

Please Note: The Historical Society of Riverton presented the attached items for discussion and consideration at Council's February 7, 2007 meeting. Council referred the proposed amendments to Chapter 128 of the Borough Code to the Planning Board and Zoning Board for review and input.

Proposed changes to Zoning Regulation 128

The main function of the Historical Society of Riverton (quoted from our Constitution) is "to create an awareness of our heritage, to discover, restore and preserve local objects and landmarks, and to continue to expand our knowledge of the history of the area." We have recently become concerned about the demolition, partitioning and redevelopment of properties in Riverton. We believe that the history, architecture and character of the neighborhood and the town are really important, that we are all part of a community that was here before us and will be here long after, and that the community has a long-term interest in protecting its character. We believe we need to work to leave future generations the best place we can and that means preserving what we've got that is good. Designating most of Riverton as a Historic District ten years ago was a wonderful first step. Unfortunately, at the time, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) was given only a non-binding, advisory role.

The Historic District does cover most of the town of Riverton. Any properties not formally included are included if they are more than 50 years old (built before 1957).

In order to truly preserve the character of our town, it is necessary to regulate what people can do with their property within the Historic District. People should not be surprised that special rules apply when they move into a Historic District. When people choose to live here, they are choosing to abide by the preservation regulations.

Because Borough Council can't do it all or know it all, and because they need advice on various matters, they have appointed special experts to commissions – planning, tree, recreation, beautification, etc. The preservation commission is a different kind of commission from the others because most of the time it is regulating private property. We are urging Borough Council to give the ARB back the teeth it should have had all along. They need to be able to say no to people when they want to do something that is not in the best interests of the town.

We have looked at the regulations in nearby towns regarding historical preservation. Moorestown was recently in the news because they passed historic preservation regulations in January of this year, having realized that too many of their historic buildings are being lost. Haddonfield has done a wonderful job of preserving their history. We borrowed many of the changes we are proposing from their existing code. Copies of both towns' regulations can

be found on line. There are numerous examples of preservation regulations and the enabling State and National legislations available.

Summary of Proposed Changes:

1. Emphasize historic preservation. Old buildings are unique – you can't make one and when it's gone, it's gone forever.
2. Establish rules for quorum, removal of members, and record keeping for the Architectural Review Board (ARB). Expand ARB responsibilities to include providing technical assistance to homeowners.
3. ARB recommendations adopted by the Planning Board shall be binding. There is legislation to back this up.
4. Require a "Certificate of Appropriateness" to be issued by the Planning Board, with guidance from the ARB, before issuance of a building permit for changes/repairs in excess of \$1000. Provide emergency repair procedures.
5. Establish design criteria and a standard of review required for issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the ARB and Planning Board. Provide guidelines for interpretation of this ordinance.
6. Provide a list of all structures within the Historic District and whether or not they are of historical and/or architectural significance (contributing structures).
7. Provide for a mandatory public hearing before issuance of a demolition permit for any structure within the Historic District.
8. Establish procedures and criteria for additions to the Historic District.
9. Delineate enforcement procedures.
10. Include regulations regarding signs and historical markers.

What is doesn't do:

1. Usurp the Planning Board's final authority. However, since the ARB consists of the experts charged with advising the Planning Board, overriding their recommendations should be extremely rare.
2. Require certain paint colors.
3. Have any say on interior changes.

