

**Village of Franklin
Historic District Commission
Regular Meeting
Monday, March 7, 2011, 7:30 PM**

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The Regular meeting of the Franklin Historic Commission was called to order by Gary Roberts, Chairman, at the Franklin Village Hall, 32325 Franklin Rd., Franklin, Michigan at 7:30 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Madeline Haddad, Garrett Keais, Gary Roberts, Mike Brassfield, Mary Ann Liut
Absent: Bonnie Cook (excused), Pat Burke (excused)
Also Present: Amy Sullivan, Village Administrator; Eileen Pulker, Village Clerk; Bill Dinnan, Village Building Official; Amanda Davis, Consultant, Bill Lamott, Village Council Liaison to Historic Commission

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Roberts requested that under **VI. Unfinished Business**, the order of **Items A.** and **B** be switched.
Motion was approved unanimously.

IV. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular meeting of February 7, 2011

There was a discussion concerning the number of teachers and staff members at the HUDA School. Sullivan stated that she would obtain a clarification.

Motion by Liut, supported by Haddad, to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting.

Motion was approved unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council received a letter dated February 19, 2011 from Felicia and Imre Molnar, Carol, Franklin, concerning the new HUDA Site Plans (attachment #1).

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

B. Consider Application to Restore Look of Façade at 32654 Franklin Road

Steve Showers, in the place of Gary Cooper who was unable to attend the meeting, presented Concept D for the south elevation of the building. The plan is to clean up and paint the conduits, mount window boxes and install awnings over the two (2) larger windows which will match the front awning, provide better lighting, and plant greenery on the ground level.

Haddad asked that if they install car bumper blocks they would not be very high so as to scrape the underside of a car's front bumper.

Motion by Haddad, supported by Keais, to approve the south elevation of the Market Basket, 32654 Franklin Road, as provided in the plans dated February 22, 2011. The awnings on the south side over the two (2) larger windows will be of the same material and color as the one on the front of the building (Sunbrella, Moss Classic #4911). The valance will be a galvanized metal frame. Boxes will be made of material that resembles wood similar to the Market Basket sign, painted green to match the storefront. The five (5) wall sconces with the backboards will be of wood with a

**molded edge to match the storefront design. Colors used will be green, beige, and gold.
The landscape plants will be hardy.
Motion was approved unanimously.**

**A. Consider Parking Lot Improvements, 32220 Franklin Road.
Motion by Liut, supported by Keais, to remove the item, Consider Parking Lot
Improvements at 32220 Franklin Road, from the table and to bring it back as regular
business.
Motion was approved unanimously.**

**Motion by Brassfield, supported by Keais, to deny the plan to Consider Parking Lot
Improvements at 32220 Franklin Road, based on the fact that the revised plans were
not submitted and the Commission's comments were not answered.
Motion was approved unanimously.**

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Beke, Recording Secretary

Eileen Pulker, Clerk

Attachment #1

To: Franklin Village Council, Franklin Planning Commission, Franklin Historic District Commission

From: Felicia and Imre Molnar, Carol, Franklin, MI

Cc: Carol Street Neighbors

Date: February 19, 2011

RE: New HUDA Site Plans

Dear Franklin Leaders,

Following the presentation of the HUDA School Site Plan by HUDA's consultants at the February 2011 meeting, I have the following response.

The Huda Board decided many years ago to purchase a historic property and to locate a school in a national historic residential district. With this decision came, I believe, a broad range of responsibilities and limitations which I fear that to date HUDA's board and administrators and their consultants have not shown any understanding of or sensitivity to, the least of which being that there are limitations inherent in such a neighborhood as it relates to any building, expansion, construction or care of the property. These limitations are not a factor of demographics or affiliations. They are simply a fact of ownership and responsibilities as it relates to property ownership in a National Historic District. These limitations and responsibilities I trust are applied fairly and across the board to all of us who live in this community.

In fact, Huda is not the only non-profit that has faced such issues as it relates to residential or National Historic sites. I can think of at least two examples that are well documented on the national level: The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia and The Philip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. I had the good fortune of spending time recently with the former executive director of the Philip Johnson Glass House, who explained her process as it relates to site management. The Glass House was the architect Philip Johnson's former residence and it was willed to the National Historic Trust in 2005 following Johnson's death. The site has since been turned into a museum and tourist site. However, as you can suspect the site is also located in a residential neighborhood. The community as well as the local town council stood fast on its principals to limit the number of visitors per day to the site and also to prevent the Trust from building any parking whatsoever on the grounds. In fact, a special use permit was written into law by the New Canaan government and the Glass House administrators worked hard with the neighbors to insure that their demands would be respected. Today visitors to the Glass House are shuttled to the site in small passenger vans, daily visits are limited so as not to disturb the neighborhood, and the administrative offices and visitors center was located in a building 3 miles away from the site in the downtown of New Canaan.

This example of the Glass House is to illustrate that Franklin and the neighborhood should not be afraid to protect the National Historic District fully. We should be unwavering in ensuring that the residential district is safe and free from overuse, and that the original character and green space on the Franklin School site remain sacrosanct. I believe that this is the ultimate mandate of the Town Council and especially the Historic District commission.

