

2020 HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD (HPAB) ANNUAL REPORT

Members: Victor Bary, Anna Bauer (student member until June), Teresa Bulger, Kinney Clark (Vice-Chair), Amy Imhof, William King, Alan Lieberman, Linda Livelli, Michael Mason, Maureen McDougall, Ronald Meeks, Nicole Mulcahy, Julie Murphy, Sarah Oliver, Jeffrey Pistol, Nancy Price, Stephen Price, Steven Saltzman, Loretta Smith, Maureen Strazdon (Chair). Township Committee liaison: Mary O'Connor.

HPAB met every month except August, usually on the fourth Thursday. The January and February meetings were held at the Community Center, and March through December were virtual, usually via Zoom. A list of meeting dates is posted in the Municipal Building and on the Cranford Township website and members of the community are invited.

At the first 2020 meeting the Board decided on priorities for the year. They were: having a Historic Preservation Element (HPE) adopted as part of the Cranford Master Plan Re-examination, creating an audio tour of important Cranford historical sites; writing design guidelines for Sunny Acres homeowners; furthering public awareness of historic preservation by promoting plaques for significant buildings, writing articles, and publicizing Cranford's historical resources; and continuing to provide advice to the Township on historic preservation. HPAB members met regularly and accomplished several objectives in spite of the pandemic.

In October 2019, HPAB had presented the Historic Preservation Element (HPE) to the Cranford Planning Board for inclusion in the Cranford Master Plan Re-examination. The Planning Board was not able to consider the HPE in 2019 nor did it address it in 2020, but HPAB believes it is important that the HPE be adopted and so followed up several times to urge the Planning Board to consider it. The HPE was written as part of HPAB's advisory activities by an HPAB subcommittee that included Steven Saltzman (chair), Teresa Bulger, Kinney Clark, Amy Imhof, Sarah Oliver, and Maureen Strazdon, and is based in part on the *Phase I Cranford Historic Resources Survey: Review of Existing Documentation, Baseline Inventory, and Survey Updates*, done by HPAB member Kinney Clark in 2016, and from input from a public meeting. The HPE includes an action plan/agenda that provides short-, mid-, and long-term guidance for Township committees, boards, organizations, and resource owners. The document does not contain any restrictions or rules for what property owners can or cannot do.

In March and April an audio tour of Cranford historic sites was written, recorded, and a brochure completed by a subcommittee consisting of Kinney Clark, Bill King, Alan Lieberman, Jeff Pistol, and Maureen Strazdon. Audio descriptions of 259 sites, recorded by Bernie Wagenblast, were made accessible using QR codes in a brochure on the HPAB website. In August a proposal for a Union County History Special Project Grant was written by Steve and Nancy Price, and in December HPAB was awarded a matching funds grant of \$650 for signs to be installed at each of the sites. HPAB will match the funds from its treasury. The Township has given its permission to post the signs and agreed to install the posts at no charge to HPAB. Installation will be done as soon as final documents are received from the County.

A draft of design guidelines for owners of homes in Sunny Acres was begun by Vic Bary. Maureen McDougall continues to write the document that would provide suggested guidance for renovations or other changes to the homes in the Historic District.

To raise awareness of preservation, oval bronze and green plaques stating "This Historically Significant Building Contributes to the Character of Cranford" were designed, produced and offered by HPAB in 2017. In 2020 the plaques were offered to owners of all buildings in the North Cranford Historic District as defined in the *Resources Survey*. Additionally, the special plaque designed and offered to Sunny Acres home owners starting in 2019 continued to be offered. Thus far 71 general plaques and 46 Sunny Acres plaques have been sold and can be seen on houses.

In September Teresa Bulger submitted an application on behalf of HPAB for a Certification of Eligibility for the Sperry Observatory. A ruling from the State has not yet been received. A Certification of Eligibility is a formal finding from the NJ State Historic Preservation Office that a property or area is eligible to be designated as historic and verifies its historical significance.

HPAB continues to work with other organizations in Cranford. HPAB and the Cranford Historical Society jointly presented the Annual Preservation Award to the owners of the Cranford Theater and the owners of a house sympathetically restored in Sunny Acres. HPAB continues to support the Heritage Plaza and Riverwalk at Cranford Heritage Corridor, spearheaded by HPAB member Michael Mason. Other activities that had been planned were cancelled because of COVID 19 restrictions.

To make it more accessible to everyone, the *Cranford's History and Architecture – A Journey Through Time* DVD was donated to TV35 and should be available through that website. To further communicate information about Cranford history, Amy Imhof arranged for history facts to be read in all Cranford schools for Cranford History Week in March. Teresa Bulger wrote a series of very popular posts about Summer on the River for HPAB's Facebook page, which started the year with 855 likes and ended with 1095 likes. Articles about HPAB activities appeared in *Cranford Monthly*, *Westfield Leader*, *Suburban News*, *TapIntoCranford*, and on Cranford Radio. Maureen Strazdon presented an Armchair Tour of South Cranford's History via Zoom to the Cranford Women's Club in November.

To support the Township Committee, HPAB commented on the historic impact of variance requests. HPAB sent Annual and Financial reports to the Township Committee. HPAB continues to request that Sunny Acres properties be included in the in Cranford's SDL portal, a database that includes data on all properties in town, as required by the HPAB ordinance.