

CHATHAM BOROUGH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

December 20, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Commissioner James Greener called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham Borough Historic Preservation Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. This meeting was held in Room 301, Upper Level, Chatham Municipal Building.

Names	Present	Absent
James Greener	X	
Council Member Dempsey	X	
Council Member Frank Truilo	X	
Lynn Magrane	X	
Karen Franklin	X	
H.H. Montague		X
Justin Strickland	X	
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary	X	

Public Comment

There was none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Mr. Strickland made a motion to adopt the minutes of the October 18, 2022 HPC meeting as submitted. Council Member Truilo seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. All Commissioners present voted aye. The October 18, 2022 HPC minutes were approved.

New Signage for the Exxon Station – 258 Main Street

Representing Exxon tonight were Steven Tombak and Connor Daniel. Mr. Daniel stated that he was the engineer who had prepared the plans for this new signage.

Referring to Sheet 2, Mr. Daniel explained that Exxon is proposing to remove two existing signs on their property. He pointed out the two existing signs on the plans. Exxon would like to remove these signs and install a single monument sign at the corner where the Exxon sign exists. Mr. Daniel distributed photos of what this sign will look like on the property.

Council Member Truilo asked if there would be any problems with the sight triangle at the intersection if this sign was installed.

Mr. Daniel answered that he had checked with the Borough Engineer, and it was found that the proposed sign clears the sight triangle.

Mr. Daniel stated that landscaping is being proposed along the base of the sign.

Mr. Greener asked if the proposed sign would be internally illuminated.

Mr. Daniel explained that the price section showing the different gas prices for the sign, will be internally illuminated. This would make the sign more visible to motorists. This proposed sign and the existing free-standing Exxon sign will be the only signs on the property.

Mr. Greener brought up the scale of this new sign. He noted its height would be 9 feet 10 inches. Why does the sign have to be this size?

Mr. Daniel felt the size would be easier to read the prices as well as being aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Tobak added that there will be a reduction of square footage is being proposed. Mr. Daniel stated that a variance would be needed. The existing free-standing signs on the property are non-conforming. The proposed square footage would be 45.5 sq. ft.

Council Member Truilo confirmed with Mr. Daniel that the price points on the proposed sign will be digital and will be controlled by a lap-top.

Council Member Truilo didn't believe digital signs were allowed in the Borough. If this was approved, other businesses in town would want these type signs. A trend could start.

Mrs. Franklin pointed out that J & M Plants in Madison has a digital sign.

Mr. Greener had concerns about the color and scale of the sign. He felt a glaring white sign would not be acceptable in the town's Historic District. Perhaps a more muted color could be considered. As a compromise, Mr. Greener suggested a smaller digital read-out, along with a reduction of the scale of the proposed sign. A revised color of the sign could also be submitted. The Historic Guidelines may be helpful with the color decision. He asked Commissioners to give their thoughts.

Council Member Dempsey stated that she didn't have problems with the digital numbers, if that is the only digitized part of the sign. The over-all design for this proposed sign will be an improvement over the signs on the pole. The corner is a good location for the proposed sign. She pointed out that it would be good if the sign could be reduced and still be legible.

Mr. Greener pointed out that he was glad Exxon was proposing surface lighting. He asked the Exxon representative to take care in proposing the color for the LED lighting.

Council Member Dempsey felt this would be an over-all improvement of what currently exists.

Mr. Strickland asked what type of material will be used for the white surface.

Mr. Daniel believed the white panels will be plastic. He wasn't sure what the remaining exterior will be made out of.

Council Member Truilo asked if it was possible to make the sign more rustic-looking.

Mr. Daniel answered that he and Mr. Tombak could look at the colors recommended by the Borough to bring out a more rustic element.

Council Member Truilo agreed with the proposal of merging two existing signs into one is a good idea; however, that particular size sign would be more suitable for a highway, not downtown Chatham with a 30 mph speed limit.

Mr. Tombak concluded that Mr. Daniel and his design team will work out an appropriate scale and color. These plans will be going before the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a future hearing.

Mr. Greener suggested Mr. Tombak and Mr. Daniel produce a new image of the sign situation and send it to him and the Commission. Mr. Greener could then write a review letter to the Zoning Board of Adjustment in time for the hearing.

Council Member Dempsey commented that she really liked the proposed landscaping around the sign. Mr. Greener appreciated this instance where a local gas station is attentive to their landscaping.

Mr. Daniel said he and Mr. Tombak will work with their client and come up with new concepts.

Mr. Greener asked that they email the new concepts to him and he will share them with the rest of the Commission.

Flag Award Update

Council Member Dempsey had nothing new to report. Mrs. Franklin noted that she had left a note at the house that she would like to see nominated, but no response,

Council Member Dempsey and Mrs. Franklin decided to wait until after the holiday season to reach out again to the two homeowners.

Council Member Dempsey pointed out that it takes a month to make the flag. Should the Commission go ahead and order it?

Mr. Greener answered yes. He and Council Member Dempsey decided to order two flags. Mr. Greener suggested one HPC Flag could be awarded to a residence and the other to a business.

Related to this topic, Commissioners touched on the new paint job recently done to a South Passaic Avenue storefront. They also discussed the future of the Sherwin Williams building on Main Street.

Goals & Objectives for the New Year, 2023

Mr. Greener recommended that the HPC ordinances must be straightened out in the new year.

Council Member Truilo recalled two months ago he had sent Steve Williams, the Borough Administrator, an email requesting a meeting be set up with the Borough's Zoning Officer, the Building Inspector, Mr. Williams himself, and HPC representatives to review changes to be made to the HPC ordinances. The HPC has serious concerns on enforcement regarding major changes made to the downtown area without the HPC being notified and not having the chance to review and contact. So far no response has been received from Mr. Truilo's email. Council Member Truilo will re-send the memo to the Borough Administrator.

Mr. Greener pointed out that ultimately the Borough Attorney will “wordsmith” the HPC ordinance, before the Borough Council considers it.

Mr. Strickland brought up the possibility that some merchants may not even know their building is in the Historic District. Perhaps the HPC could send out a marketing mailing to all the merchants explaining the Historic District and what the HPC is charged to do. Chrmn. Greener felt it was important to let the merchants know that the HPC is “business friendly”, not out to alienate them.

At 8:30 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Historic Preservation Commission Meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, 7:30 p.m., Room 301, Upper Level, Chatham Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary