

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE VILLAGE OF MONTEBELLO WAS HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2013 AT THE MONTEBELLO VILLAGE HALL. THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:45 PM, FOLLOWED BY THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL WAS TAKEN.**

**Roll call.**

Members Present: William Smith  
Rosemary Mocio-Acting Chairperson  
Dorice Madronero  
Matt Moetzinger

Members Absent: Lisa Levin-Chairperson  
William Ellsworth

Others Absent: Warren E. Berbit, Village Attorney  
Craig Long-Village Historian

Shelly Flanagan-Ramos-Deputy Village Clerk -Transcriber of Minutes

Resolution: 13-002

Village of Montebello

Title: Approval of Minutes

BE IT RESOLVED, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission of January 2, 2013, be and are hereby approved.

Motion: Member Mocio

Second: Member Smith

Upon vote, the resolution carried unanimously.

Old Business:

Acting Chairperson Mocio asked if any members had received an update on the Montebello Bridge.

Member Smith stated the drawings are in the works and that County plans on going out to bid so that the contractor can get started in the late fall. Ms. Mocio recalled something that was supposed to happen in July. Member Moetzinger does not recall where the Commission had left off. There will be further discussion at a later date.

The Board is not quite sure what is happening with the Historic House update either. There was speculation that a postcard mailing was supposed to go out.

Those two topics will be revisited at the next meeting.

New Business:

The "Cronin House" at 96 Viola Road.

Member Mocio spoke with the realtor that has the house listed. The subdivided one acre is going to have something built on it, for which the new owner is going to ask \$779,000.00, and the house itself is going to be sold for \$350,000.00. The Planning Board granted approval that if the owner sells the house, the new owners can either keep it or they can tear it down.

The Commission is disappointed that they were not notified of these conditions before approval was given by the Planning Board. There is nothing that can be done to salvage this historic home if the new owners wish to demolish it.

Member Moetzinger and Member Smith visited the home; they felt that the house is in pretty good shape. Member Mocio noted that a few areas inside need TLC, but nothing that cannot be renovated.

Member Madronero asked what size the lot is? Member Mocio thought it was over 2 acres.

There are two barns on the property, one is nicer than the other, and one could fit 2 cars, which is falling apart. Members did not know if the barns were on the one subdivided lot that will house the new home. Member Ellsworth advised there was an ice house on the property at one time, and noted that this home was recognized in the Reconnaissance Level Historic Resource Survey done by the Larson Fisher Associates in August 2010.

Again, the Commission is very upset and disappointed at what will become of this property. Ms. Mocio mentioned that the realtor stated this went back and forth with the Planning Board for four months on trying to decide what to do. The Planning Board gave the owner permission to knock it down.

At the last meeting was the first time the Commission had heard anything about this. At this point Ms. Mocio is hoping someone buys the house and tries to restore it. That is a possibility.

Member Madronero thought there were plans whereby the house is taken down and setbacks were instituted to prevent the obstruction of vision when turning from the intersection. Members do not recall seeing those plans. Member Smith stated there was a tree that was on the corner that created a blind turn, but the tree is no longer there, alleviating some of the site distance issues.

He felt that even if the home is demolished there is still going to be a site problem, unless the road is changed and re-graded. There is beautiful red cobblestone inlaid around the property, Historian Long stated at a previous meeting that type of stone is old and rare.

For the record, Member Moetzingler read the information from page 13 and 14 of the Reconnaissance Survey Booklet about 96 Viola Road:

“The R. Johnson House at 96 Viola Road may have been constructed as early as 1820. Despite being expanded, its original 2 story, 5 bay gable roof form is clearly visible,. This farmhouse was one of those adapted as a country retreat in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, without extensive changes. The property also contains several out buildings, of varying ages. No barn is extant, however.

The R. Johnson House, c. 1820, at 96 Viola Road; a fieldstone outbuilding- possibly a dairy cooler (picture). An ice house is also located in the property.”

The Commission is certain that Historian Long has additional information.

The owner also has the option that if no one purchases the home to knock it down.

Member Smith noted there is very nice woodwork in the home. The Cronin’s were very well respected residents in the community. Mrs. Cronin was a realtor. It has a beautiful staircase and original kitchen with a fireplace.

It breaks Member Mocio’s heart that it may be torn down.

There is discussion on what the Commission would have done if given the opportunity to make recommendations to the Planning Board. It was agreed they would have fought to save the house and not have it torn down. They felt that it’s useless at this point, but that was why the Commission formed in the first place, to PRESERVE.

Member Madronero stated that the Town of Clarkstown has funds reserved to preserve historic homes.

