

**WEST VINCENT TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**September 9, 2019
7:00 PM**

Attendance: Jim Helm, Chair; Peter Benton, Vice-Chair (via telephone); Kate Farnham, Secretary; Thomaseth Dulchinos, and Township Manager Erica Batdorf.

Mr. Helm called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

CORRESPONDENCE/APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

There was no correspondence. No changes were proposed to the draft minutes of the June 10, 2019 meeting. **MOTION** by Ms. Farnham to approve the minutes as written; second by Mr. Benton. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Commissioners were reminded to submit the final approved minutes to Kathy Shillenn for township records.

NEW BUSINESS:

352 Blackhorse Road (Tax Parcel 25-6-83)

The Commission discussed the application for the subdivision of the property at 352 Blackhorse Road into three single-family residential lots. The Applicant was not present. Property is a Class II resource but according to Isabelle Travaglini, who was in the audience, her research indicates this may be the original Matthews Keeley house and may qualify as a Class I. The Cedarville Engineering review letter to the Applicant referenced that the property contains a historical resource and that our ordinance dictates that the Applicant must agree to conduct a Phase I archaeological study should artifacts or actual resources be discovered during construction. Mr. Helm asked whether the Applicant had requested a waiver from historical resource studies and Ms. Batdorf stated that they had not. As such, the Commission does not have a decision point and consideration of this application was for discussion purposes only.

2806 Conestoga Road (Tax Parcel 25-6-67)

The Township received an application for a demolition permit from the Candace Lane Company (Martin McCabe) for demolition of the dwelling and garage at 2806 Conestoga Road. The Applicant was not present. Applicant's stated reason for demolition was to reduce taxes. The property has been vacant for years and is badly deteriorated. Mr. Helm asked Ms. Batdorf whether the Township found this application up to their standards. Ms. Batdorf responded that it is pretty basic, she would have more questions, and her recommendation as staff was to request more information from the Applicant. Mr. Helm asked Ms. Travaglini for current research on the property and she stated it was the home of Robert Miller, a blacksmith, and dates to the late

1800s; the blacksmith shop is no longer standing. Ms. Batdorf stated that Frank Newhams, Building Inspector, was unable to access and inspect the property due to the severe overgrowth and recommended that it be cleared. Mr. Helm stated that applicants have the right to file an application to demolish but do not have the right to demolish. If we agree to the demolition, the township and applicant can start work. If we don't agree, they can go to the Supervisors. Commissioners believe the property is in neglect, agreed that its condition is far gone, and members of the HRC have been concerned about it for some time; however, those present were not comfortable rubber-stamping this application because they need more information from applicants and this would set a poor precedent. The application is minimal, has little documentary information or a solid rationale for demolition (i.e. safety hazard), and Commissioners would like to see a safety report by the Building Inspector. **MOTION** by Ms. Dulchinos that the Commission postpone the discussion of this application to the October meeting pending more information on the demolition rationale and a completed safety report. Ms. Farnham seconded the motion. *Motion carries unanimously.*

670 Birchrun Road (Tax Parcel 25-7-5.1, aka Bruner-Zarichniak Farm)

The Commission discussed the application for the adaptive reuse of the Pennsylvania Barn on at 670 Birchrun Road. Mr. Scott Risbon, the owner, has applied for a Rehabilitation Permit to rehabilitate this agricultural building as four apartment units. Ms. Batdorf gave a status update: the Applicant met with the Township and the Building Code officer provided a corrections notice. Zoning has granted the new use. Mr. Helm stated that tonight's discussion was for the purposes of providing guidance and no decisions were needed because we don't have an application yet. Mr. Risbon was present and displayed drawings and answered questions about his proposed plans and work at the property thus far; he is seeking the Commission's comments on his plans. Building inspection found the barn is in worse condition than expected and he needed to do some immediate work (removal of rotted timbers, construction of new interior framing) to stabilize it. He also stated that part of the adjacent outbuilding (referenced as a corn crib but actually a wagon house) was collapsing so he took it down with plans to reconstruct it. He has saved all the wood removed from the barn and wagon house for reuse and also bought salvaged barn doors to reuse on the wagon shed. Mr. Helm was concerned about the demolition that has already occurred but stated that we need to discuss the SOI Standards and the 2007 Hankin settlement agreement concerning this property in planning for its future. Plan details were discussed, including paint, siding, windows, and reuse of salvaged wood. Mr. Benton stated that he would like more detail on proposed window materials/configuration and while he likes the plans, he is disappointed that the interior bents will be concealed and would like them exposed since they are an important feature. Multiple Commissioners were concerned that the plans violated the 2007 agreement which stated that the barn exterior needed to be retained in its current condition; some changes like inserting windows in the stone side walls would diminish the appearance of being a barn. Mr. Helm opened public commentary and several audience members asked questions or made comments. Supervisor Bernie Couris stated that potentially, legal agreements could be reopened and revised, but would need attorneys involved. Mr. Helm stated we would need to hear from the Township Solicitor and concluded discussion.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Endorsement by the Historical Commission

