

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD  
AD HOC PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – MARCH 24, 2022

The regular meeting of the Ad Hoc Property Committee of the Township of Lower Makefield was held remotely on March 24, 2022. Mr. Steadman called the meeting to order.

Those present:

Ad Hoc Property Committee: Dennis Steadman, Chair  
Fred Childs, Vice Chair  
Bette Sovinee, Secretary  
Sarah Daubert, Member  
John Mohan, Member

Others: Fredric K. Weiss, Supervisor Liaison

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2022: Ms. Sovinee

Mr. Childs moved, Mr. Steadman seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of February 17, 2022 as written.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL PHASE 1 NEXT STEPS SHOULD RECOMMENDATIONS BE ACCEPTED: Mr. Steadman/All

The Committee presented the final report and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on March 2. There was favorable informal feedback from the Board at that meeting although no decisions have been made by the Board of Supervisors at this point. In an attempt to keep the positive momentum, it was felt that the Committee should consider what the next steps would be should the Board of Supervisors approved the recommendations

The top priorities included in the recommendations were agriculture at Patterson Farm and hospitality at Makefield Highlands regarding the Slack House. The second priority was to preserve historic buildings wherever possible, and that will have to

be a joint effort between the Township and the community since neither of those entities could be expected to be able to do that by themselves. The third priority is to find a purpose/use for every building in order to keep the buildings alive.

The Committee tried to balance three goals in making their decisions – preserving, history and agriculture, establishing community use and support, and maintaining fiscal responsibility.

What was not discussed in detail with the Board of Supervisors on March 2 although it was in the report, was the vision for the properties. With respect to the Patterson Farm, the vision that the Committee has reported to the Board of Supervisors is that among the highways and suburban neighborhoods the Patterson Farm is a 220 acre “oasis” of farmland, trees, ponds, and wildlife as well as home to two historic Pennsylvania Quaker homesteads that are utilized by the community for growing food, for art and inspiration, as well as education in history and art. The rich farm soil remains productive as it has been continuously for more than three hundred years.

The vision for the Slack House at Makefield Highlands is to complement the services and revenues of Makefield Highlands with a historic Bucks County themed, high quality event venue serving the greater Lower Makefield community, bringing in visitors, golfers, and revenues to the Township. The historic stone Slack House circa 1760 is the “ribbon on the package” of this unique venue.

Five elements were recommended for the Patterson Farm in Phase 1 of the multi-phased Plan and two elements in Phase 1 for the Slack House at Makefield Highlands. The first is to establish a Patterson Farm Oversight Board to guide the planning, management, and community support of this resource since it is more than the Township employees and the Board of Supervisors can do to manage this kind of property. The Board should be established under the supervision and guidance of the Board of Supervisors. The second element is to develop a Patterson Farm Master Plan and conduct a necessary site clean-up.

Three top priorities were then identified for the Patterson Farm – restore the Tunnicliff Cabin, settle on the future use and funding for the Satterthwaite House, which will be a difficult, expensive “dilemma,” and rehabilitate the Satterthwaite main barn for use by the farming tenant. The fourth element is to review the Tenant Leases for mutually-agreeable, potentially new terms and conditions reflecting the new uses, organization, and plans for the property overall.

The fifth element is to see to it that there is near-term stabilization and security developed for the non-prioritized buildings so that during this period there is not further unnecessary deterioration.

For the Slack House, the priority is to conduct a Site Feasibility Study; and if it is feasible to accommodate the kind of event venue that is envisioned, to then conduct the necessary engineering assessment of the Slack House to estimate the renovation that would be required for that particular use.

With regard to the Patterson Farm Oversight Board, the first step would be to draft a Charter/Operating Agreement for the Oversight Board for review and approval by the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Steadman stated that Board could report to the Township Manager or to the Board of Supervisors. The Charter could grant certain authorities to the Oversight Board within limits as set by the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Steadman stated an example would be that if in the future there is a Budget for Patterson Farm that is laid out each year, the Oversight Board might have the authority to spend the monies within that Budget within a dollar limit provided it is a Budgeted item. If it were not a Budgeted item, it would have to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The make-up of the Board would have to be considered for Board of Supervisor review and approval. Mr. Steadman stated there could be a member from the Historical Commission, Farmland Preservation, the Environmental Advisory Board, and possibly the Park & Recreation Board. The Township Manager or the Township Manager's delegate could also be a member of this Board since a lot of the activities will need to be carried out by the Township as the landlord/property owner. Other non-affiliated residents could also be on the Oversight Board.

