last meeting with HPRC in February 2009, the Seminary has continued with schematic design work on the proposed project. The exterior design of the building has evolved and the renderings have been changed from the last meeting. The proposed project is smaller, more compact, and has been set back further from Mercer Street.

I. Torrance gave an introduction to the HPRC on the proposed project and noted that the design of the initial development has been revised based on comments from the HPRC and neighborhood meetings. The proposed building is now set back further, the building is smaller, and the large book storage area on the eastern elevation has been removed from the design. He noted the Seminary houses the largest freestanding theological collection in North America and the second in the world after the Vatican Library in Rome.

S. Crocco explained the programmatic and structural problems associated with the existing Speer library. He stated that the cost of upgrading Speer to modern building standards was nearly identical to the cost of a new building integrated with Luce Library and still would not provide the programmatic and technological advantages of a new building. The proposed building will address the following structural and programmatic problems with the existing Speer:

1. Inadequate electrical service.
2. Inadequate book capacity; the Seminary subscribes to over 2,000 journals and related materials, and has a collection of a million paper books, volumes, pamphlets, and microforms.
3. Irregular climactic conditions (which are detrimental to books).
4. No loading dock (currently trucks park on Library Place for deliveries).
5. Floor levels within Speer do not match the floor levels within the Luce making it extremely difficult to align new interior floor levels with existing window openings that are too low to function adequately.

A renovation of the Speer Library would present a hardship for the Seminary. The Luce Library is flexible and accommodating to the proposed building in a manner that does create two distinct buildings. A single integrated library building allows the Seminary to create more spaces for patrons and will promote the Seminary's mission of teaching and learning.

J. Gilmore explained that Speer Library has exhausted its useful life in terms of systems and functionality. The current library presents a hardship for the Seminary to fulfill its mission. J. Gilmore noted that deed restrictions of the 1843 donation of the land, where the Speer is located restricted use of the land to only a library. The Seminary cannot afford to repurpose Speer and build a new library on another site due to a lack of suitable sites and funding.

He referenced the Seminary's traffic report, prepared by Orth-Rodgers, which indicated the Seminary has adequate parking spaces on its campus for its needs, including visitors and special functions. There are no plans to increase the number of students or employees in the foreseeable future. The nature of libraries has greatly changed since the construction of Speer Library especially in terms of technology and digital information. In order for the Seminary to best conduct its mission, it needs one new integrated library.

D. Fixler gave an overview of the history of the Speer Library and reiterated its physical and programmatic inadequacies. The building was reduced in size and scale, the book box storage was eliminated and the building was set back further from the streetscape. He noted that the current Speer has a structural load capacity of 120 lbs. per foot whereas 150 lbs. per foot is now required. The proposed structure will have a load capacity of 300 lbs. per foot which will accommodate high volume book storage. D. Fixler testified that to renovate Speer and retain its façade would require digging down into the bedrock which to align the floor levels with the Luce Library. This could only be accomplished by hand or using small equipment. D. Fixler explained how the project fits within the parameters of contextual design for an historic district and how it complies with the historic preservation criteria. He advised the Committee that changes have been made to the plans being reviewed by the committee. The changes were made after the plans had already been distributed. The following is a list of changes not included in the plans submitted/reviewed at the meeting by the Committee:

1. Windows: the new design features the same number of window bays and window openings, which are virtually the same size on the primary elevations, but a soft angle bow has been introduced into the windows along Mercer Street and a finer grain mullion pattern.
2. The windows in the corner pavilion to the northeast of the tower have been consolidated into a corner bay.
3. The window sizes have been slightly reduced on the northeast (parking lot side) elevation.
4. The roof line has been simplified. The parapet "crenellations" between the window bays have been eliminated and the copper roof overhang made continuous.
5. The building is still a combination of coursed and random ashlar stone masonry, but the renderings indicate the Applicant's preference to use a warm sandstone or limestone from Ohio or Western Pennsylvania, similar to the stone used in Scheide Hall, rather than continuing the gray palette of the present buildings.

6. The building footprint has increased by approximately 1,500 sf. – this increase is due to a slight change in the bay size to optimize the shelving layouts.
7. The tower design has been modified slightly – it is now asymmetrical and incorporates the Speer bas-reliefs.

The proposed building was designed to be a 21st Century building with recognizable influences from the Mercer Hill District, Morven, Stuart Hall, Scheide Hall, Trinity Church, Alexander Hall and Firestone Hall. The proposed roof will be a continuous copper roof. D. Fixler discussed the reading room (pavilion) proposed on the lower level of the building on the Library Place facade.

D. Damone discussed the landscape plan. There are a considerable number of mature trees including several very large trees and a fairly diverse mix of species existing on the site. The trees contribute significant value to this portion of the Campus. The proposed plantings are focused around the subject property utilizing mainly native species of trees, shrubs and groundcover plantings that will provide shade, seasonal interest, as well as visual and environmental buffering. The walkways leading to the entrance on Mercer have been redesigned to limit impervious coverage, prevent fragmentation of the lawn and to provide accessibility to the building. Bollards are proposed at the crosswalk on Mercer Street. The existing hedges framing the parking area are to remain at a height of 36 inches. The existing materials in Speer will be utilized where possible in the walks and walls.

J. Perantoni advised the Committee that the balance of the hearing would be structured with a question period followed by a comment period.

N. Kerr questioned if a café is being proposed within the building. D. Fixler stated that a lounge located within the library would provide minimal food services and that the intent would be to service library users and not the outside public.

J. Constantine asked if alternative pervious paving materials had been explored for the parking lot. D. Damone replied that to the best of his knowledge none was considered.

