

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND PARKS COMMISSION OF THE VILLAGE OF MONTEBELLO WAS HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 2021 AT VILLAGE HALL, THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:04 P.M. FOLLOWED BY THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Present:	Lisa Levin	Chairperson
	Dorice Madronero	Member
	Rosemary Mocio	Member
	Matt Moetzinger	Member
	Robert Israel	Member
	Bill Ellsworth	Member
	Craig Long	Village Historian/HPPC Advisor
Others Present:	Alyse Terhune	Assistant Village Attorney
	Regina Rivera	Planning & Zoning Clerk
Absent:	Josh Goldstein	Member
	Tony Piazza	Member

Present were John Atzl and Ramya Ramanathan of Atzl, Nasher & Zigler P.C. and architect David Mayerfeld.

Chairperson Levin opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and the public hearing notice was read into the record. Assistant Village Attorney Alyse Terhune established the public hearing was properly posted and published on June 10th, and established for the record the materials submitted: The application dated June 9, 2021, narrative dated June 9, 2021, photos of features to be removed from the site dated May 14, 2021, architectural renderings and floor plans of the proposed synagogue and the pedestrian bridge, specifications of the materials to be used on the building, a site and grading plan dated August 13, 2019 with a latest revision date of 7/20/20, and a planting plan dated May 14, 2019 with a latest revision date of August 13, 2020.

Ms. Ramanathan provided an overview of the proposal for a 28,000 square foot, two-story house of worship with a multipurpose space and 144 parking spaces. She explained that much of the proposed building lies within the Scenic and Historic Roads Overlay District buffer as does the historic Johnson Farmhouse, and they have been working diligently with the Planning Board for two years and received a Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact (Neg Dec) which allowed the application to proceed to this Board. Ms. Terhune noted that the Planning Board public hearing remains open, and that the application really came to CDRC for the first time in 2016, after which they reduced the size of the building and placed the parking in the so it is not seen from the road.

Mr. Atzl noted that the rear of the building and its sunken patio is facing Viola Road and the entrance and parking is on the other side hidden from the road. There will be a walking path located along Viola Road on the subject property, a foot bridge over the stream, crosswalks at Lety Lane, Canterbury Lane and Spook Rock Road, and another foot path leading from Emerald Lane to the parking lot, he explained.

Chair Levin asked what materials will comprise the foot path and how far off the road it will be. Mr. Atzl said they have not settled on materials for the path, which will be about 20 to 25 feet off the road, but that pavers or something similar are being considered. Ms. Terhune said that the

Board will be interested in how the path will look, and Chair Levin requested that information as soon as a decision is made.

Member Ellsworth asked Mr. Atzl to elaborate on the buildings to be removed. Mr. Atzl said the house in the rear of the property currently being rented and the outbuildings that are badly in disrepair will be removed, as will the two dams. The Army Corps of Engineers and the New York State DEC both gave their approval for the dam removals because they are denuded and non-functional, he said. The Farmhouse, which is a Village historic landmark, will remain and serve as the Rabbi's residence.

Member Ellsworth asked if a downstream study was conducted. Mr. Atzl said there were exhaustive studies which determined that the dam removals will have no adverse effects on-site or downstream.

Member Madronero asked if the footbridge could be seen from the road, noting the industrial look in the renderings, and offered that aesthetically it should match the building and the arboreal surroundings. Mr. Atzl said it will be seen from the road more so in the winter and that the look they were going for was rustic, not industrial or modern. Member Madronero asked about maintenance of the bridge during the winter. Mr. Atzl assured her it will be plowed and assured her that they would never use salt that could contaminate the stream below.

The Commission and the Applicant discussed vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The Commission made known their concerns about pedestrian safety, the efficacy of the crosswalks, the blind curves of the road and the overall dangerous conditions of Viola Road. Mr. Atzl explained that they worked with the Planning Board and traffic consultants for many months on mitigating the traffic issues and produced solutions that ultimately led to the issuance of a Neg Dec. The Commission remained dubious about the efficacy of the mitigating measures and Mr. Atzl reiterated the diligence with which the reviews were conducted. Ms. Terhune said that if this commission has anything to add to the traffic analysis, the Planning Board can condition their approval on those additional traffic mitigating recommendations.

A discussion ensued about the projected number of pedestrians and vehicles during events and holidays. Chair Levin wanted to know more about special events such as weddings and how it will impact the neighborhood. Mr. Atzl said that Village noise ordinances will be obeyed and that there is a parking management plan for overflow parking at larger events.

Member Madronero inquired about the height and distance of the proposed synagogue in relation to the historic farmhouse. Mr. Atzl said the corner of the base of the building to the farm house is 75 feet and the building will be about 20 feet higher. Ms. Madronero asked about the maturity and location of plantings along Viola Road because she wanted to be sure the landscaping will not block the line of sight for drivers exiting the property and expressed her concerns about how the property will be lit at night. Mr. Atzl assured her that the landscaping will screen the property but will not hinder drivers' ability to see oncoming traffic, and that the lighting will be close to the building and will not shine onto Viola Road or neighboring properties.

