

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD  
AD HOC PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – OCTOBER 4, 2021

A working meeting of the Ad Hoc Property Committee of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on October 4, 2021. Mr. Steadman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Those present:

Ad Hoc Property Committee: Dennis Steadman, Chair  
Fred Childs, Vice Chair  
Bette Sovinee, Secretary  
Sarah Daubert, Member (joined meeting in progress)  
John Mohan, Member

Others: Frederic K. Weiss, Supervisor (left meeting in progress)

Absent: James Nycz, Ad Hoc Property Committee Member  
James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

Mr. Steadman stated the sole purpose of the meeting is to complete the Fact Sheets for each buildings. The Committee had divided up the responsibility for preparing a draft for each building, and the Committee wanted to get together live to discuss each building to make sure they were being represented fairly and accurately. A spreadsheet for each property has been prepared.

Mr. Steadman noted that Mr. Nycz is attending School in England this semester which may impact his ability to serve on the Committee the next several months. Dr. Weiss stated as long as the Committee feels he can still contribute remotely, the Township would not have an issue with Mr. Nycz continuing to serve.

Ms. Daubert joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Sovinee showed the spreadsheet for Patterson 1 which is the well house. Ms. Sovinee stated the well house actually protects the well that serves the Janney House and the cottage being used by Colleen Attara, the artist. The well is in the basement so the description will be changed to reflect that. There is water a tertiary treatment system in the basement of the Janney House and in the cottage as well. The water is safe once it is treated. There is a special faucet in the kitchen of the Janney House for the treated water.

There was discussion about the cost estimates that had been provided, and Mr. Steadman stated the cost estimates were done in 2007, and Mr. Majewski updated them in 2019/2020 based on inflation as well as assumed deterioration since 2007.

With regard to the condition of the well house, there has been damage caused by woodchucks. Ms. Sovinee stated the roof has been repaired. The well house could be used for storage as well as housing the well. Given that it houses the well, it is considered an important building.

The spreadsheet for the Janney House was shown. The property is leased to AOY. It had been considered for the National Register, but was not finalized. There was discussion about the proposed restoration cost of \$153,000 provided, and Ms. Sovinee stated she believes that was for the dormers. The third floor has not been restored. Ms. Sovinee stated AOY would like to make use of the third floor. Mr. Childs noted the engineer's report done this year estimated replacement of the slate roof of about \$228,000 with an alternative for asphalt of about \$93,000.

Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Marshall had advised that the Registry of National Historic Places is only concerned with the exterior so that would not hamper what could be done on the inside. Mr. Steadman stated since the house is utilized and in respectable condition, it is possible they should pursue the Registration since it would not constrain what could be done inside.

Mr. Steadman stated that the Janney House is by far in the best condition, of all of the buildings, and the only one that is seriously being utilized. An action item could be to look into the status of the Registry of National Historic Places filing. Ms. Daubert stated Registry may provide an opportunity to apply for Grants, but she would want to make sure it would not preclude them from doing something they may want to do with the structure.

Mr. Steadman stated he feels this building is the number one asset of all of the sixteen buildings they are discussing.

Mr. Steadman stated that they would need to fix the roof before any work was done to the third floor. Ms. Sovinee stated the third floor and the basement could be better utilized although she is not sure that AOY would use

those spaces for classes because of the ventilation and egress issues. A comment was added to the spreadsheet that there are improvements needed on the third floor and basement to expand its utility.

Ms. Sovinee stated on the covered porches there were arches that held screens, but they were taken out for Summer Camp. She stated they would like to screen that off again to make it a nine-month room since AOY likes to use that space for receptions/openings, etc. This was added as a proposed improvement.

There was further discussion about pursuing the historic designation. Ms. Daubert stated if they were to achieve this designation, she assumes the roof would have to be a slate roof which would be more expensive than asphalt. Mr. Mohan stated possibly they could get a matching Grant for the slate roof. Mr. Steadman stated at this point he feels they should begin the filing review to see what is involved but not actually apply for the designation at this time.

The spreadsheet for the Caretaker's House was shown which is rented to Ms. Attara. An estimated cost for improvement was shown of \$46,500. Mr. Steadman stated the amount and duration of the Lease needs to be added to the spreadsheet. Ms. Sovinee stated from information she had read, this stone building may actually be older than the Janney House. It was noted the Lease with Ms. Attara is a separate Lease not associated with AOY.

