

**MINUTES OF A MEETING  
OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
OF THE VILLAGE OF THOMASTON  
June 13, 2023**

The Landmarks Preservation Commission met on Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at the Manhasset-Lakeville Firehouse, 25 Prospect Street, Thomaston, NY at 7:30 p.m.

**Present:** Donald Stern, Chair, Leila Mattson, Deputy Chair, Miriam Chatinover, Julie Georgopoulos, Gary Noren, and Village Administrator Denise M. Knowland

**Absent:** None

Chairman Stern opened the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Mr. Stern welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked both the Manhasset-Lakeville Fire Department for their hospitality and the Village administration for making the meeting arrangements. Mr. Stern introduced to the public the members of the Commission, and noted they are all Thomaston residents and unpaid volunteers. He particularly thanked Julie Georgopoulos, a new member of the Commission, who is a registered architect and has professional experience with historic landmarks.

Mr. Stern commenced discussion with respect to a request received by the Commission to landmark the property located at 46 South Middle Neck Road, which was originally constructed as a church circa 1926.

Mr. Stern noted that, while this is a public meeting as required by law (so that the public can see and hear the proceedings of the Commission), there is no legal requirement for a public hearing at which the public can offer comments. However, the Commission will nevertheless welcome public comments, as was indicated in the notice for the meeting.

Mr. Stern next reviewed the legal context of the Commission's work, based on advice of legal counsel and the experience of the Commission with the Belgrave Motors building last year. He pointed out that the function of this Commission is two-fold: (1) first, to determine whether the subject property fits within the definition of "Landmark" within the Village Code, and (2) second, if it does, whether the Commission should "designate" that property as a Landmark for purposes of the Code. He noted that designation of a building as a "Landmark" affects the rights of the owner, and therefore can only occur in accordance with the Village Code. Accordingly, he noted his view that it is insufficient that a building just be old and attractive, or that nearby residents would prefer that it not be altered for other reasons.

Mr. Stern reiterated that if a structure satisfies the definition of "Landmark" in the Code, that does not mean it must be automatically designated as a Landmark by the Commission. The Commission has reasonable discretion. For example, in reaching its decision last year to designate Belgrave Motors as a Landmark, the Commission took into account factors such as: (i) importance of architectural value, (ii) historical significance to the Village, (iii) impact of landmarking on the future of the property, such as ability to repurpose the building, (iv) effect of zoning restrictions, (v) hardship of landmarking to the owner, and (vii) "integrity" of the original building - - i.e. in that case, very few alterations had been made to the exterior of the property following original construction.

Mr. Stern also noted that members of the Commission had attempted to research the history of the 46 South Middle Neck Road site prior to the meeting by consulting the History of Great Neck pamphlet (of which Leila Mattson, a member of the Commission and the Village Historian is co-author), the Village of

Thomaston pamphlet, the Village building files, the website of the Great Neck Historical Society and the Reference Department of the Great Neck Public Library. While these resources refer to other houses and buildings in Thomaston of historical note, the Commission members could find no mention of 46 South Middle Neck Road.

Mr. Stern also pointed out that the Commission was unable to confirm that Robert Tappan (a prominent architect of churches on Long Island in the 1920s) was in fact the designer of the 46 South Middle Neck Road. The building was constructed prior to incorporation of the Village, so no building plans identifying any architect are on file with the Village (materials relating to the 1958 addition are on file, but that was designed by a different architect). The State Historical Preservation Office noted that design of the building “was attributed” to Robert Tappan, but no source for this attribution was given.

Mr. Stern noted that one portion of the definition of “Landmark” in the Village Code includes structures “of particular historical or aesthetic significance to the Village, the Town of North Hempstead, The County of Nassau, the State of New York or the United States.” He remarked that, given the lack of information uncovered so far by the Commission relating to the historical significance of the property to the Village, the “aesthetic” portion of the test was likely to be more relevant.

In this regard, Mr. Stern related that he and Ms. Georgopoulos had requested that SHPO (the New York State Historic Preservation Office) consider the subject property, and SHPO had concluded in a written report posted on the Village website prior to the meeting that the property “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic values.”

Mr. Stern then opened the meeting for public comments, noting that comments would be particularly helpful if they informed the Commission as to the elements noted above for landmark designation pursuant to the Village Code.

The following members of the public offered comments in favor of landmarking the subject property (noting the beauty of the building, the uniqueness of its design in the Village, and its proximity to the Belgrave Motors building which was previously landmarked): Wendy Halpern, 10 Brompton Road; Lynn Zysman, 16 Pont Street; Jean Celender, 1 Overlook Avenue; Ellen Mones, 27 Knightsbridge Road; Olivia Pinsley, 30 Brompton Road; Sara Blumenstein, 37 Brompton Road; Nina Gordon, 200 S. Middle Neck Road.

Mr. Eric Larsen, representative of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization/Global Harmony House, owner of 46 S. Middle Neck Road, introduced himself to the Commission and offered comments, pointing out that the owner had great regard for the building and had always maintained it accordingly. Later in the meeting, Mr. Ram Singal, representative of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization/Global Harmony House, offered additional comments from the owner’s perspective, indicating that the design of the building was a key favorable factor when Kumaris decided to purchase the building.

Mr. Andrew Cronson, a master’s student of architecture and preservation, made a presentation entitled “Landmarking in the Village of Thomaston: 46 S. Middle Neck Road (Global Harmony House), the slides from which were posted on the Village website.

The public comment period was concluded at 8:37 p.m.

Chairman Stern then thanked the public for their comments, and noted that the Commission planned to consider the issues and reconvene at a second meeting at which it expects to make a determination. He noted that the second meeting for this agenda item will be a public meeting, but limited to consideration by the Commissioners of the landmark issues without further public comment.

RESOLUTION 23-01

Upon motion of Miriam Chatinover, seconded by Donald Stern, and unanimously approved, the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLVED, that further discussion of the request for landmark designation of the property at 46 S. Middle Neck Road is continued to a meeting of the Village of Thomaston Landmarks Preservation Commission to be held on Monday, July 24, 2023 at 7:30pm at the Thomaston Village Hall, 100 E. Shore Road, Thomaston, NY; and that the Village Administrator post notice of such continued public meeting as may be required by law.

The vote on this resolution was: Donald Stern, Chair:	Aye	Leila Mattson, Deputy Chair:	Aye
Gary Noren:	Aye	Julie Georgopoulos:	Aye
Miriam Chatinover:	Aye		

**Adjournment**

At 8:43 p.m., there being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Donald Stern, seconded by Gary Noren and unanimously approved.

The vote on this resolution was: Donald Stern, Chair:	Aye	Leila Mattson, Deputy Chair:	Aye
Gary Noren:	Aye	Julie Georgopoulos:	Aye
Miriam Chatinover:	Aye		

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Knowland  
Village Administrator