

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
RED BANK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
October 15, 2025

The Red Bank Historic Preservation Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 7:00 PM, in the municipal building, first floor, 90 Monmouth Street, Red Bank, New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM. A roll call showed that Louis Almerini, Paul Cagno, Karen Schmelzkopf, Anthony Setaro, Michael White, and Bethsy Varela attended. Michele Donato, Board Attorney, and Shawna Ebanks, Board Secretary, were also present.

The Open Public Meeting Statement Act was read. Adequate notice was posted in the newspaper, the Borough Clerk's office, the Borough website, and outside the Red Bank Council Chambers.

Michele Donato read the Oath of Office and swore in a new member to the Historic Preservation Commission:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Term Ends</u>
Michael White (Class C)	2029

Regular Meeting Minutes: September 17, 2025

Motion: Approved as presented
Moved by: Bethsy Varela
Seconded by: Anthony Setaro
Ayes: Karen Schmelzkopf, Anthony Setaro, and Bethsy Varela
Nays: None
Abstained: Louis Almerini, Paul Cagno, Michael White

Minor Works Committee

Over email, the Committee reviewed three minor works applications. Two applications (3 East Front Street and 7 Broad Street) for new signage and one application (37 Washington Street) for new siding were approved by the Committee.

RiverCenter Liaison

There was no report.

Historic Sites Designation/Design Guidelines Committee

The final draft of the design guidelines incorporated feedback from the Chair, and the document would be approved or accepted at the HPC public meeting, allowing it to be adopted by Council. Steven met with members of RiverCenter to discuss the impact of the guidelines on the business community. They asked that the guidelines include a statement. The Commission discussed whether there should be less restrictive standards for commercial properties versus residential properties. Paul Cagno stated that there shouldn't be less stringent rules for one group over the

other; instead, they should apply to both types of uses. There should not be a loophole for commercial properties over commercial. Karen Schmelzklopf agreed that the current version of the guidelines is an equal standard for both types of uses. Steven Smolyn added that these design guidelines, which apply not just to storefronts and signage but also to residential windows and roofing, provide a wide degree of latitude in choosing materials that meet the HPC's aesthetic and the property owner's budget. Anthony Setaro pointed out that at the last meeting, the Commission approved an applicant to use substitute materials to avoid making their renovations more costly.

The RiverCenter's comments/edits to be included in the guidelines on pages 71 or 83 were:

"Notwithstanding the foregoing, we recognize that a downtown business community is a living, breathing organism, which must change from time to time to continue to be economically viable and to allow business owners and businesses operating in those buildings to keep up with changing market demands."

Although Liam Collins was not in attendance at the meeting, he sent a statement to the Commission commenting on RiverCenter's edits, and it is as follows:

"I appreciate the River Center's interest in supporting economic vitality alongside our historic preservation efforts. However, I have significant concerns that introducing terms like 'economic viability' and 'market demands' into our guidelines could unintentionally create a loophole that weakens our ability to protect the historic character of Red Bank.

To ensure these guidelines truly serve our community's heritage, I propose that:

- 1. We clearly define 'economic viability' and 'market demands' within the guidelines to prevent vague interpretations that could justify harmful alterations or demolitions.*
- 2. Preservation of architectural and historic integrity remains our primary priority. Economic factors should be considered in ways that support, rather than override, this priority.*
- 3. Any proposals citing economic reasons for deviating from preservation standards must be thoroughly reviewed, with documented evidence demonstrating that strict adherence to preservation guidelines is financially unfeasible.*
- 4. There should be transparent processes and opportunities for public input when economic considerations are invoked to modify preservation requirements.*

By implementing these safeguards, we can strike a careful balance between preserving Red Bank's unique historic identity and supporting sustainable economic use of our properties, without compromising the standards that make our town."

Michele Donato agreed that the final version of the guidelines allowed flexibility. What the RiverCenter is requesting to add is duplicative, and the statement should be revised to reflect the entire document, rather than just this section, to avoid serving as a loophole.

Paul Cagno requested that the vote on the approval of the design guidelines be moved to the next meeting because there were still some concerns with the document. Anthony Setaro also agreed that the vote be adjourned to the next meeting to remove and correct some addresses from certain photos.

Chair Almerini also requested that the applicability page include a statement clarifying that the guidelines apply not only to existing historic districts but also to all historic sites. Michele commented that the statement should read, "These guidelines are designed to apply to what the Borough has designated and future designations."

Steven requested that any additional edits be submitted to Shawna by the end of the following week, so he has ample time to make revisions and present the final draft for adoption.

The Committee also met to discuss the draft of the intensive-level architectural survey that had been reviewed. The survey will cover 150 buildings within the boundaries of the locally designated historic district. Each contributing building will have a survey report. It will include a detailed architectural description of the existing condition, a brief narrative on its history, including when it was built, notable people who owned it, and notable businesses located there, among other details. Additionally, a statement of significance is included for each building, explaining why it contributes and what the HPC will be able to do with these forms in practical terms in the future. It will help the HPC make informed decisions on applications. The survey will feature diagrams, Sanborn maps, the 1889 Wolverton map, and other historic maps dating back to the 1700s, showcasing the progression of the Board Street Historic District.

The Commission agreed to hold a special meeting on November 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM to vote on the design guidelines and to cancel the November 19th meeting due to the League of Municipalities conference.

A Design Guidelines Presentation meeting will be held on November 13, 2025, at the Red Bank Public Library.

Anthony Setaro seconded Paul Cagno's motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 PM.

Respectfully,
Shawna Ebanks
Historic Preservation Commission Secretary