Mr. Steadman asked if there could be other uses for this building should there no longer be a Lease with Ms. Attara. Ms. Sovinee stated there are always opportunities to expand the educational environment. There is a kitchen and bath in that structure. Mr. Steadman stated while the rooms are small, someone could live there as it is a caretaker house. Dr. Weiss stated there are people living rent free in the homes in Tyler State Park, for example, in exchange for taking care of the property. Mr. Steadman stated it may be too small to be an event venue. Dr. Weiss stated if it were renovated, maybe it could be used as an Airbnb as there are people who would be interested in staying there for a weekend. Mr. Steadman stated one issue is the farming tenant who would not want 'guests' wandering in the fields as it is an active farm. Ms. Daubert stated having an interesting story about the house could add to its rentability.

The spreadsheet for the tenant garage was shown. Ms. Sovinee stated AOY and Ms. Attara use it for storage although it is not included in the Lease Agreements. It was suggested that under Revenue potential it be noted that it could be included with P2 and P3 rentals. Mr. Hucklebridge will be doing the recommended trimming around the building. It was noted that this building was probably built in the 1940's/1950's.

Dr. Weiss stated it could be used for Township purposes as well, and some of the buildings are being used by the Township already at this time. He added that some Board members have indicated that more of the buildings could be converted to be used by the Township Public Works Department to free up more space in the Township. Mr. Steadman stated there has been discussion that the first floor of the barns could be used by the Township for equipment storage, although it had also been noted that some of the ceilings may be too low to drive in some pieces of equipment. Mr. Steadman stated that possibly the Slack House or the Satterthwaite House could be used by the Township for office space.

The spreadsheet for P5, the first garage, was shown. There are two bays, one of which is used by a Scout group for storage. It is a usable building for storage. Estimated restoration cost was provided of approximately \$60,000.

Mr. Mohan asked that the Township provide internal dimensions for the buildings where there is storage potential. Mr. Hucklebridge will be asked to provide this.

Dr. Weiss stated he does not feel the Board of Supervisors will be discussing what to do about these buildings until the spring.

Mr. Steadman stated one of the questions the Committee needs to discuss is whether they are trying to restore individual buildings or a farmstead which would include some or all of the outbuildings. He stated this will be driven by the uses. Dr. Weiss reminded the Committee that Mr. Marshall stated that if they spend money on these structures but do not have a use for them that has an income stream to maintain them, they will be back where they started in a number of years. Ms. Daubert stated it is important that these structures be self-sustaining and provide a return on investment so that there are not annual expenses to the Township.

Ms. Sovinee showed the spreadsheet she had prepared based on a survey she did on some surrounding farms, and they all have some type of commercial venture on the farm in order to sustain the farm.

The spreadsheet for the corn crib was shown. There is a Township tractor parked inside, and it does need some foundation work. Estimated cost for repairs was shown as \$36,000.

Mr. Mohan noted that there is value in reclaimed wood if any of the buildings are taken down.

The spreadsheet for P7, the equipment garage, was shown. Ms. Sovinee stated it is currently used by the farmer. There is a second floor to this building. It is a three-sided garage and could hold equipment. Doors could be put on the other side.

Mr. Mohan brought up the possibility of turning the area into an artists' community which would generate revenue. Ms. Sovinee stated there are artisans who are looking for studio space to rent, and a garage would be appropriate for that use. Mr. Steadman stated P5 could be used for that use as well, but they would need insulation, heating/air conditioning, and plumbing. Ms. Sovinee stated if they were to bring in public water and public sewer it could serve all of the buildings. Dr. Weiss stated the use would have to justify the expense. Mr. Steadman stated if they were to convert some of the outbuildings for use by artisans, they may also need windows.

Mr. Childs noted the Tyler Art Center which was previously a stable, and Ms. Sovinee stated she is going to see that building on Wednesday. Dr. Weiss stated they may want to consider an arrangement with the Community College for use of these buildings. Mr. Steadman stated a popular use for art now is with regard to mental health/behavioral health. Dr. Weiss stated they may want to speak to Jefferson Hospital to see if they would be interested in these structures for that purpose.

With regard to the Pack House, P8, Ms. Sovinee stated AOY has submitted a letter to the Township expressing interest in renting that structure. It is a one-story, cinderblock structure with a concrete floor. While it once had

heat and plumbing it is unlikely that those are working now. Ms. Sovinee stated they are interested in this for a ceramic studio and printmaking. All utilities would be needed including water and sewer. It would need to be ADA accessible if it is to be open to the public. It was noted that the Janney House restrooms are not ADA-compliant although there is a ramp to come into the first floor. The pack house, if renovated, could be the ADA-compliant restroom for the entire complex. Ms. Sovinee stated when they currently host events, they bring in an accessible porta potty.

Mr. Steadman stated the pack house could be rented to a craftsman, but they would still need heating and cooling. Ms. Daubert asked if utilities would be needed if it were just used for storage, and Mr. Mohan stated that would depend on the type of storage.

Dr. Weiss stated another option the Committee could consider is to sell some of the buildings with the proceeds used to improve more important buildings.

