

MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2023, MEETING OF THE FLORENCE TOWNSHIP HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

HPC members present: Katy Beckman, Carol Gardner, Janet Malotky, Pam Miller, Jim McIlrath (Town Board liaison), Liz Schmidt (Goodhue County Historical Society liaison)

Citizens present: Steve Dietz, Joyce Engstrom, Chuck Rusch

Chair Katy Beckman called the meeting to order. The Pledge was recited and minutes from the May 9 annual meeting approved as read.

Design application: Chuck Rusch, 28941 Van Blarcum Av., brought us plans and photos of a ‘ 12’x20” storage shed he has added to his property. He said he built it before learning that he should have submitted a design application. The shed is wood, olive green in color with white trim, and faces Van Blarcum. It is not classified as a permanent structure. While Chuck’s property is within the Historic District, it is not a “contributing property. The Rusches bought the property in 1992 and rebuilt the house on it in 1998. The HPC approved the shed.

OLD BUSINESS

Review of May 20 lilac giveaway/plant exchange: Joyce, who oversaw the event, read a report on it. In part, it read: “43 bare-root lilacs were given away on a first-come basis. ... The plant share and swap brought many plants from neighborhood gardens and both new and experienced gardeners came to get varieties and advice on plants offered. ... The event was well-attended by residents of Frontenac, Frontenac Station and greater Florence Township. Those who came enjoyed the event and the fellowship with other community residents.” The HPC thanked Joyce for her great work, and all agreed the event was a slam-dunk success. If we do a lilac giveaway next year, and we probably will, using only donated money, they will have to be ordered in the fall and picked up in April. Carol suggested that alternatively, we could sponsor the ordering of lilacs from the Goodhue County Soil and Water District. Joyce will look into how that would work. Carol reported that the event garnered \$45 in donations, to be put toward next year’s event. Many email addresses were collected and added to Contacts in our new florencetownshipipc@gmail.com account for sending out future HPC information.

Grant update: Katy said Carole Zelle has reported that her Historic District mapping project is nearing its end and will go to SHPO within a few days. The grant period ends in July, so “the clock is ticking,” Katy said.

NEW BUSINESS

Joyce asked if the HPC might want to consider donating a bulletin board for the Florence Township Post Office, where community events could be listed. No decision was made on that. Carol said she’s also asked if a bulletin board might be installed at the new playground. These

options could expand the spread of information that now is pretty much confined to the township website.

The Locust Lodge saga: Jim reported that although the Property Maintenance Ordinance was indeed approved last year by the Town Board, legal issues remain around what the board can and cannot do to enforce it. “The board wants to respect homeowners’ rights,” he said. Pam has written a draft letter asking the board to use the ordinance to require Locust Lodge owner Margaret Anteblian to repair the badly deteriorated property. That letter will be delivered to the Town Board after we clear up some confusion about whether Granicus Inc. could have a role in enforcement. (The board hired Granicus to oversee the new Short-Term Rental Ordinance, but it’s not clear to us whether Granicus might also have a role with the Property Maintenance Ordinance.)

Let there be less light?: Pam asked why there is a streetlight at the north end of Van Blarcum when the Historic District has dark-skies guidelines. The light serves no purpose that we can see. Janet said there was a similar light down on the boat landing that stays on all night. These streetlights violate the lighting guidelines in our 2007 design guidelines. The HPC will bring this to the Town Board’s attention at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m. Next meeting will be at 6 p.m. July 11.

Respectfully submitted,
Pam Miller
HPC secretary