

CHESTERFIELD TOWNSHIP SPECIAL SESSION MAY 30, 2024

The Township Committee met on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 295 Bordentown-Chesterfield Road, Chesterfield, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Matt Litt at 7:00 p.m.

The Open Public Meetings Act Statement was read and compliance noted.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present: Rebecca Hughes, Denise Koetas-Dale and Matt Litt

Absent: Belinda Blazic and Shreekant Dhopte

Also present: Rachel Fryc, Deputy Clerk, Hailey Bell, HPC Secretary and Dominic P. DiYanni, Township Attorney

COMMENTS FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

Mayor Litt said that historic preservation is very important to him and that he hopes to have a conversation tonight between the Township Committee and residents in order to figure out how to properly balance the importance of the Historic Preservation without creating a burden on homeowners. Ms. Koetas-Dale echoes what Mayor Litt said. She has been on the HPC for some time and says the volunteers are dedicated and do a great job of weighing all applications. She is hoping for a positive meeting tonight. Ms. Hughes welcomed all to the meeting.

AREA SUBJECT TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

Ms. Fryc read the following:

How the Historic District was Determined –

The Villages of Crosswicks and Chesterfield are shown on the State and National Registry of Historic Places and that was used for the Township Historic District.

Why was the Historic Preservation Commission Created –

The Historic Plan Element of the Master Plan recognized the importance of the Historic Districts. It was recommended that there be the appointment of an Historic Preservation Commission with the intention of reaching a goal of preserving the historic villages of Chesterfield, Crosswicks and Sykesville as well as individual historic sites throughout the Township. Prior to the current HPC there was a group of volunteers that met with homeowners to review their plans to guide the homeowner with appropriate home improvements. This advice as guide and the homeowner was not required to follow the guidance given. The current Historic Ordinance was created with the intention to help obtain grants through the State for historic preservation which included an element for the creation of the Historic Preservation Commission. The HPC provides yearly mailings to the homeowners in the historic districts to guide them with these

improvements and review plans prior to construction permit to ensure appropriateness. The Planning Board then reviews those recommendations for approval.

Mayor Litt asked all when speaking during the public comment to keep it to 5 minutes. Additionally, he would like public comment to be more of a conversation in order to be more productive.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Ms. Hughes to open the meeting to public comment. All were in favor.

Susie Mahon, 16 Chesterfield-Crosswicks Road said the Township's criteria to be in the HPC is conflicting on the Township website.

Steve Hazen, 447 Main Street is not in support of the HPC. He has lived in Crosswicks for over 20 years and was never made aware when the HPC was formed 8 years ago.

Robert Constantini, Barbara Drive (vacant piece of land) asked what the criteria is to make it historic and in the HPC. He does not agree it should be in the HPC.

Dave Freeman, 22 Chesterfield-Crosswicks Rd is concerned because when he purchased his home in 2021 he was not made aware that the home was in the HPC District. He was only made aware from the Township when putting in a new fence.

Elizabeth Ashley, 636 Chest-Arneytown Road said that if she knew her home was in the HPC district she would not have bought it.

Mike Cronin, 31 Chest-Georgetown Road has had a lot of issues with the Township Construction Department and does not agree with the \$100.00 a day fine.

Brian Johnson, 443 Ellisdale Road asked what the purpose and benefits are of the HPC. He does not want to be regulated.

Dawn Donahue, 79 Bordentown-Chesterfield Road said she is not in the historic district. She does not agree with the \$100.00 a day fee for violations and does not agree with regulating the homeowners.

Ms. Koetas-Dale said that the Township paid for HPC Design Standards last year and believes there is an effort by the HPC to follow these standards while having flexibility. Old York Village has certain standards that homeowners need to meet as well.

Lauren Santise, 10 Church Street does not agree that the HPC and Old York Villages restrictions are the same. She said the homeowners in Old York Village

knew about the restrictions prior to purchasing while there are no recorded restrictions for homes in the HPC district.

Molly Hazen, 447 Main Street asked that the HPC be abolished.

Jill Moraca, 4 Hutchinson Drive and member of the HPC. She welcomes people to attend the meetings and to read the ordinance and new guidelines. Said the HPC is dedicated, loves their town and residents and is there to help.

Mayor Litt said that the HPC members are committed and thanked them all.

John Kelly, 633 Chesterfield-Arneytown Road asked if the HPC is qualified to make these decisions.

Ms. Koetas-Dale replied that there are two historical architects on the HPC and the others are all residents.

Tim Beggs, 16 Buttonwood and member of the HPC said there is a misconception of what the HPC is. They are there to give recommendations to the Planning Board and provide guidance to the homeowners.

Brian Mahon, 16 Chest-Cross Road said that his home was not always in the HPC but was moved at some point to include his home without him knowing about it.

James Codela, 470 Main Street and Chairman of the HPC welcomes all to attend the HPC meetings.

Sherri Bailey, 18 Georgetown-Chesterfield Road asked what changed with the HPC in 2016. Ms. Koetas-Dale replied that prior to 2016 the HPC was more of an advisory board giving homeowners advice. The HPC was changed in 2016 to have more standards. Ms. Koetas-Dale said that she was not involved during that time.

