



Lawrence Historical Society

PO Box 6025, Lawrenceville NJ 08648
www.thelhs.org

Lawrence Township Town Council
2207 Lawrence Road, PO Box 6006
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

May 6, 2019

RE: Lawrence Historical Society's Concerns and Comments to Proposed Subdivision Application

- *Trail at Princeton Pike, Block 5101, Lot 18*

Honorable Mayor Christopher Bobbitt and Members of Town Council,

Lawrence Historical Society has been following the proposed Trail at Princeton Pike subdivision application with an eye toward possible impacts the project would have on the 1761 Brearley House, a building on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places, and surrounding historical area. While we are not opposed to thoughtful planned development of the subject site, we are opposed to the current proposal and do have some significant concerns that we would like to bring to the attention of town council at this time. We have attached a position statement by the Society enumerating these concerns. You will also find attached two independent reviews, one by Michael Mills and one by Ian Burrow, two names that should be familiar with the Township as long-time champions of the 1761 Brearley House.

Mr. Michael Mills, FAIA, was the architect who first mothballed the house when it was purchased by the Township in 1979 and then led the Township's restoration of the house in the late 1990s. The mothball effort is still featured as an example in the National Park Service's *Mothballing Historic Buildings*, Preservation Note 31. Mr. Mills has an intimate knowledge of the structure and its environs, which is why the Society asked him to review the proposal to assess the potential impact to 1761 Brearley House's structure and presentation as an historical landmark. Mr. Mills' conclusion is that the development as proposed "would place extensive development directly in the view shed of the Brearley House severely impacting its historical context." Mr. Mills also details the various issues he sees with the development with constructive suggestions for resolving these issues.

Dr. Ian Burrow, FSA, is a professional archaeologist with whom the Township and Society have worked for decades on the 1761 Brearley House property. Dr. Burrow recently was contracted by the Township to author *Three Houses and Three Thousand Years: Archaeological Research at the Brearley House [28me297]*, Lawrence Township, Mercer County, New Jersey, 1998-2005. This publication was produced

with grant money obtained by the Township from the U.S. Department of the Interior – National Parks Department through the State of New Jersey and is the culmination of research and excavations that have taken place under the direction of the Township since 1998. In his statement, Dr. Burrow discusses the critical need to protect the 28-me-297 site immediately to the west of the house, as it is has a long-standing status as a rich excavation site for prehistoric and early American artifacts. The supporting documentation for the proposed development also notes the need to conduct further research at this location, a point Dr. Burrow addresses in his review.

The Society presents these comments for your consideration, along with our position statement, in the hopes that we can work together toward making the proposed development a success without placing undue stress on, or negatively impacting the 1761 Brearley House and its associated archaeological site, in the process. As noted, we are not opposed to thoughtful planned development, so much as we wish to make some potential impacts of the current proposal known now, while they can be properly addressed to avoid any harm to the historical presentation and preservation of 1761 Brearley House, which both the Township and Society have already invested a great deal of time and money in maintaining as an example of our deep and rich history as a community.

Thank you for your time in this matter,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Halvorsen".

John Halvorsen, President

On Behalf of Lawrence Historical Society

Cc: Kevin P. Nerwinski, Esq., Township Manager
Kathleen Norcia, Municipal Clerk
Lawrence Township Planning Board