N. Kerr asked whether the Mercer Street parking lot had been moved from the previous design. B. Perry responded that the location of the Lot had not changed. N. Kerr inquired as to what type of screening the parking lot would receive. D. Damone noted that a mix of herbaceous shrubs, 3' to 6' high, would be utilized.

J. Constantine requested that the applicant speak to the variance for loading docks. S. Crocco noted that currently there is no loading dock and that deliveries are made via library place. Most of the deliveries are from panel type trucks with deliveries from tractor trailer occurring only once or twice a year.

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B. Perry explained the three zoning variances being sought. The majority of the proposed building and the existing Luce Library are located within the E1 Zone. The loading berth requirements for the E2 Zone are the same as the E1 except that on lots of more than one acre located within the E2 Zone no berth is required. The total size of the proposed library and the existing (Luce) library is approximately 133,000 sf. Two loading berths are required while the Seminary has proposed one loading area. Variance relief is required. The expansion of the parking lot on the Stockton Street boundary requires a 25 ft. setback in accordance with Section 17A-390(d). The existing setback of the temporary parking lot is 4.7 ft. from the property line. The proposed setback is 7.1 feet. Variance relief is required. Section 17A-387(a) requires that a standard parking space be 9' x 19'. The proposed parking space is 9 feet x 18 feet. Variance relief is required.

The Committee questioned the lack of screening along the expanded parking area on Stockton Street. N. Kerr noted that the effect of the plan was to institutionalize the temporary lot which is located directly across from Morven. J. Perantoni questioned whether more screening could be provided at the expense of parking spaces.

N. Kerr asked if there were any ashlar stone masonry samples available for review. J. Faggen noted the need to compare any samples with the existing stone work on the Luce Library. D. Fixler advised the Committee that a full palate of samples would be provided for their review.

J. Perantoni opened meeting to comments from both the Committee and the public.

J. Constantine commented he would like to see a softening of the entire parking lot and to explore alternatives to the location of handicap spaces along the eastern façade of the proposed building.

C. Tazelaar noted she was in favor of the elimination of the existing gravel lot along Stockton Street which would provide an alternative for an improvement of the Stockton Street view shed including the Center for Theological Inquiry.

There was general discussion and agreement of the Committee in favor of enhanced landscaping and reduced parking along Stockton Street. The Committee advised they would support that position when the applicant appeared before the Planning Board.

C. Tazelaar asked that the architect describe the function and vision of the pavilion located on Library Place.

D. Fixler noted that the pavilion was designed to be a reading room. The floor level was sunk into the ground to minimize its impact and to accommodate a two story structure while at the same time transitioning to the residential nature evident on the opposite side of Library Place.

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C. Tazelaar questioned the book storage of the redesigned building now that the book box had been eliminated. D. Fixler noted the storage capacity will be 1,000,000 while the book box capacity was 2,000,000.

W. Howard questioned the energy efficiency of the building. D. Fixler explained that the building will meet codes for energy efficiency, and will utilize recycled material, solar panels are being considered. They are hoping to obtain a LEEDS silver certification.

B. Brown, Edgehill Street, stated the revised plans are a great improvement and suggested the Seminary provide additional plantings around the parking area.

W. Storr, Director of the Center for Theological Inquiry, stated he would like landscaping along Stockton Street enhanced, and noted he was a trustee of Morven.

R. Wagner, Seminary Professor, Library Place, stated that the proposed design will enhance the entire neighborhood.

Executive Session. J. Constantine supports the proposal and stated that the preservation application met both demolition and hardship criteria. K. Thoft commended the applicant's historical research and noted that proposed design made the demolition issue easier to struggle with. C. Tazelaar noted that the Committee had done its due diligence with regard to the demolition issue and welcomed the new design which eliminated the book box. J. Perantoni wanted to make a point for the record that the applicant had supplied all of the information the committee had requested. N. Kerr and W. Howard both supported the application but are concerned with buffering the parking area on Stockton Street. R. Tudor supports the proposed new library and complimented the design and noted it will help revitalize Luce Library. J. Perantoni commented that the revised plans including the pavilion were a successful attempt to engage Luce Library with the new building and urged the applicant to utilize a sustainable approach as possible.

ACTION: J. Constantine noted that the new design met both the demolition and design criteria of the Ordinance and made a Motion to approve the development application with the following conditions:

1. Final architectural and site plans, material samples, and details are all to be submitted to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for review.
2. Reduction in parking spaces and additional buffering along Stockton Street is supported by the Committee. A softening and reduction of the entire parking area is supported.
3. Reduction in the loading dock requirement from two to one.
4. Support the variance for parking space size of 9' x 18' versus the required 9' x 19'.

J. Faggen seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

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OTHER BUSINESS

Mercer Street Road Reconstruction

A polling of Mercer Street residents was conducted by the Engineering Department. The poll based on linear feet of frontage did not get the required number of votes for bluestone curbing along Mercer Street. The Committee strongly expressed the need to maintain the character of all historic districts.

Educational Seminars; D & R Greenway-Historic Easements, 10/28/09 & Commission Assistance Mentoring Program (C.A.M.P.), 11/13/09

The following staff and members attended the D & R Greenway event: D. Bridger, J. Faggen, N. Kerr, W. Howard, C. Robertson, and C. Tazelaar.

The C.A.M.P. program was attended by D. Bridger, C. Robertson, and C. Tazelaar.

The possibility of hosting a C.A.M.P. program in the Borough was discussed. Committee members discussed possible matching grant funding.

There being no public comment W. Howard made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. K. Thoft seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

The reorganization meeting of Historic Preservation Review Committee will be held on Wednesday, January 6, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Derek Bridger, Historic Preservation Officer
Historic Preservation Review Committee