Susie Mahon, 16 Chesterfield-Crosswicks Road said that the HPC used to be strictly advisory. She said that when the HPC changed over in 2016 and guidelines created in 2020 none of the homeowners were informed. She asked the Township Committee to apply for more grants. Mayor Litt said they removed the \$100.00 HPC application fee.

Don Czehut, 468 Main Street supports the HPC but says they can do better. He is the Clerk of the Quaker property and is responsible for the Quaker Meeting House. Thanked PW Director Troy Ulshafer for helping construct a new playground and renovate the baseball field in Crosswicks. Mr. Czehut thanked the Township Committee for rezoning the homes in Crosswicks. Says Crosswicks has a lot of broken curbs and sidewalks that is unsafe. He asks that the Township apply for grants and work with the Township Engineer to implement improvements.

Steve Hazen, 447 Main Street disagrees with the HPC for fining a resident for putting up pillars at the end of their driveway.

Cindy Mallison, 10 Chesterfield-Georgetown Road said she had to replace every window in her home costing \$40,000.00 based on HPC requirements for windows. Said homes less than 125 years old should not be in the HPC. She has requested to be a member of the HPC.

Tom Orban, 26 Church Street said that he has lived in Crosswicks for over 40 years and the HPC does not have a right to recind permits. Said his driveway was deteriorating and spent over \$35,000.00 to put in a new one. He is offended that the HPC has a problem with it.

Jerry Baranosky, Chesterfield General Store, Suggested that the HPC go back to being an advisory board.

Mayor Litt said the HPC is strictly advisory and everything has to be approved by the Planning Board.

Tom Orban, 26 Church Street said the HPC says his barn is unsafe and he has a \$100.00 a day fine until he fixes it.

At 9:06pm Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Ms. Hughes for a five minute adjournment at the request of Mayor Litt. All were in favor.

At 9:17 am returned to the meeting.

Jocelyn Gray, 13 Crosswicks-Chesterfield Road was not aware her home was in the HPC when she purchased it in 2021. Her house was build inn 1964 and does not think it should be in the HPC district.

Tom Orban, 26 Church Street said he has a problem with the Township Building Inspector.

Nancy Mrzljak, 471 Main Street said there are two types of properties; contributing and non-contributing. She said that in 2016 the ordinance was passed by the Township Committee with no objections.

Thomas Painchaud, 13 Chesterfield-Georgetown Road said that the cost of materials is double due to the HPC requirements. He asked that the HPC meet the homeowners in the middle.

Ms. Koetas-Dale replied that the HPC does try to work with the home owners.

Eric Tally, 45 Main Street said the HPC has worked very well with him but the HPC guidelines are very hard to find on the website and the website is not user-friendly.

Mayor Litt said the Township is moving to a new website platform.

Jill Moraca, 4 Hutchinson Drive and HPC Committee Member welcomed all to come to the HPC meeting and said the Committee want to work with the home owners and not be discouraged.

Doreen F (indiscernible) Is in favor of the HPC guidelines and stated because of them is why the new construction in Crosswicks looks the way it does.

Jennifer Lynch, 437 Ellisdale Road and HPC Committee Member said that her mission is to take in consideration cost to the homeowners in order to keep the integrity of the community.

Sandra Denarski, 20 Front Street said the HPC was very rude to her when she asked them for guidance on her barn. She does not like how the HPC has treated several homeowners in Crosswicks, lack of communication and asked the Township to do better.

Scott Buchanan, 464 Main Street had a positive experience with the HPC.

Caroline Buchanan, 464 Main Street supports the HPC and is impressed with the new homes built in Crosswicks and believes the HPC guidelines are to thank.

Shawn Bruton, 612 Chesterfield-Arneytown Road was never made aware that his home is in the HPC district. His home is less than 30 years old. He asked about the HPC fines.

Mr. DiYanni replied that the HPC ordinance is enforcing the fines not the HPC. The Code or Zoning Officer is issuing these fines based on the ordinance.

Steve Hazen, 447 Main Street was not aware of the HPC when they moved in to their home. He refuses to go to the HPC for approvals when making updates on his home.

Dawn Donahue said that realtors need to be aware of what homes are in the HPC so they can inform the buyers.

Elizabeth Ashley, 636 Chesterfield-Arneytown Road thanked the Township Committee for having this meeting. She would like a tax abatement. She is very upset that the HPC tells her what she can and cannot do. A lot of residents did not receive a letter for this meeting.

Molly Hazen, 447 Main Street says the new home owners that are flipping houses or making major renovations should have to go through the HPC not the existing homeowners who are making minor repairs.

Hearing no further public comment, Ms. Hughes made a motion seconded by Ms. Koetas-Dale to close public comment. All were in favor.

Mayor Litt said to call or contact himself or anyone on the Township Committee with any concerns and thanked everyone for attending. Ms. Koetas-Dale and Ms. Hughes echoed what Mayor said and thanked all for coming out.

Ms. Hughes made a motion seconded by Ms. Koetas-Dale to adjourn the meeting at 10:44 PM. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Fryc, RMC
Deputy Township Clerk