

**DOYLESTOWN BOROUGH
HISTORIC & ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
November 17, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Doylestown Borough Historic and Architectural Review Board was held at 7:30 PM on Thursday, November 17, 2016 in the Council Chambers, 57 W Court Street, Doylestown PA. Members of the Doylestown Borough Historic and Architectural Review Board in attendance were: Vice Chairperson Heather Walton, Denise Blasdale, Ralph Fey, Marie Kovach, Amy Taylor-Popkin, Jennifer Jarret, Andy Happ, Alyson Logue, and Karyn Hyland, Zoning Officer. Not present were Chairperson Kim Jacobsen and Walter Kepler.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Walton called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

MINUTES APPROVAL: On a motion from Ms. Blasdale, seconded by Ms. Kovach, the October 2016 minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

SIGN APPLICATIONS:

130 S. Clinton Street, Ashlie Reed, applicant

The applicant appeared before the Board and requested approval for a new sign. The sign would be four feet by five feet and would be either vinyl or wood, depending on the budget. The applicant noted that the "Station Express" and ATM signs would hopefully be removed, so that only her sign would remain. Responding to a question from Ms. Walton, the applicant confirmed that the sign would be attached to the building as it is shown in the rendering; ideally, it will look identical to the temporary sign currently in place.

Responding to a question from Ms. Taylor-Popkin, the applicant stated that she will be the only business in the building. Responding to a question from Ms. Walton, the applicant stated that the sign will not be illuminated. Responding to a question from Mr. Happ, the applicant stated that she has no plans for a sign on the façade parallel to Ashland. Ms. Hyland added that there is plenty of wall space for additional signage, once some of the existing signs are removed from the building.

On a motion from Ms. Blasdale, seconded by Ms. Jarret, the Board voted unanimously to recommend a Certificate of Appropriateness for the sign, subject to final approval from Borough Council.

BUILDING/REPAIR APPLICATIONS:

168 E. Oakland Avenue, 120 Athens Avenue Assoc. LLC, applicant

Mr. Wally Smerconish and Ms. Flo Smerconish appeared before the Board. Mr. Smerconish is undertaking a subdivision of an existing property into three lots; he was advised to come to the HARB because there is an existing home on the lot that, in his subdivision application, is marked for demolition. He has included an inspection report and an architect's analysis of the merits of the property and structure. He explained that he is merely subdividing and selling the properties; whoever buys the lots will have to

return to the Board if they wish to erect new structures. Ms. Walton said that the Board's concern is the demolition of the existing building; Mr. Smerconish stated that whether the building is demolished or not depends on who the new buyer might be. He added that the building is not in good shape and, according to his architect's report, has no outstanding historical merit.

Ms. Hyland explained that the existing house is located on Lot 1 on the subdivision plan; the second lot would be on the corner of Oakland and Church, while the third would front only on Church. The house is labeled to be removed on the existing plan, and she felt that demolition approval should be cleared up now so as not to compromise a future buyer.

Mr. Fey noted, regarding the architect's letter, that the Board usually seeks feedback from experts in the fields of historic or preservation architecture to substantiate such opinions. Ms. Blasdale noted that, in the past, the Board has always received plans for a new structure in tandem with a request for demolition. Mr. Smerconish confirmed that he is simply selling the lots, and that future buyers would have to come forward with specific plans and architecture. Ms. Blasdale stated that Ms. Jacobsen (not in attendance) had left a note suggesting that the home dates back to roughly 1850 and is one of the original brick houses in the Borough; if that is the case, Ms. Jacobsen would like to see a Federal-era brick façade taken into account in a future replacement structure. Mr. Smerconish stated that the property is available for any member of the HARB to inspect for repurposing.

Ms. Taylor-Popkin stated that the house is very representative of the Federal style, with its tall front façade, windows, porch design, etc. Mr. Smerconish replied that the home can certainly be replicated, but the existing home needs to come down as it is in very poor repair. Mr. Fey expressed appreciation for the applicants coming before the Board to discuss the issue, and was pleased that there is a dialogue in place for preserving the front brick piece of the building. While the building may look sad now, it would be equally sad to take it down and replace it with something completely different, which would be a loss for the historic character of the neighborhood. He added that the guidelines for the HARB state that they should preserve whenever possible, and complement with the architecture of the period; this seems to be a prime project for that approach. That said, Mr. Fey added that he would not like to approve a demolition without knowing what comes next.

Mr. Smerconish thanked the Board for their thoughtfulness and stated that he shares many of their concerns. Ms. Hyland suggested that they should work on the language of the subdivision plan to eliminate confusion.

The Board opened the floor to comment from the audience. Mr. Carter Van Dyke, a resident and landscape architect, suggested that to "chop away" at the Borough's historic buildings would imperil the entire Historic District. He stated that this building contributes in terms of its scale, character, height, windows, roofline, etc, and encouraged the HARB to fight for authenticity and integrity. Mr. Smerconish assured the audience that he would not like to see a "McMansion" replacement. Ms. Flo Smerconish stated that the property has been on the market for two years, and the home itself is in dangerous disrepair. However, she agrees that a portion of the building could be restored; as a long-time resident, she would not want to do anything to harm the historic integrity of Doylestown.

Ms. Doreen Stratten of 186 E. Ashland stated that she looks at the house as almost a part of her family; it is special to her due to its history, and she hopes it can somehow be saved. She expressed concern that Doylestown is becoming known for its very large homes, and it might be nice to see a smaller house that a middle-class family can move into. Ms. Judith Stratten added that it would be nice to see something built in a similar style which could give the same value to the community. Mr. Smerconish stated that these are great suggestions.

Mayor Ron Strouse stated that there seems to be a general concern that the building be preserved. In this particular case, it seems that the appropriate course of action would be to remove the "subject to demolition" language from the subdivision plan, and leave the debate to the next owner. Mr. Carter Van Dyke added that it would be a great benefit to save a particular magnolia tree on the property as well. Mr. Fey thanked everyone for their opinions and remarks.

The Board discussed what kind of motion they would like to make. Mr. Fey believed that their motion should state that the Board does not support the demolition that is proposed on the Van Cleef Engineering plans dated August 1st, 2016. Ms. Jarret agreed, stating that she would not want a buyer to think the Board has okayed a demolition. Mr. Smerconish volunteered to amend his plans to state that the building "may or may not" be demolished. Ms. Hyland stated that they could work on the specific language, suggesting that "demolition, subject to HARB approval" might be a good option. Mr. Smerconish agreed to withdraw his application in order to work on the language; the Board agreed that this seemed like the best course of action.

RENOVATION CONTINUANCE: None.

WALK-INS: None.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS: Mr. Fey reported that Mr. Jake Taylor, who was handling the renovations of the Moose Lodge, has invited the members of the HARB to a welcome opening.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dirk A. Linthicum

Meeting Minutes Secretary