

May 24, 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
	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 from the March 23, and April 20, 2023 meetings

Item #2 – Public hearing to consider the Certificate of Appropriateness application for 230 White Plains Road, aka, “The Ward House.”

Item #1 **Approval of minutes for the March 23, and April 20, 2023 meetings**

Member Luisi motioned to approve the minutes from the March 23, 2023 meeting.

Chairperson Steinhagen seconded the motion and the motion was carried unanimously with a vote of 3-0.

Member Luisi motioned to approve the minutes from the April 20, 2023 meeting.

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

Item #2 - Discussion: Public hearing to consider the Certificate of Appropriateness application for 230 White Plains Road, aka, “The Ward House.”

Chairperson Steinhagen discussed the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the structure located at 230 White Plains Road, aka, the Ward House, noting the long history of the structure, the process which led to the structure gaining local landmark status, and the current application’s request to demolish the current structure and replace it with a similar single-family home.

Chairperson Steinhagen invited the applicant, Greg Holcomb, to address the Commission and explain his team’s reasoning for the Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Mr. Holcomb spoke in support of his Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Mr. Holcomb’s attorney, Mr. Lefkowitz discussed the Certificate of Appropriateness and stated that the application and proposed replacement structure will honor the historic structure located at 230 White Plains Road. Mr. Lefkowitz proceeded to argue that the structure is currently unsafe and it would be prohibitively expensive to save the current structure.

Louis Campano, spoke on behalf of the applicant, stating that the current structure has undergone various unpermitted modifications. Mr. Campano went on to say that while the Ward House was owned by Concordia College, it suffered from a pronounced lack of maintenance, leading to the depletion of the structure’s architectural significance.

Mr. Campano went on to show the Commission the applicant’s plans for a new structure that incorporates many elements of the historic structure to honor the historic nature of the property.

Chairperson Steinhagen thanked Mr. Campano for his comments and noted that the Historic Preservation Commission only looks at the exterior of landmarked structures.

Chairperson Steinhagen went on to discuss the separate steps in a Certificate of Appropriateness in cases like this, with the step the Commission was addressing at this meeting being the initial step, determining if the structure is an imminent or unavoidable threat to the public health, safety, or welfare. If the Commission denies the Applicant on those grounds, the second step would be determining if repairing the structure would constitute an economic hardship.

Peter from Pantec Engineering, spoke to discuss the condition of the structure located at 230 White Plains Road which led to the Applicant’s certificate of Appropriateness application for the demolition of the structure. The Engineer stated that Pantec Engineering created 12 probes which revealed a reported total of 42 separate deficiencies, along with approximately 15 deficiencies on the exterior of the structure. The Engineer went on to say that the condition of the two beams supporting the walls and the condition of the foundation are quite worrying.

Member Belles asked the applicant if the condition of the two beams constituted an imminent danger.

Mr. Lefkowitz responded on behalf of the applicant, stating that the structural issues are so severe that they pose a danger to anyone in the house.

The Engineer said that the number of previous modifications makes it difficult to assess the safety of the structure, but the two beams supporting the load-bearing walls are deteriorated and deflecting. He stated that due to the many unknowns, he could not say that the structure is safe.

Member Belles thanked Mr. Lefkowitz and the Engineer for their responses.

Chairperson Steinhagen stated that the question before the Commission is whether the structure is an imminent and unavoidable threat to the public health, safety, and welfare.

Mr. Campano responded to the Chairperson stating that a temporary beam is supporting the two deflecting beams to prevent further deflection and an imminent threat to the structure.

Chairperson Steinhagen advised Mr. Campano and the property owner to keep the temporary beams in place. The Chairperson went on to say that the structure has been stabilized thanks to the installation of the temporary beam.

Chairperson Steinhagen opened the public hearing.

Architect Stephen Tilly spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness, stating that based on the report submitted by Pantec Engineering, he sees no reason why the structure cannot be restored without a complete demolition. Mr. Tilly described his experience successfully restoring structures that he said were in worse condition than the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident John Wilson asked the Commission if an inspection was completed before the structure was sold to the applicant.

Tuckahoe resident Sal Provenzano asked Member Castellanos if he believed the structure is at risk of collapsing.

Member Castellanos responded to Mr. Provenzano's question by saying that the structure is not currently at risk of collapse.

Mr. Provenzano went on to say that we will not save this structure by demolishing it, adding that we should save this structure for our children and grandchildren.

Yonkers resident Deirdre Rylander expressed her opposition to the certificate of appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Bronxville resident Marianne Schafer expressed her opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident Maria spoke in opposition to the certificate of appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident John Wilson spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House, noting that New York needs to do more to preserve its history.

Tuckahoe resident Michael Collins spoke, noting that the developer should be allowed to return a profit, however, the purpose of this meeting is to determine if the structure is an imminent danger. Continuing by asking what question the Commission is trying to answer during the meeting.

Chairperson Steinhagen responded by saying the purpose of tonight's meeting is to determine if the structure is an imminent threat and if their application is denied, they can apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the structure based on the potential financial hardship the owner would face in order to repair the structure.

Tuckahoe resident Edward Powers spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Eastchester resident Alisa Halen spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Hudson resident Elizabeth Leggie asked the Commission if the Ward House was landmarked before the current owner purchased the structure.

Village Attorney Gary Gjertsen stated that he was not sure exactly when the Village Board of Trustees put the moratorium in place.

Tuckahoe resident Sal Provenzano said the moratorium was put in place in August 2021, and the house was purchased on September 21, 2021.

Eastchester resident Jack Flannery spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Scarsdale resident Bob Fois spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident Jeff Zuckerman spoke, noting that a smokestack on Riverview Place was torn down despite its historical value.

Wilton Connecticut resident Peter McGovern spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident Maria spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Ward House.

Tuckahoe resident Elaine Provenzano spoke in opposition to the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the ward House.

Chairperson Steinhagen stated that the public comment period will remain open for three weeks. Comments should be made in writing addressed to the Village or the Tuckahoe Historic Preservation Commission.

Member Abrams moved to close the public hearing, which was seconded and carried unanimously by the Commission with a vote of 5-0.

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