Ms. Farnham discussed the recent webinar presented by Cory Kegerise, Preservation Outreach staff for the Pennsylvania Historical Commission/Historic Preservation Office. Sara Shick also

took the webinar and copies of the presentation were forwarded to all Commissioners. Being a CLG provides benefits such as historic preservation guidance and access to technical expertise and grants. After some discussion, **MOTION** by Ms. Farnham to add CLG as a fifth Historical Commission project, second by Ms. Dulchinos. **Motion carries unanimously.** Ms. Dulchinos volunteered to take the lead on the CLG project and will contact Mr. Kegerise.

OLD BUSINESS:

Project Updates

Website: Ms. Farnham stated it is in progress but she feels our website already has a basic framework and we just need to start populating it with files and links. She asked Ms. Batdorf whether the Township website is maintained and updated by the Township or an outside consultant. Ms. Batdorf stated that the Township does most of it in-house with some outside help, and to discuss updates with her.

Historic Resource Impact Study (HRIS) Guidelines: Mr. Wise and Mr. Benton have discussed this but have nothing in writing as of yet.

Cloud Storage: Ms. Batdorf updated the Commission on cloud storage of Township historical files and documents. Kur Bonak (HRC) digitized all of the historic resource binders in the lobby, as well as other records and books, and placed them in OneDrive; this material is being transferred to a more private drive owned by the Township and will be available for HC use but not accessible to the public. The Township is salvaging a fireproof cabinet from the old cow palace in the new Township park to be used to store important documents. Mr. Helm requested that the binders be removed from the lobby to keep them safe. The Commission expressed thanks to Mr. Bonak for doing all this scanning and indexing free of charge. Ms. Batdorf has set up Microsoft Teams for Commission use and sent a Teams invite to all Commissioners.

Rehabilitation Guidelines: Mr. Benton stated he will look at this for the next meeting.

Permit Application Revisions: Ms. Batdorf stated that the Township is working on this and our application is fine but we still need to work on developing HC procedures (such as seeking a variance or our role in providing feedback in advance to Zoning Hearing Board) since the procedures are not spelled out in our ordinance. The township is almost finished with codification and we need to sort this out soon.

Public Comment: Ms. Travaglini stated that the binders are the work of Karen Oncay of the HRC, and that HRC recently discussed ways to make updates to the binders without messing up the cloud. Ms. Shick stated that we need to develop an update procedure to add new items and flag them for digitization. There was further discussion about OneDrive and Teams and the need to work out a system for public access to historical information.

Ms. Farnham asked for an update on the construction work at 670 Sheeder and Ms. Batdorf responded that the scope of the application, although provided to us, didn't trigger HC review.

2020 Budget: Mr. Helm stated that he received a call from Township administration requesting we finalize our 2020 budget, and if we have budget for projects, we need to flag this to Ms. Batdorf.

REPORTS:

There were no reports.

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR:

Ms. Shick stated that the Chester County Historic Preservation Network recently increased its member rate to \$100.

Ms. Shick mentioned a proposal to widen the historic bridge on Birchrun Road at Hollow Road by the triangle, and suggested we should comment to PennDOT on proposed plans.

Ms. Shick mentioned that there is ongoing construction at the Michaelson farm on Bartlett Road and was wondering if there were demolitions. Ms. Batdorf stated the Township is working through this with the property owner.

Jane Helm asked whether there are penalties for unapproved demolitions. Mr. Helm responded that there are multiple avenues including fines, Board of Supervisors orders to preserve existing structures, and withholding of building permits for one year.

Ms. Shick mentioned that some Township commissions/committees are placing items in the next Township newsletter and asked whether the HC would like to add a progress report. Mr. Helm said no.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION for adjournment was made by Ms. Farnham; second by Mr. Benton. *Motion carries unanimously.* Meeting adjourned at 9:07PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Farnham, Secretary