

**WEST VINCENT TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**January 14, 2019
7:00 PM**

Attendance: Jim Helm, Chair; Peter Benton, Vice-Chair; Kate Farnham, Secretary; Bob Wise; and Township Manager Erica Batdorf. Thomaseth Dulchinos absent.

Mr. Helm called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ESTABLISHMENT:

The West Vincent Township Historical Commission was established on October 15, 2018 through the adoption of Ordinance No. 184-2018 by the Board of Supervisors. The following members were appointed by the Board of Supervisors at its meeting on January 7, 2019:

James Helm (Jim) – 1 year term
Katherine Farnham (Kate) – 2 year term
Robert Wise (Bob) – 3 year term
Peter Benton – 4 year term
Thomaseth Dulchinos – 5 year term

CORRESPONDENCE/MINUTES, OLD BUSINESS

There were no Correspondence, Minutes, or Old Business, as this was the first meeting of the Historical Commission.

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Officers – Mr. Helm requested nominations for officers of the Historical Commission for 2019. **MOTION** by Mr. Wise for election of Mr. Helm as Chair; second by Mr. Benton. *Motion carries unanimously.* **MOTION** by Mr. Helm for election of Mr. Benton as Vice-Chair; second by Ms. Farnham. *Motion carries unanimously.* **MOTION** by Mr. Benton for election of Ms. Farnham as Secretary; second by Mr. Wise. *Motion carries unanimously.*

In discussion of the Secretary position, it was agreed that the responsibility for the preparation of minutes will be rotated each month among the members, excepting the Chair. Mr. Benton agreed to prepare the minutes for the January meeting. Draft minutes will be submitted to the Secretary for finalization and submission at the next meeting.

Mr. Helm noted that the correct terms are “Historical Commission” (not “Historic Commission”) and “Historic Resources” (not “Historical Resources”). Some recent correspondence has confused the two.

Liaisons to Other Commissions – Among its duties, the Historical Commission will monitor the work of other Township boards and commissions to maintain awareness of issues that may affect historic resources. The Township staff will assist in this effort. Attendance at the meetings of other boards and commissions will be agenda driven on an as-needed basis. Most important will be the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Helm will take a lead in monitoring the Planning Commission, having held a seat on it until recently. Ms. Dulchinos will be asked to monitor the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), upon which she currently sits. Yvonne Brown, who was in the audience, volunteered to forward topics being addressed by the Sustainability Committee.

Standard Operating Procedures – Mr. Helm handed out copies of Article XXIV of the Zoning Ordinance, *Historic Preservation Overlay District*, to Commission members. Operating procedures for various aspects of the ordinance were discussed. It was noted that the Township ordinances posted online are current and correct.

With respect to **Demolition Permits** (Section 2404), Ms. Batdorf noted that the Zoning Officer has a checklist and timeline of procedures which was handed out and which members should review for further discussion. Mr. Wise will review the definition of Demolition under Section 2404a.

With respect to **Standards for Rehabilitation** (Section 2409), it was noted that building design review of construction projects involving historic resources as outlined in the ordinance does not currently take place. It was further noted that the introductory language in the section is vague and that design review processes require definition. Ms. Batdorf noted that West Pikeland has a standard building permit form for similar design review, which she will download and forward to members for review. Mr. Benton and Mr. Wise will investigate how this section is implemented in other townships with similar provisions.

With respect to **Historic Resource Impact Study** (Section 2410), language changes are currently under consideration by a Township ad hoc zoning committee recommending changes to the Zoning Ordinance. These changes would clarify when impact studies are required and what information should be submitted. Mr. Benton participated on the committee and forwarded the proposed language changes to Commission members for review. Mr. Wise will review other ordinance language on impact studies that he has worked with.

Historic Resources Committee – Harriet Stone was present representing the Historic Resources Committee (HRC) and spoke regarding the interests of the HRC. The HRC has previously performed many of the duties of the Historical Commission as a subcommittee of the EAC. Ms. Stone noted that the HRC would like to maintain a strong working relationship with the Historical Commission but would like to be an independent, informal entity rather than being a formal subcommittee of the Historical Commission. The HRC is focusing on research and public programming. When needed, ad hoc subcommittees will be formed by the Historical Commission to work on topics requested by or of interest to the Historical Commission.

Historic Resources Inventory – Mr. Helm led a discussion regarding the Township’s Historic Resources Inventory. During the 2012 updating of the Inventory/Atlas, recommendations were made for reclassification of some Class I, II, and III resources. These proposed reclassifications have not been reflected in the Zoning Ordinance. Other updates may also be necessary. Mr. Wise will lead the review of the resource inventory with members of the HRC who were involved in the update.

Digitization of Inventory – The importance of digitizing the Historic Resources Inventory was discussed. At present, there are two paper copies, one available for public view in the lobby of the Township Building and another on file in the back office. These paper copies could be lost to fire.

Kur Bonakdarpour was present at the meeting and has been working on scanning and digitizing the inventory to PDF format on a voluntary basis. He reported that the work is about 20% complete. He has created a naming protocol using tax parcel, ID number, and address. Proceeding with this project needs further discussion. Mr. Wise noted that he has experience in creating large-scale website and database access for historic resources that could be helpful.

Historical Commission Website – The discussion of digitization led into the topic of the Historical Commission’s website. Ms. Batdorf reported that the Township has created a web page on the Township website similar to those of other boards and commissions. Historical Commission members should give consideration of how the web page might be further developed and used to provide access to historic resource and educational information. Ms. Farnham was asked to give consideration to this topic.

Historic Resources Watch List – Sara Shick was present and transmitted the HRC’s *Concern’s List* of historic properties threatened by potential neglect to the responsibility of the Historical Commission. The list was dated October 22, 2018 and included properties listed as Active Concerns as well as a Watch List of potential future concern. Mr. Helm will manage the list on behalf of the Historical Commission.

The importance of monitoring and preventing demolition by neglect was discussed. The process of reaching out to the owners of properties of concern will be reviewed with the goal of establishing set procedures. A two-step process was discussed: (1) an informal, unofficial outreach process to property owners to express concern and request remediation steps before (2) undertaking an official process involving citation for code compliance. Ms. Batdorf will discuss current code compliance processes with Township staff/consultants. She agreed, however, that it would be permissible for Commission members to reach out informally to the owners of properties that were of immediate concern. There was consensus that outreach must always be professional, constructive, and positive in nature.

Adjournment – Business having been completed, **MOTION** for adjournment was made by Mr. Benton; second by Ms. Farnham. *Motion carries unanimously.*
The next meeting will be held on February 11, 2019 at 7 PM at the Township Building.

Respectfully submitted by Peter Benton.