We, the community government and neighbors, are the stewards of this Historic school property, as is the Village Council. To steward this site includes protecting the green space and the heritage trees. It means limiting construction, pavement and expansion of the original footprint. It means that we must not cower in the face of threats that detract attention from this main issue. There have been multiple attempts to turn the Huda site into a confrontation about politics and discrimination. I want to be clear that this is not the case, at least in my position nor for many of the neighbors that I am in contact with. We moved to Franklin's Historic District precisely because we knew that there would be limitations and strict oversight on growth, light pollution, and that the natural surroundings would be protected. On these grounds, we are against any construction to expand the parking lots at the Franklin School property. I believe that the Huda Administration and board should be counseled in finding alternatives off site to their parking and drop off issues. There is a lot of precedent for this both locally at the Cranbrook schools and in towns with schools in residential neighborhoods or limited access areas across the country, such as in Pasadena, California where children in both cases are shuttled from staging areas for drop off to the school site.

The Huda building was never intended to house more than 300 students. It was designed as a neighborhood school for children who walked to school. The Birmingham School District left the site when they realized that their needs could not be met for busing children to this site. It was never intended to accommodate large numbers of drop offs by cars, nor were the surrounding streets designed to accommodate over 300 cars in the space of one half hour twice a day. The building and neighborhood does have very limited capacity for traffic and use. This is a fact of the geography and building as it now exists. It is incumbent upon the owners of the Franklin school site to finally face up to these issues.

Thank you for your time.

Felicia Molnar
Carol
February 20, 2011

Franklin Village Council
32325 Franklin Road

Franklin, MI 48025

Re: Site Plan Review Procedure

Gentlemen,

February 7 I attended the Franklin Historic District Commission Meeting to hear its review of the Huda School parking change request. The review was very well conducted and the Commission quite well prepared. The request for change was tabled to give the petitioner time to answer a list of questions the Commission presented. The list was lengthy and thorough, but limited to the purview of the HDC. This is the crux of my concern.

I have long believed that for any project involving both the HDC and the Planning Commission during the Site Plan Review process, the sequence presents some risk to the Village. Current procedure calls for the PC to refer an application for change within the Historic District to the HDC prior to its own in-depth review. Since the HDC can only react to what is presented to it, it is in the position of approving a proposed change that in the end may not be acceptable to the PC. The risk is that if later denied by the PC, a proponent can attempt to use the HDC approval to claim one arm of the Village wants the change and the project therefore deserves the permission to proceed. I suggest it is preferable for the Planning Commission to undertake its review, debate and public hearing to shape the project prior to the HDC's review. By entering the process at this later stage, the HDC's action will be more meaningfully conclusive.

During the HDC Huda review, these concerns came to light for me once again. Questions relating to traffic circulation had to be set aside because the HDC's purview is largely aesthetic not conceptual or technical. The proposal had to be dealt with as though it was a solution, when in fact, it does not solve the traffic problems inherent on and around the site. Examples of issues (there are others) which must be considered outside the Historic District Commission's immediate concern include:

- The proposal purports to simplify drop-off and pick-up utilizing one traffic circle, when there are actually two: one off Franklin Road and another off Romany Way. Dangerous, traffic that is disruptive to the residential neighborhood will not be displaced to Franklin Road as claimed.
- There is curb parking on Romany Way, a danger to neighboring residents.
- There are two parking areas: one off Franklin Road and another off Romany Way with no on-site connection.
- There is a conflict between cars turning east into the Franklin Road drop-off and onto Romany Way by both northbound and southbound cars.
- There is insufficient stacking. Conservatively figuring 200 cars dropping off the 300 students in a 30 minute period prior school starting, each car would have just 9 seconds to discharge passengers. Without multiple stacking lanes this is impossible, particularly given the assumption many cars are delivering more than one student.
- No vegetative screening is called for between the parking areas and adjacent residences to the north and east.

The HDC did discuss the fact that the steep slope is being blamed for pushing the parking into the front yard on Franklin Road necessitating the removal of numerous heritage trees. Reductions in parking and remote drop-off/pick-up are alternatives that can eliminate these issues. Another less desirable alternative to consider is to redesign the Franklin Road drop-off with multiple on-site stacking lanes and relocate the parking to tiered plateaus lower on the site. To accommodate this change, the playground could be displaced to east of the building, buffering the building from dedicated staff parking at the east end of the property.

Alternative solutions are better handled first at the Planning Commission level, with the decisions becoming the basis for the HDC's subsequent review. Concerns of the HDC can be dove-tailed into the PC's final site plan requirements. In the big picture, the Village and the projects will be better for it.

Another aspect of the process needs to be raised. Because parking and circulation are designed and regulated according to Use Definitions in the zoning ordinance and because a site plan review is required for the proposed changes, I believe a Special Land Use Permit must be sought. All of the current uses are non-residential and taking place on residentially zoned property. Whether or not the uses are allowable as accessory to a residential district, they must be identified then validated with a SLUP which places appropriate restrictions on those uses for the community's well-being. What action is the Village Council requiring of the Planning Commission in pursuing this issue?

Respectfully yours,

William L. Finnicum
German Mill Road