Member Mocio would like procedures implemented whereby the HPC is notified when a situation like “96 Viola Road” comes before the Planning Board.

Member Moetzingler stated there is a procedure in the code on how to designate, but if the various village boards do not involve the HPC for advice or consultation, then they have to go after them proactively. The problems arise when it happens too late. Members will review minutes from the village website and attend the May 21 Planning Board meeting.

Next on the agenda is the Fant Farm Barn development information proposal.

In the interest of full disclosure, Member Moetzingler stated he resides at 2 Fant Farm Lane, formerly known as 257 Spook Rock Road, (“SRR”) which is the original Fant Farm cottage site adjacent to the barns at 255 SRR and to the original farmhouse at 253 SRR. There has been an informal application submitted by Marcel Amona, the builder of the Fant Farm subdivision to build on the lot that is at the southernmost southeast corner of the subdivision. The HPC had originally designated 300’ of west of SRR, the entire property to receive historic designation, and no building of adjustments to existing buildings would be done without village approval. Also, east of SRR in what is now the Berbit Nature Preserve, which is now preserved as a park and open space. The builder was originally supposed to maintain the façade of the barn at 255 SRR, and hopefully succeed in finding a buyer who would maintain the structures as a single family residence. Mr. Amona has been unsuccessful at selling the barn property, so he would like to build at the westerly end of the property, Lot 5. This would entirely defeat the whole intent of maintaining a historic property 300’ west of SRR. There have not been any circumstances changed since the designation was allocated to the property. The designation was never contingent on the sale of existing structures; this was entirely a risk that the builder took on himself when he purchased from the widow Fant.

Member Moetzingler felt that even as an interested party, if he was completely disinterested, he would strongly object to this. It underlines the entire intent of village code and this Commission.

There are other factors which play out too. There is no way a home could be built on the lot without tree removal and significant modifications to the existing open space, which again was the entire intent of designation in the first place. In addition, there are currently 5 un-built lots within the subdivision and the builder has been unable to sell the original farmhouse at 253 SRR. That home is now rented to several tenants and the barn has fallen into disrepair.

Members bring up the past history regarding demolition of the cottage.

Member Moetzingler will completely recuse himself, but suggests to the other members that they should strongly suggest to the Planning Board that they consider the HPC input.

Members agreed.

A letter will be drafted to the Planning Board putting forth the Commission’s request. Member Smith agreed with, and, reiterated everything Mr. Moetzingler said.

Member Madronero is not that familiar with the property but stated that if the Village implemented these historically designated areas/parcels, they should abide by their laws.

She mentioned that directly across from the parcel in questions is the Berbit Preserve, she felt it would undermine what the intentions were of the Village and the people who put this Park together as open space. If this project is approved it will be the Village as a property owner of the Preserve that will be effected.

Member Mocio recommended everyone go to the next Planning Board meeting on May 21. She requested Mr. Moetzing, because he is so well versed with the project, to put together a letter and distribute to the Commission to look at, then send on to the Planning Board.

He agreed to do this draft letter, but will not be voting on the resolution to do the letter. Member Mocio will call and speak to Chairman Levin to let her know what the intentions are. The Commission members that are absent will be polled to ask what their position is.

Member Smith made a motion to draft a letter to the Planning Board, seconded by Acting Chairman Mocio, all were in favor.

Member Smith noted that he thought the red barns were important to the Village of Montebello. The wish is to preserve those that are left. Something to that nature will be put in the letter.

A copy of the draft letter will be sent to Attorney Berbit before being sent to the Planning Board.

It was clarified that Mr. Amona's proposal was to include the barn as part of the 253 SRR parcel. He is requesting that he be given approval to build on Lot 5 as an exchange for incorporating the barn on said parcel. Members do not know why Mr. Amona needs approval on Lot 5 when he has additional lots that are not built on yet.

Discussion on the amount of times Mr. Amona appeared before the HPC in the past.

Member Smith asked about the Grant. The village has not heard anything as of yet.

Member Madronero noted that the R.C. Historical Society had a history conference at a local hotel, which was attended by History Teachers and AP Students. It was the first one ever, and it was unbelievably successful. Discussion was on local history only. The students selected a location in their community and made a presentation about it. Readings were done from civil war letters back home to Rockland County. It was fabulous. This will be an annual event. Historian Craig Long attended. It was recommended that Montebello get involved next time, it would be a great event for young children, to make them aware, that history is happening now!

Member Smith

A motion was made by Member Madronero and seconded by Member Moetzing to adjourn the meeting, all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.