

Kingston Village Advisory
Committee (KVAC)
Year-End Public Meeting
January 26th, 2009
7:30 PM Kingston Firehouse

The Joint Township Advisory Committee for the Village of Kingston (KVAC) will hold a community information session on Monday evening, January 26th at the Kingston Firehouse on Heathcote Brook Road. All are invited.

Presentations begin at 7:30 PM, doors open at 7:00. Come early for a cup of coffee and meet your neighbors.

Most of this meeting will be dedicated to discussing the future of the Laurel Avenue School Building.

The Kingston Village Advisory Committee (KVAC) is appointed jointly by South Brunswick and Franklin Townships. The committee monitors progress on goals outlined in a Planning Implementation Agenda (PIA) required by the State of New Jersey for Village Center Designation (VCD). There are nine broad areas with a total of 32 specific goals, divided into short-, medium-, and long-term. Key goals in Kingston's PIA include preserving the historic character of the core Village, improving traffic conditions and pedestrian access, and preserving a permanent greenbelt of open space around the Village. Each year, KVAC files an Annual Report with the State of New Jersey and with South Brunswick and Franklin Townships. A full copy of this report is available at our website, <http://www.kingstonvac.org>.

Laurel Avenue School Building in Trouble

Demolition is likely unless a suitable plan for its use can be developed. Your ideas are needed!

Franklin Township's lease with the occupants of the Laurel Avenue School ended in November and there is no new tenant for the building. Without a rent-paying tenant, the future of the historic school is in jeopardy. Before the building can be occupied again it will need substantial improvements. Some of the essential maintenance includes repairing or replacing the roof, replacing the heating/air system, and installing a new fire alarm. Because the estimated cost of these repairs exceeds \$1 million, Franklin Township is considering demolition of the building. Finding a new tenant presents a challenge, too: the school and grounds were purchased with taxpayer-funded Open Space money, the New Jersey Green Acres Program must approve any use the Township plans, and there are restrictions on how the site can be used. (For example, it can not be used for a commercial purpose.) Franklin Township does not want to pay any expenses on the building until there is an acceptable plan for using it. The Township has asked KVAC to make a proposal on how the community would like to use the building, who would use it and how often, and whether the entire building would be needed or some part of it could be razed. The Township will review the KVAC recommendations in order to decide if the expense is warranted. **The good news here is that Franklin Township wants to hear from the community before taking irreversible action to raze the school. Most of the January 26th public meeting will be dedicated to discussing the future of the school. Please bring your ideas to the meeting!**

Historic Status for Princeton Nursery Lands

Now on New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. A committee of local citizens is working on restoration and preservation.

The Mapleton Preserve Commission, an appointed body responsible for the 53-acre core of the preserved area of the former Princeton Nursery Kingston Site, is working with South Brunswick Township on grants for the preservation of the remaining buildings on the site of Princeton Nurseries. The Commission, which is made up of local citizens as well as members from New Jersey Parks and Historic Preservation offices, is also developing a Cultural Landscape Report for the area. KVAC and the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands participate as members of the Commission and did much of the work on these grants. Listing on the two historic registers was made official at the end of 2007.

The Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park and the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands host nature outings, walks, and other events throughout the year. Check <http://www.fpnl.org/> for details.

Renovations around the Village **Kingston has witnessed a number of major renovation and construction projects in the last year.**

Here is an update on local buildings and houses around the village.

EnoTerra. An impressive restoration of the original circa 1840 building with a major expansion of the restaurant was completed and opened in September, 2008 on the site of the old General Store and later The King's Inn. Raoul and Carlo Momo and their company TerraMomo generously donated all the meats served at this year's Kingston picnic.

The Momo brothers are also responsible for the beautiful restoration of **The Union Line Hotel** at the corner of Main Street and Heathcote Brook Road, restored to its 1889 splendor. Tuscan Hills, a gift store, will open on the ground floor in March, 2009.

Stitching Horse Complex, Main Street. Two new buildings are under construction in a new business development at the rear of the Stitching Horse. One building is near completion and a second is under way. The **Historic Wind Pump** will once again be relocated, this time to a position very near its original site.

Maple Town, Mapleton Road. A development of seven homes, all original Princeton Nurseries houses renovated by local builder Michael Sassman for use as single-family residences. Two are complete.

Most Kingstonians will be amazed by the renovation of the **J.J. Lake House**, an 1840-era house located on Ridge Road just off Route 1, next to the Doubletree Hotel. This building had fallen into an advanced state of decay. It has now been beautifully restored by Michael Sassman, and will open in early 2009 as a private office.

Jedediah Higgins House, Main Street and Raymond Road. One of Kingston's oldest houses is undergoing a complete restoration with an addition on the back for professional offices. Michael Sassman is also responsible for this renovation.

Children's Learning Center. Located in the vacant lot next to the Jedediah Higgins House on Route 27 near Raymond Road. Scheduled to open in 2009-10.

The American Water Company replaced water mains and installed new meters for houses on **Academy, Euclid, Lakeview, and Basin** streets over the summer and fall. As a result, these roads were closed, excavated, and subsequently repaved. South Brunswick Township completed the repaving of Mapleton and Basin Streets.

Master Plans and Zoning

KVAC works with both Franklin and South Brunswick Townships to make sure Village goals are represented in each municipality's Master Plan. Working with KVAC, both townships have developed uniform zoning for the commercial/mixed use of Main Street. This fall, KVAC recommended to the **South Brunswick Zoning Board** that a use variance be denied at **10 Academy**. The application was for a retail dancewear shop. KVAC opposed the variance, reasoning that a retail operation on a residential side street is inconsistent with the intent of the Master Plan to concentrate commercial activity and traffic on Main Street, sets a precedent that will make it more difficult prevent commercial encroachment onto residential side streets in the future, and is opposed by neighbors. The Zoning Board granted the variance.

Millstone Valley Scenic Byway

Plans are moving ahead on the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway, a loop consisting of the "river road" along the west side of the Millstone River and the "canal road" along the east side of the D&R Canal with Amwell Road the northern leg and Route 27 the southern leg, which includes the village of Kingston. The loop also includes Rocky Hill, Griggstown and Blackwells Mills Causeways. A grant has been awarded to restore the Griggstown Bridgetender's House as an interpretive center for the Byway.

Joint Township Advisory Committee for the Village of Kingston (KVAC)

Anne Zeman, *Chair* ▪ Robert von Zumbusch, *Vice Chair*
Corrington Hwang ▪ Karen Linder ▪ Cathy Pavelec ▪ Lauren O'Neil

Liasons:

Shirley Eberle, *Franklin Twp. Council*
Joe Camorata, *South Brunswick Council*
Craig Marshall, *South Brunswick Planning Dept*
Mark Healy, *Franklin Twp Planning Dept*