

Franklin Borough Planning Board
Workshop Meeting Minutes for
December 4, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:30PM by the Chairman, Mr. Christiano who then led the assembly in the flag salute.

Mr. Christiano read the Statement of Compliance pursuant to the “Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975.”

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:

John Christiano – Chairman (Present)
John Friend – Vice Chairman (Present)
Wes Suckey (Present)
Jim Williams (Present)
James Nidelko (Absent)
Michael Raperto (Present)
Floy Estes (Absent)
Councilman Concetto Formica (Present)
Mayor John Sowden (Present)
Sharon Schultz, Alternate 1 (Present)
James Affinito, Alternate # 2 (Absent)
Keri Marino, Alternate #3 (Present)

ALSO, PRESENT:

Robert Correale, Planning Board Attorney
Tom Knutelsky, Planning Board Engineer
Alison Kopco, Planner

Mr. Christiano stated that this meeting will not take place of the regular Planning Board meeting Scheduled for December 16, 2024 @ 7:30.

PRESENTATION:

Franklin Historic District designation – Presented by John Christiano.

Mr. Christiano stated that by the end of this presentation the board will vote on accepting this report as is and recommending the council approve the historic designation district and allow for Franklin to be designated as a Historic district.

Mr. Christiano presented the board and public with a power point presentation titled. “*Franklin Borough Historic District Designation: Our Next Step in the history of Us!*”

Mr. Christiano explained how we got here and why we were discussing this, this evening.

Mr. Christiano stated that it all started with the effort of the designation was required by the county of Sussex as a condition of issuing the wetlands permit for the new viaduct.

This means that both the county and state both recognizing that there is a lot in Franklin worth recognizing and preserving.

Mr. Christiano went on to explain that there is no better timing then now. The state has just approved Franklinite as the state mineral and the Mineral Museum has created a special display for it, to share with tons of thousands of visitors who visit the museum a year.

Mr. Christiano briefly touched on the history of Franklin going back as far as the 1600’s

Mr. Christiano stated that in the late 1800’s Franklin was noted for its limestone, Iron and of course Zinc.

In the 1950’s, Zinc had found its way into hundreds of products and it all came from the Franklin- Ogdensburg mines.

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There was another great “combination” taking place here in Franklin. Immigrants from other countries were coming to Franklin to work. Uncovering hundreds of unique minerals. Some were not found anywhere else on earth. There were so many minerals discovered they started using the names of miners to name the minerals.

The fluorescent mineral list is unmatched on earth. Every major natural history museum in the world including New York, Washington DC, London and Budapest have a sample collection from the Franklin mines.

Mr. Christiano stated that this is very cool stuff. The history runs deep and we owe it to those before us to respect it and preserve it anyway we can.

Mr. Christiano continued with his power point presentation. What Does “Historic District” Mean? Mr. Christiano stated that he first would like to discuss what its not. The Historic District is not an ordinance. Some Ordinances may come later but for now, the designation is not an order from the state, county or borough to tell property owners what their homes or business should look like. There are also no restrictions on new construction either.

The Historic district designation is a recognition of an important place and people who made it important. Mr. Christiano stated Franklin is important because what took place here and how it contributed to the present- day economy and society of the borough, state & Country.

It is a recognition of the educational and scientific value of the Franklin experience.

Mr. Christiano went on to explain how the designation helps Franklin. By being a part of the NJ national register of Historic Places, properties have some protections against destruction or damage of historic resources. Coming from the Tax reform Act of 1986, permits owners and lessees of historic buildings to take a 20% income tax credit of the cost of the rehabilitation.

Mr. Christiano went on to list some of the “soft” benefits.

Which would be Tourism, help local eateries, education and a possible increase in property values through the “Historic District” inclusion in real estate listings.

Mr. Christiano stated that he was going to share a map with you showing exactly how much of the town of Franklin would fall under the Historic District. Mr. Christiano stated that you can clearly see that 90% of Franklin falls in the historic district area. Mr. Christiano stated and that’s all it means. If your house falls under the historic district which many do. It means only that.

There is nothing that means now you have to change your house to fit a certain standard.

Mr. Christiano stated at this time that concludes his presentation.

Mr. Christiano stated that he will now open the meeting up to the public starting with Peter Olileman. Who is the project manger of this project and the person behind the report that is in front of you.

Mr. Olileman stated that Mr. Christiano did a good job of summarizing how this project came to light. Mr. Christiano was accurate in what he said about why this project came about with completing the viaduct project.

Mr. Olileman stated that working with Tom Jones we discovered that Franklin is full of history and checks off all the boxes needed to be considered a Historic district.

Tom Jones – Historical preservation planner. Who was also a consulting to Mr. Olielman’s viaduct project. Mr. Jones stated that if Franklin decided to designate franklin a Historic district. Franklin would have an advantage for any future projects that would be involving wetlands, or any other environmental issue that would need permits and reports such as the viaduct project. Having already done a project like this and being in a historic district it would eliminate a lot of the paper work and leg work behind the scenes. Having already being a part of the historic district would put Franklin in a higher advantage for other projects for sure.

Not only having the advantage for future projects but being designated as a historic district comes with self-pride. Knowing that you live in a town that has been noticed for its tremendous

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historical background is something that the community should be very proud of, if not for you for those who were here before you, who made this town what it is today.

Mr. Jones stated that he believes whole heartedly that the town of Franklin should also be considered under UNESCO World Heritage site. The history runs very deep in Franklin as Mr. Christiano stated in his presentation. The people, the sites and the unique minerals that can only be found here in this town. Mr. Jones stated that he is very confident that Franklin meets the criteria. Some towns struggle to meet one or two of the criteria. Franklin would check off all 5 of the criteria's listed. Which is a real unicorn when it comes to the UNESCO world Heritage recognition. A great honor that Franklin should really consider. People want to come to a world heritage site. It's a win- win for Franklin.

