

**WEST VINCENT TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**September 14, 2022
7:00 PM**

Attendance: Bob Wise, Chair; Kate Farnham, Vice-Chair; Karl Brachwitz; Peter Benton (via phone); Bernie Couris, Township Supervisor; Sara Shick, Township Supervisor. Absent: Thomaseth Dulchinos.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Wise called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes of the July 22, 2022 meeting of the Historical Commission prepared by Ms. Farnham were distributed. **MOTION** by Mr. Brachwitz for approval of the minutes; second by Mr. Benton. *Motion carries unanimously.*

3. NEW BUSINESS (moved earlier to accommodate guest)

Brian Wilde of East Vincent Township described his book project utilizing historical materials from Clyde Scheib. He is adding a chapter about Birchrunville to a new edition of his previously published book, *West Seven Stars and Beyond: Preserving Local History*.

4. APPLICATIONS:

1404 Hollow Road (Birchrunville Store Café):

Michael Labetti, designer/contractor for the project, was present for the Applicant (Francis Pascal) and described his credentials and the proposed work to reconstruct and expand the modern deck appended to the rear of the first floor. The owner purchased the property in 2004 at which time the deck was already in place. The deck is proposed to be reconstructed and made structurally sound; expanded approximately 10 feet further to the rear (north) toward Birch Run; stairs to be moved from the east side to the west side facing Flowing Springs Road; and a new shed roof constructed above the entire deck and attached to the rear (north) elevation of the historic building. Existing deck is 12' deep, so the expansion would nearly double its depth toward the rear. The intent of the project is to make the deck structurally sound, expand and improve its functionality, and provide better ADA egress from the first floor to the exterior via the deck and new stairs.

Commissioners asked numerous questions about the plans, including materials and how the decking/roof would be attached to the exterior. Mr. Labetti stated that plans are in a draft stage intended for a permit, and still need to be refined for historical commission review. Mr. Brachwitz stated that this is perhaps the most iconic historic building in the Township and the existing deck would never have been approved today; he is not in favor of expansion. The restaurant lacks ADA access from the main entrance, so doing this for ADA egress does not seem like a valid reason. Mr. Benton stated he was not opposed to the concept of expanding but plans need upgrading. Mr.

Wise agreed that much more detail is needed. Ms. Farnham was concerned about losing historic fabric by attaching deck structures to the building exterior. She was also concerned about the roof giving this the appearance of a 2-story porch structure/addition rather than a deck. Mr. Labetti stated the roof could be removed from the design. All Commissioners agreed the plan requires caution and whatever is done needs to be done well and in a sensitive manner. Mr. Labetti stated that he would work with the owner on refining the design and come back for further discussion.

2200 Flowing Springs Road (Birchrunville Schoolhouse):

Discussion postponed, as no one was present for the Applicant.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

Township Barn:

No updates since last meeting; per Mr. Couris and Ms. Shick, the architects are still reworking plans. Isabelle Travaglini was present and asked that Mr. Wise reprise his past talk about historic barns for a public presentation. Mr. Wise will talk to his associate who had been involved with the previous presentation.

1461 Pottstown Pike:

The farmhouse on this property has a metal roof coming off at one corner, threatening the house. This has been an issue for over a year and it has been difficult to track down the owner to notify them that it needs attention. Mr. Benton had drafted a letter and sent it to the Township several months ago but it has not been reviewed by the Supervisors or Township manager. Mr. Benton is to work with Mr. Couris to get this sent out. Mr. Brachwitz stated that this is not the HC's bailiwick.

Opalanie Park:

Barb Quinter of the Historic Resources Committee prepared a report on Native American history in the Township. Based on this work, Mr. Benton is working on drafting text for 4 interpretive panels and will send a draft around to the Commissioners. Mr. Couris stated that the Township is eager to get moving on the project. Cindy Clark of the HRC was present and offered to help Mr. Benton.

Cloud Storage of Historical Materials/Digital Archives:

Kur Bonapur set up a cloud storage database several years ago as a digital repository for scanned WVT historical materials, including the Historic Atlas forms, scanned archival materials, and publications. He has been paying for this as well as scanning in a lot of the materials. It should be moved into Township responsibility but we need to figure out how to do so. Mr. Benton and Ms. Clark have already sorted through to determine which items should and should not be accessible to the public. Ms. Clark will work with Ms. Shick to develop a description of the database as part of the consideration for how to transfer it.

6. NEW BUSINESS (resumed):

Visitor:

Ms. Shick introduced Suzanne Amrich, our liaison to the Chester County Historic Preservation Network.

Quilt:

Ms. Travaglini mentioned that a historic quilt and other materials from the Township were donated and we need to decide what to do with them.

7. PROJECTS:

There were no updates.

8. REPORTS:

There were no reports.

9. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR:

There was no business from the floor, as audience members already brought up various topics during previous agenda items.

10. ADJOURN:

Business having been completed, **MOTION** for adjournment was made by Mr. Brachwitz; second by Ms. Farnham. *Motion carries unanimously.* Meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Farnham, Vice-Chair