Member Madronero requested renderings that include a fuller landscape. Chair Levin agreed and asked if there would be evergreen trees. Mr. Atzl said that Norway Spruces and Eastern Red Cedars will be planted among the deciduous trees. Chair Levin requested seasonal renderings (summer and winter) with more robust plantings from the viewpoint of the building from Viola Road where the entire building can be seen. There are properties in the area that will see the

parking lot in the winter and aesthetically we want to protect neighbors from that view, she added. The Commission members agreed that more renderings were needed to properly assess the aesthetic impacts to the area. Ms. Terhune suggested that the Applicant also submit a rendering of the building that would include the farmhouse for better perspective and the Commission agreed.

Architect David Mayer presented a rendering of the main entrance of the building, which, he explained, is the rear of the building. Some Commission members felt that the side of the building faces the road should be faced entirely in stone, but Mr. Mayerfeld disagreed, explaining that there must be a break in texture and color so the edifice will not look large and imposing. Member Madronero suggested the façade colors should be darker to blend in more with the surroundings and the view shed of the road. The Commission agreed that they wanted to see another rendering with darker colors on the building.

Ms. Terhune summarized the additional submission requests: path materials, a better rendering of the bridge, seasonal renderings showing more landscaping and darker colors on the building, and full views of the building and the farmhouse.

No one else wishing to speak, Member Ellsworth made a motion to open the public hearing, seconded by Member Madronero and upon vote, all were in favor.

Andrew Ackerman, 11 Heather Hill Lane, Montebello, NY asked if an archeological survey was conducted on the property and whether there will be a basement in the building. Mr. Atzl said that New York's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) conducted such a survey as part of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) and determined that there will be no archaeological or historic resources impacted by this project, and that there will be no basement and only a partial excavation. Mr. Ackerman asked if there would be oversight over that excavation or if provisions have been made for an archeologist to be on site, citing the opportunity for recovery of historical artifacts. Ms. Terhune said the Village Engineer will be overseeing any excavation and asked this Board if they felt the need to make this request to the Planning Board. Member Ellsworth asked Mr. Ackerman to elaborate.

Mr. Ackerman explained that an archeologist would walk the site looking for any surface remains, followed by a vigorous survey using sound technology to discover any artifacts below the surface prior to excavation, and once digging has begun, the site would be carefully examined further. It is a shame that this property is not being preserved as an historic site and that burden rests on your shoulders, he said, adding that once the project is done there is no chance for recovery of artifacts or meaning.

Mr. Atzl said that no evidence of historic or archeological artifacts were discovered during the Phase I assessment during which soil samples were submitted, and SHPO did not feel further studies were warranted. Mr. Ackerman countered that SHPO only looks at environmental issues but was corrected by Mr. Atzl who explained that the agency considers archeological and historical factors equally. Unconvinced, Mr. Ackerman said the area is rich in Native American tradition that should be respected, and the Phase I study does not have those types of remains in mind. He urged the Board to do their due diligence out of respect for the historic property and farmhouse.

Mr. Atzl said the farmhouse will remain and be used as a dwelling for the clergy, but Mr. Ackerman felt it should be used educationally and be open to the public. Ms. Terhune reminded him that it is a private home, will remain so, and that there will not be any historical tours. Mr.

Ackerman said that this Board should at least require signage that documents and explains the history of the house.

Village Historian Craig Long explained that in 2006, this Board designated the house historic under Montebello's local law. At the time it was slated for another development and the Board protected it. It will be a private residence, he agreed, but the full history is written in the historic resource survey that was commissioned by this Board and is available on the Village website.

Mr. Long said that the house is older than one might think and spans three periods. It was built in 1840 and additions were built in 1880 and 1920 and does not therefore represent just one era. The property was a working farm with a swimming pond and was acquired by the Johnson family in the 1880s, who themselves were around since the 1770s. It's true that Rochambeau's and Washington's troops came through Montebello from Stony Point, but they camped in Suffern. Mr. Long said he would recommend a survey if the soldiers camped there or if Native Americans inhabited the property, but it was a farm and a sawmill long before the Johnsons acquired the home.

The house and its outbuildings eventually fell into disrepair and this Board became concerned about losing the structure, he continued, and there is comfort in knowing that it has been preserved. Mr. Long then explained that since it is private property, the owners can do as they please with the interior as long as they do not use the historic status to fund any interior restoration or renovation. HPPC has oversight of the exterior, which must be maintained and kept in good condition.

Mr. Ackerman suggested the interior be designated historic as well. Ms. Terhune said even if it was, the owners cannot be compelled to allow the public inside for tours. Mr. Ackerman thanked the Board and Mr. Long for their time. No one else wishing to speak, Member Moetzinger made a motion to adjourn the public hearing, seconded by Member Mocio and upon vote, all were in favor.

Member Moetzinger recommended that the 2006 original historic designation be reviewed by the Board so they can be thoroughly familiarized, and all agreed. Ms. Terhune gave a summary of all that transpired with the application during the Planning Board process and answered questions until the Board was properly updated.

No one else having any questions or comments, Member Madronero made a motion to adjourn the application to the next HPPC meeting, seconded by Member Israel. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Member Ellsworth made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m. seconded by Member Madronero and upon vote, all were in favor.