Mr. Jones stated that he would sit back down and stay close for anyone who has questions.

Mr. Christiano stated that the meeting was still open to the public for anyone who wanted to step forward.

Phil Crabb – Chairman of the Franklin Borough Historical Committee. Mr. Crabb also stated that he was on the freeholder's board at the time of the viaduct project and is one of the signatures of the checks that was sent in. Mr. Crabb stated that he wanted to start with the saying that Franklin is famous everywhere but in Franklin. Mr. Crabb briefly gave the history of the largest iron mines known to the world. Here in Franklin at Mitchell Park (in front of the pond)Across the street from that was the worlds biggest zinc mine. As you have heard before Franklin's history runs deep and should be preserved in anyway it can and the historic district designation will help with that.

Mr. Crabb stated that being the chairman of the Franklin Borough Historical committee he would like to see planning board applications that come through that have properties in the historic district come before the historical committee for review and comment to help aid them if the applicant sees fit to make their home/property remain and or convert back to its original look. Mr. Crabb stated in no way will the historical committee be a hinderer. The committee would should aide the applicant if they wanted to make their home historical correct.

Mr. Crabb stated that the map you see on the screen was brought to this planning board back in 2003 for recommendation to be considered a historic district.

Now we are again presented with this opportunity with the viaduct project coming to a close. Now is the time to take advantage of this opportunity if not for us for the men and women who were here before us, who made Franklin what it is today.

Mr. Crabb stated that he asks that the planning board really take all what has been said this evening into consideration and approve this report and pass your approval with any other comments or recommendations to the council for their approval. Mr. Crabb thanked the board and went back to his seat.

Jean Dunnpearle – Stated that her family has been apart of Franklin for over 100 years.

Ms. Dunnpearle stated how much she loves the town of Franklin and how excited she was to hear that there was a possibility of Franklin being designated as a historic town. She hopes that this board and council approve this because it would really be a great honor for the town of Franklin and for all of those miners who worked so hard to make Franklin what it is.

Ms. Dunnpearle thanked the board and went back to her seat.

Judy Williams introduced herself and stated that she was speaking as a resident and has the president of the Franklin Historical society.

Mrs. Williams stated that for decades we have been going around with this idea. However, this time Mrs. Williams feels like we all might be on the same page.

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Judy Williams stated that she has a lot to say but she wants to start with the zinc mine site, everyone knows of the Zinc mine site and if you don't you must not be from Franklin. Mrs. Williams stated that she would be reading from the sheet in the board's packets titled "NJ Zinc – Palmer Plant" "The Palmer Plant should be recognized and honored as it has held a special roll in not only our town, our county, State, and world. There will be a historical plaque placed there in a later date. It takes time in government as we all know. However, we have been recognized and the Palmer Plant will be identified as a significant historical marker as it should. Mr. Williams went on to say that she cannot wrap her head around that site producing 22 million tons of ore during its operation. A plant that employed over 4,000 immigrant workers who came to Franklin with only the clothes on their backs look for work and somewhere to raise their families. We owe this to them. So many of you have been so fearful of this historic district talk. Not knowing what it really means or what it will do to the property owners. Education over fear we did our homework we researched this and we have found that there are no restrictions to home owners/business owners when it comes to the Historic district. We talked to other towns who have historic districts they have said that only good things have come from being a historic district that we as Franklin should not fear it. Mrs. Williams said folks we have researched this to death we know that this is something Franklin should embrace this. Mrs. Williams stated that the time has come. It's a good thing for Franklin. Let's Capitalize on it the way it fits in our town. It can be controlled. We are the Flourcements mineral of the world. Our mineral Franklinite is the state mineral. It took us 15 years to achieve it but we did it. Don't turn your back on this town's heritage. This town as history and its not ok to turn your back on it. That's where I stand on this and I hope you find it in your hearts to do the same. Thank you. Mrs. Williams returned back to her seat.

Sara Zydon – Franklin resident. Sara asked for the planning board to be brave. Its really hard to get to this point. Be Brave this is the right time. Reach out for help, research what needs to be researched. Talk to people who have a part in this. I encourage you to be brave and I pray that you will be making good decisions for Franklin. God Bless and thank you. Mrs. Zydon returned to her seat.

Donald Devore – Member of the Historical committee. I'm 4 or 5 generations in this town. I have a lot of opportunities to speak to the younger community to educate them on the town of Franklin.

I think the younger generation people in town they don't see use moving forward and changing things. Getting the national heritage would blow us up and we get the business and the changes we want to see. Let's take advantage of our heritage and past. Let's make this happen.

Thank You. Mr. Devore returned to his seat.

Not seeing anyone else coming forward Mr. Christiano closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Christiano stated that he would like to have a motion to take the Van Cleef Report Project #NJSUF114 recommended to the town council that they accept the report and accept and so designate the areas of franklin that are defined in that report

Ms. Schultz made the motion. Seconded By **Mr. Friend**.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Friend, Suckey, Williams Raperto, Sowden, Schultz, Marino

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Formica,

Approved

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OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Christiano opened the meeting to the public. Not seeing anyone Mr. Christiano closed the meeting to the public.

DISCUSSION:

NONE

OLD BUSINESS:

NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

NONE

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Schultz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Mr. Suckey** seconded it.
All were in favor. Meeting adjourned 9:05 P.M