

October 25, 2023

TUCKAHOE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Village Hall – 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Present: Jennie Steinhagen Chairperson
 Peggy Belles Member
 Greg Luisi Member

Absent:
 Samara Abrams Member
 Ladislao Castellanos Member

Also in Attendance:
 Gary Gjertsen Village Attorney
 John Sullivan

Chairperson Steinhagen announced the agenda as follows:

Item #1 – Approval of minutes of the September 28, 2023 meeting

Item #2 – Presentation of proclamation to Dr. Frank Petronella for 101 Main Street, aka “The Washington Hotel”

Item #3 – Public hearing to consider the Certificate of Hardship application for 230 White Plains Road, aka “The Ward House”

Item #4 – Announcement of upcoming landmark nomination

Item #1 Approval of minutes for the September 28, 2023 meeting

Member Belles motioned to approve the minutes from the September 28, 2023 meeting.

Member Luisi seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously with a vote of 3-0.

Item #2 Presentation of proclamation to Dr. Frank Petronella for 101 Main Street, aka “The Washington Hotel”

Chairperson Steinhagen presented a proclamation recognizing Dr. Frank Petronella on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Dr. Petronella personally accepted the proclamation and thanked the Historic Preservation Commission for recognizing his efforts to restore and preserve the structure located at 101 Main Street, known as the Washington Hotel and the Samuel Fee Building.

Item #3 Public hearing to consider the Certificate of Hardship application for 230 White Plains Road, aka “The Ward House”

Chairperson Steinhagen remarked that the purpose of this public hearing is only to determine if the applicant meets the Tuckahoe Historic Preservation legislation’s criteria for a certificate of hardship.

Chairperson Steinhagen invited the applicant to come forward to present information regarding their application.

The Property owner’s attorney, Lee Lefkowitz, stated that the applicant’s goal is to earn a reasonable return on the property located at 230 White Plains Rd while respecting the history of the property.

Mr. Lefkowitz said the property has already fallen into disrepair, suffering from years of neglect and a lack of maintenance while it was owned by Concordia College. These conditions are documented in the Pantec Engineering report attached to the application. Additionally, Mr. Lefkowitz stated that Concordia made numerous alterations to the structure that were haphazard and require remediation.

Mr. Lefkowitz outlined the applicant’s application, specifically addressing the eight criteria mentioned in the Tuckahoe Historic Preservation legislation.

The applicant’s architect, Luis Campana, explained the cost difference between the reconstruction of the Ward House as opposed to a renovation. Mr. Campana noted that materials like asphalt shingles, vinyl siding, and a sprinkler system were added to the structure while it was owned by Concordia College.

Mr. Campana stated that the total cost of demolition and reconstruction would be approximately \$882,775, compared to a renovation, which could cost between \$1,400,000 and \$1,600,000. He went on to say that a reconstruction will allow the applicant to generate a return on his investment while leading to a quicker construction timeline and more energy-efficient home.

The applicant Greg Holcomb addressed the Commission to discuss his efforts to sell the property. Mr. Holcomb stated that he has not received any bona fide offers in the nearly three months that it has been listed. He added that the offer from the Friends of the Ward House, Inc. does not have deal certainty.

Chairperson Steinhagen explained that the Commission has had time to digest the written application submitted before the last Historic Preservation Commission Meeting. The Chairperson continued by asking the applicant if he knew that Tuckahoe was considering new historic landmark legislation while purchasing the property.

Mr. Lefkowitz responded to the Commission, stating that the property owner cannot be expected to know what legislation would or would not pass after he purchased the property.

Member Luisi asked the applicant why he had purchased the property sight unseen.

Mr. Holcomb responded saying that 230 White Plains Rd and several other properties were bundled together and sold without the opportunity to complete an inspection. He went on to say that he knew the property had some historic value and knew that a historic building moratorium was likely, but was not aware that there would be any legislation restricting his ability to rebuild on the property.

Chairperson Steinhagen noted that during the Commission's last meeting, members of the public complained about the building falling into disrepair.

Mr. Holcomb responded to the Commission, saying that the property is in exactly the same state of repair as it was when he purchased it from Concordia College.

Chairperson Steinhagen stated that the Commission would need to consider what return on the owner's investment is reasonable. The Chairperson asked the applicant why the commissioners have been unable to find 230 White Plains Rd for sale online when the application states that the property has been listed for 83 days.

Mr. Holcomb addressed the Commission stating that he deals with TriCrest Realty, which is part of Berkshire Hathaway Realty. This company handles listing all of Mr. Holcomb's realty transactions.

Chairperson Steinhagen asked the applicant about the offer they had received from the Friends of the Ward House, Inc.

Mr. Lefkowitz explained that one potential buyer lost interest after learning that the property was landmarked, and the offer from the Friends of the Ward House offered Mr. Holcomb \$651,000 for two lots, which is below the asking price. Mr. Lefkowitz said the Friends of the Ward House had not accepted Mr. Holcomb's counteroffer and appeared to be unwilling to negotiate.

Member Luisi asked the applicant if he is selling the property for \$850,000.

Mr. Holcomb responded to the Commission saying he is willing to negotiate, but he has not received an offer with proof of funds and a close date.

Chairperson Steinhagen asked the applicant if the estimate accounted for the parts of the structure that would be reused and not need to be replaced.

Mr. Campana responded, saying that many parts of the home need to be replaced and they tried to use materials that are true to the history of the house to the extent possible. Mr. Campana went on to say that, many of the parts of the building are custom and cannot be easily purchased.

Chairperson Steinhagen noted that the commission is not necessarily asking the owner to replace every part of the building with an exact replacement, adding that the Commission is more than willing to work with property owners to minimize repair costs while maintaining historical value.

Chairperson Steinhagen asked the applicant if they had attempted to get funding from grants.

Mr. Lefkowitz addressed the Commission saying that the applicant cannot access most of the available grants because they are not eligible, and the remaining grants they identified were for relatively small sums of money that would not make renovation profitable for the owner.

Mr. Lefkowitz closed by saying that the Commission should balance the various factors in the legislation when they make their decision.

Chairperson Steinhagen asked for a motion to open a public hearing.

Member Belles motioned to open a public hearing for the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Member Luisi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with a vote of 3-0.

Gary Rapaport, an attorney representing Friends of the Ward House, Inc. asked the Commission to wait for the court to decide if 230 White Plains Road is a landmark or not involved in pending litigation with the Village.

Sal Provenzano spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Jack Flannery spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Maryann Schafer spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Peter McGovern spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Louis Campana addressed a question raised during the public hearing.

Bob Foise spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Anthony Lori spoke about traffic and noise concerns at 230 White Plains Road.

Dick Forliano spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Joe Catania spoke in opposition to the certificate of appropriateness application for 230 White Plains Road.

Edward Powers spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Gary Bush spoke in opposition to the certificate of hardship application for 230 White Plains Road.

Chairperson Steinhagen asked for a motion to keep the public hearing open into the Commission's November meeting.

Member Belles motioned to keep the public hearing open into the Commission's November meeting.

Member Lusi seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously with a vote of 3-0.

Item #4 Announcement of upcoming landmark nomination

Member Lusi said the Commission is seeking to nominate the Generoso Pope Building as a local landmark.

Chairperson Steinhagen thanked the Tuckahoe History Committee for researching the Generoso Pope Building for the Historic Preservation Commission.

There being no further business before the Commission, upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned.