

# **Township of Moorestown Appearance Committee**

## **Minutes for the Meeting of May 18, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Steve Chepurny, David Donachy, Scott Hearn, Patricia Canton, Melissa McGrath, Annette McGuire, Wayne Urffer, Gina Zegel, D'Arcy DiSpirito

**TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVE:** Patty Muscella

**COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE:** Sue Mammarella

**CALL TO ORDER:** Steve called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:** The committee reviewed the minutes for the previous two months. Annette moved to approve the March 16th and April 20th minutes and David Donachy seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Patty advised that DR Horton will submit revised plans in response to the committee comments from the April 20th meeting.

The demolition application for 415 S. Lenola Rd will have a stay until the June 15, 2022 meeting.

### **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS:**

#### **Demolition Application:**

334 Chester Avenue, Block 4307 Lot 8, Funeral Home, 4887 square feet, built in 1890  
George Matteo, Council for Connell Foley Law Firm, representing the applicant addressed the committee. He stated that the property was purchased by the Levins Group and 1227 Capital Group in February of 2022. He presented that the property had been on and off the market for many years, was last used for a funeral in 2021 and that his client purchased the property for the land. He said his clients did not know the historical significance and value of the home at that time. He said his client believes it is economically infeasible to restore the property due to deterioration, asbestos, and structural and mechanical deficiencies. He did point out that his clients are willing to consider options other than demolition and are willing to work with the township and this committee on a path forward. He asked if the township would entertain purchasing the property and noted that his client would need some economic return on the investment.

He also noted that he did not believe the property to be registered on the state or national register of historic places and that the town does not currently have a Historic Preservation Ordinance in place.

Mr. Matteo would not confirm that the applicant is requesting a variance to build 3 residences, they are waiting for further calculations. The owner is evaluating the economic viability of building two residences. The applicant declined to provide a price for any homes to be built.

Steve asked for comments or questions from the committee. Members of the committee asked the following:

- Have structural studies been done? Answer: no, not yet.
- Was any part of the home in usable condition, as a funeral was held in November of 2021? Answer: the applicant believes there are serious foundation issues and wood rot.
- If studies indicate that the structure is sound would the owners consider other uses - multiple units for rentals or purchase or working with affordable housing? Answer: the owners are open to working with the township.
- Would the owners consider renovating the original home (if sound) and building a new residence on the property? Answer: willing to consider options.

Steve then read letters opposing demolition of the home from:

- Lenny Wagner, President, Historical Society of Moorestown
- David W. Schill, President, Moorestown Improvement Association, Inc.
- Nancy Matthews, Resident 44 E. Central Avenue, Moorestown
- Steve Chepurny, Resident 231 E. Main St Moorestown & Chair of this committee

**Public comment:**

A number of residents addressed the committee to ask the owner to please seriously consider other options in order to save this home from demolition as it is historically significant and prominently located on one of the town's most beautiful and historic streets. They also requested that if it is demolished and new residences are constructed that the owner build homes that will be congruous with the other homes in the area and that the township deny any variances needed to build three homes. Other public comments addressed possible uses such as low / moderate income housing and that parking be considered if multi-family units are considered. Other residents and real estate professionals spoke to the issue of the home being a stigmatized property due to its use as a funeral home and their opinion that restoration of the home would not be a sound investment. It was suggested that the committee should request further information from the applicant. It was not determined if the applicant is willing to do an engineering study at this time.

**SIGN PERMITS:** None

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION:** Sue told the committee that Mayor Jim Malley of Collingswood will speak to council about redevelopment zones at the June 9th council meeting.

Steve asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dave made a motion and Annette seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

**NEXT MEETING:** June 15, 2022 @ 7:00pm in the Library Building

Respectfully submitted by D'Arcy DiSpirito