Mr. Steadman stated there had been discussion about the Slack House at the Golf Course, and it is possible that they could sell that house to an individual who wants to live in a historic home and there could be a Restoration Easement attached. Dr. Weiss stated the money received for that property could be used to restore other buildings. Mr. Steadman stated he has been trying to find a Realtor with expertise in historic homes as at some point they would want to get a market estimate for properties that could be considered to sell. The Committee Resolution did call for a Real Estate Agent who lives in Lower Makefield to serve on the Committee, but that individual may not have experience in historic homes, so appraisals would likely still need to be done by a specialist.

Ms. Daubert stated they would also need to know what would be an appropriate rent for the structures if they were to be leased.

Mr. Steadman stated if one of the houses were to be sold, there would need to be an Easement that the structure would need to maintain historical standards.

Dr. Weiss left the meeting at this time.

The spreadsheet for the Main Barn, P9, was shown. Mr. Childs stated he believes part of the Historic Register Application referenced letters between William Penn and owners of this farm but not the barn itself. He stated he saw a reference that 1840 was the possible date for the barn. The second floor can be accessed by a vehicle.

It was noted that Mr. Mohan needs to schedule a tour of the buildings with Mr. Majewski; and once that date is known, others may want to join in as well.

It was noted that while the barns could be considered for use as event venues, it would involve weatherizing, egress, heating, plumbing, etc. Mr. Steadman stated the first floor of both barns would be difficult to use; however, if the first floor were stabilized, the second floors could be used by a craftsman/tradespeople.

Ms. Sovinee stated it was noted earlier that there is also the need for community space. Mr. Steadman stated if it were to be open to the public, they would have to meet numerous standards. Ms. Daubert stated if there is a need for additional space it may be better to restore one of these buildings as opposed to building a new structure for community space. Ms. Daubert stated she feels they need to find out from the Township what they may need space for.

The spreadsheet for the Satterthwaite House, S1, was shown. Ms. Daubert stated she does not feel this house is as attractive as the Slack House. The inside was two units. Mr. Steadman stated there were two families there with an approximate 60/40 split with one side being more ornate than the other. It was then used as a rental. The house is easily seen from the road. Mr. Steadman stated if the house is to be saved, he feels a possible use is Township offices because it is so broken up inside. Mr. Mohan stated he assumes there would be ADA requirements if it were to be used as an office, and they would need to put in an elevator so people could access the second floor.

Mr. Childs stated while they could restore the exterior, the interior could be gutted so that it could be a home, adding that this portion of the property has already been parceled off separately so it could be sold as well.

Mr. Mohan stated he would be in favor of selling the house and using the money to restore other properties.

Ms. Daubert stated she had included \$1.7 million as estimated costs for restoration adding that the last time a cost estimate was done was some time ago, and it was approximately \$750,000. Mr. Childs noted there is significant environmental remediation needed as well for the lead paint. Mr. Mohan stated in 2018 the engineer did a structural evaluation of the house and the preliminary project estimate was \$402,000 for remediation. Ms. Daubert asked if any work has been done on the house, and Mr. Childs stated he believes that roof repairs were done.

Ms. Sovinee noted possible uses could be rental by a tenant or as an office use with the exterior look to be maintained as well as a possible sale with funds to be used to restore other buildings.

Mr. Steadman stated the Satterthwaite farmstead has the house, the main barn, and the modern, concrete garage, S6. He stated there are other out-buildings which are not as viable. Mr. Steadman stated S2 is a garage which houses the well. Mr. Steadman stated to sell or upgrade these structures, they will need to run utilities.

The spreadsheet was shown for S5, the main barn. Ms. Daubert stated she feels the second floor of this barn is in much better shape than the other barn. Mr. Steadman stated the Township did spend a significant amount of money five to six years ago to stabilize the second floor. Mr. Steadman stated under utilization ideas he would include use by tradesmen. He stated he feels the community would like to save this barn if a good use could be found for it.

There was discussion about the future of farming in this area.

There was discussion about the Slack House on the Golf Course property, and Ms. Sovinee stated that could be sold or it could be made part of a wedding/ event venue.

Mr. Steadman asked Ms. Sovinee if she feels there could be an art community at Patterson, and she stated she feels that would be feasible as there are artists who would like to rent space provided there were the right kind of



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conditions. There was discussion about the use of the abandoned greenhouses at Patterson which could be used by artists or rented to the Community College as a demonstration location for hydroponics. Ms. Sovinee stated if there was to be an art community it would be good to have it tied into Edgewood Village and the new Wegman's center. Mr. Mohan noted there is also a memory care facility near Edgewood Village which could benefit from art therapy.

There was no one from the public wishing to speak at this time.

There being no further business, Mr. Childs moved, Mr. Mohan seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bette Sovinee, Secretary