

New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission Discusses New Updates for Town

By: Katey Johnson

NEW PALTZ, Sept. 22 – Last night, the [New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission \(HPC\)](#) board held a public meeting via Zoom to discuss recent updates and upcoming plans for the board and town. This meeting was hosted by chair John Orfitelli and attended by Commissioner Susan DeMark and Commissioner Matt Maley.

There was a lot of talk about a new information packet that will provide homeowners of historic properties historic data and other information about their properties. There are 18 stone houses standing in New Paltz that the board wants to provide the owners with these packets. They are being worked on now, with a prototype packet coming soon.

DeMark said, “We have 18 stone houses, and they are surviving and they are from different time periods, but what we want to do is create homeowners' packets for each one. That would include a get-to-know your home from a historic angle. It will give them a lot of background, and then a timeline and map, and place it in context of the town.”

If these information packets are successful, these historic stone houses will be saved from potential demolition and renovations. For the board, and for many people in the town of New Paltz, historic preservation is an important aspect of keeping the town grounded to its roots, as it shows where the town began, and how it flourished throughout the years.

Later into the meeting, there was discussion about use of taxpayer funds. The town of New Paltz created a [Community Preservation Fund \(CPF\)](#) that supports town assets. The funds will be contributing to potential easement opportunities, specifically with farms, wetlands, wooded areas and recreational trails. Orfitelli made it clear that the funds must be used appropriately, and not taken advantage of. The fund was established in November 2020 after a vote formed from the town, according to the board.

According to the Board, this fund was able to continue because of New York state legislation in 2019 that revised the [Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act](#) to add Ulster County in. The CPF allows a municipality to move forward with plans for the possible easement opportunities without raising property taxes. Secondly, the Real Estate Transfer Tax ([RETT](#)) supports this, and for the town of New Paltz, the RETT is 1.5% that is paid by the person making the purchase in the real estate agreement, with an exclusion of the first \$280,000 from the fee payment. However, each year, this amount could differ.

Orfitelli also provided recent updates about the RETT funds for 2021, which is currently \$182,498. He estimated that within a few months, they will reach a quarter of a million dollars, reaching \$1 million dollars in four years.

He added, “Hopefully, with that money, we’ll be able to come up with a way of applying those funds to incentivize the homeowners that have historic properties to participate in the designation process.” There is no deadline to spend the RETT funds, but the sooner projects and plans start to move into motion, the better.

There was talk during the meeting about a new roof being built on 46 Libertyville Road, deemed a local historic landmark. The owner of this house, Katherine Schulten, hired an architect, James Reynolds, to help her decide what type of roof would be best for this house. However, Reynolds has not reached out yet to discuss these plans. Once everything is discussed and more set-in-stone, there will be a meeting to review the plans and meet with the architect on how to move forward.

The board also wants to let the community know of a publication on their [Facebook site](#) as well as the [board town site about the Josiah P. LeFevre House and family](#). DeMark wrote the highlight, while Maley provided a sketched illustration of the house. This highlight is to let people know of the historic house, and the family who lived in it, including Johannes LeFevre who fought in the Civil War. The board is pushing to provide the town with detailed specifics of not only this house but many others like it with tons of historic background to keep the rich history of this town alive.

The next Historic Preservation Commission meeting will be held on Oct. 19.

Katey Johnson is a 23 year old student attending SUNY New Paltz. She is currently a junior, majoring in Journalism, as she aspires to be an entertainment journalist one day. Katey attended Bergen Community College from 2016 to 2019 and was the News Editor at the student newspaper there for a semester. Prior to being News Editor, she was a contributing writer and had her work published in a few editions. Katey also interned at the Bergen Record for a day in 2019. Katey loves music, writing and hiking as her personal hobbies.