

## WVT Historic Resources Committee Minutes -- January 22, 2018

Attending: Jim and Jane Helm, Elizabeth Albert, Brian Curry, Barb Quinter, Sara Shick, Harriet Stone, Martha Thomae, Isabelle Travaglini, Peter Benton, Bob Wise, John Coine, Marcy Flickinger

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm.

The minutes of Nov. 27, 2017 were approved.

**Ralston Barn:** Discussion of the larger Ralston barn at 1501 St. Matthews (HID 103) was the most important item on our agenda and it took the most time. Peter reported that the barn is in good shape. It could easily be stabilized if there is not a need for it at the moment. The missing metal parts of the roof could be easily replaced and the part of the barn wall that is missing could be replaced with plywood. Peter is going to find out what it would cost to hire a structural engineer to give a professional opinion of the effort and cost to "mothball" the barn.

Since our HRC is a subcommittee of the EAC, that group is the one authorized to give advice and expert opinion to our Supervisors. The next meeting of the EAC is 2/7/18 at 5:30. Brian Sundermeir, the project manager for Natural Lands as they protect as much of the Bryn Coed property as they can, expected that there would be a public meeting to discuss the question of demolition vs. stabilization. He will not be able to attend the next EAC meeting, but Peter Williamson of Natural Lands will come to explain Natural Lands position to the EAC that night. Our committee is delighted with the preservation efforts of Natural Lands, but we want to encourage preservation of the historic values as well as the preservation of the land itself.

Harriet is to send Peter's assessment of the barn and what we know of its history to the entire HRC mailing list and the EAC. It was suggested that the neighbors of the barn should get this information also.

The conclusion of this long discussion was a motion by the HRC to the EAC with the intent of informing the BOS. The motion, made by Sara Shick and seconded by Peter Benton was: Given that the HRC has determined that the subject barn is a Class 2 Historic Resource and is one of the most significant old barns in the township, the HRC recommended the EAC invoke the 60-day extension on the permit review to allow the HRC/EAC to complete the review and continue discussions with the property owner in exploring alternatives to demolition. This barn was part of UPI #25-4-167, 1501 St. Matthews Road, before the recent lot line change.

Since the HRC is a subcommittee of the EAC, we will send our assessment of the Ralston Barn along with our motion that the EAC inform the BOS that the barn is salvageable and is one of the more important buildings in our township, along with our recommendation that they deny the request for a demolition permit.

**Barn Architecture:** Bob Wise is willing to give a talk this spring concerning architecture and use of West Vincent barns using local. Harriet will work with him on the date; we hope to use the Hankin Library.

**Possible Historical Tour:** We may be able to have a township-only historical tour of Ludwig's Corner and the Conestoga Road by September.

**History Library in the township building:** Jane Helm suggested that we need a list of the history and other books in the small meeting room and a sign-out ledger so people could take the books home, but not in perpetuity.

**African-American settlements in WVT:** Isabelle is finding information about this topic and will keep researching.

Sara and Harriet reported on the **Municipal Historic Preservation** Leadership Luncheon hosted by the Chester County Planning Commission and the Chester County Historic Preservation Network. There will be a CCHNP 2018 Spring Workshop on March 10 at the Brandywine Conservancy 8:00 am-12:30 pm "Refining Our Local Commitment to Historic Preservation" (registration deadline March 2). We heard compliments about our ordinance.

Some interesting ideas for our township:

1. At the beginning of each year, the BOS has a meeting with all the chairs of the township committees, discussing township goals for the year and the ways in which the supervisors want the committees to help with getting to those goals.
2. Posting photos of historic sites or items of local interest on social media twice a week.
3. Be sure the HRC is included in the EAC annual report to the BOS.
4. Some municipalities have the Zoning Officer send a monthly report to the BOS concerning properties where there is demolition by neglect or other concerns. How can this information be public without shaming people who can't afford the cost of repairs but still require developers who are neglecting buildings so they can then say the buildings are in too bad shape to repair?
5. *Our comprehensive plan should include the context of the historic and natural resources that need to be protected; we will look for that as we review the new Phoenixville Region Comprehensive Plan.*
6. *The PA Planning Education Institute has useful training classes. The HRC has a directed donation to cover tuition costs if necessary.*

**Demolition by neglect.** Two properties were mentioned. The Benner farmstead was not protected by the developer as he agreed to. The remains of the barn walls were not capped. We haven't seen inside the springhouse which he promised to repair. The other property is the Brunner/Zarichniak farmstead on Birchrun Road. This collection of about five buildings needs paint and inspection of the roofs and walls.

The meeting adjourned about 9 pm.