Ms. Sovinee stated she feels that since Lower Makefield does not have a Council on the Arts like some other Municipalities do, she feels the arts need to be represented in some way if not on the Oversight Board, then on the Master Plan development. Mr. Steadman stated art will play a role at the Patterson Farm so that would make sense, although they would need to debate whether a member of the Board should be an actual tenant of the property like AOY is. Ms. Sovinee stated while AOY is a tenant there, they would like to have a voice.

Mr. Childs stated it may be possible to ask the Oversight Board, once established, to tap into various other stakeholders that have interest in the property in an advisory role. He stated this is what was done by the Ad Hoc Committee when they tapped into subject-matter experts with the barns and getting input from Charlann Farms. He stated the groups noted to be included on the Oversight Board are already organizations that have been established by the Township itself.

Ms. Sovinee stated other Townships have Councils for the Arts; and since Lower Makefield does not have that kind of organization, she is requesting that the arts have a voice.

With regard to membership of the Oversight Board, Mr. Steadman stated in his experience serving on a number of Boards, seven members is a workable number.

With regard to development of the Patterson Farm Master Plan, Mr. Steadman stated he feels this should be done by the Patterson Farm Oversight Board. He added that while the Ad Hoc Property Committee was put together to do some analysis and make recommendations, if the Board of Supervisors likes the idea of an Oversight Board, that group should review and confirm the vision, reach concurrence on likely future uses of the buildings, and entertain proposals from engineers and architectural design firms to develop the Master Plan which conceptually could be done for about \$15,000 to \$20,000 or in a more detailed way for about \$75,000.

Mr. Steadman stated a clean-out of the buildings should be started, which he feels could be done primarily by Township staff with the Budget in place.

Ms. Sovinee stated she has seen that the Township has started this at the Patterson Farm. Mr. Steadman stated it is important that the grounds be cleaned up so that they are treated as if there is a pride of ownership.

Mr. Steadman stated with regard to the Tunnicliff Cabin, they would need to set up the dendrochronology, architectural, and archeological studies that would be helpful in confirming the ages of that building as well as the Satterthwaite House. Input and leadership would be needed from the Historical Commission to guide the studies. Mr. Steadman stated while he does not know how much those studies would cost, Patterson Farm Preservation had indicated that they had done estimates on some of that work. He stated it would be useful if there

was non-profit funding available to support this work. He added that before they proceed with restoration, the dates should be confirmed as recommended by the Historical Commission. Mr. Steadman stated he believes that the archeological studies will be important in achieving National Registry status for the farmsteads.

Detailed restoration plans can be developed including identifying contractors and obtaining Bids. In parallel with that, Grant Applications should be developed for planning or execution of the restoration. Mr. Steadman stated the Historical Commission would be in the best position to take a leadership role in this.

Mr. Steadman stated he feels the Oversight Board should take these early steps, but if the Ad Hoc Committee will still be in place for a while longer, they could help with these early steps.

Ms. Sovinee stated she had been copied on an e-mail with Representative Perry Warren's office about some Grants, and he had come back with some possibilities through the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts. She stated she is in correspondence with them and the State about whether or not it is applicable for historic properties.

Mr. Steadman stated as the Committee recommended, the Satterthwaite House needs to be analyzed and a future use needs to be decided as well as the cost of renovation for that use. He stated the studies on the age would make progress toward that. He stated it also needs to be considered if there is a deadline to be set for making a decision on this House from the Oversight Board, a sub-Committee, or someone else.

The third priority is the Satterthwaite main barn so that it can be put in a condition for a farm use, and that engineering assessment has been done by the Township.

Mr. Steadman stated the next step would be issuing RFPs for competitive Bidding and then making a selection. He added if there are Grant Applications available at the County, State, or some other organizational level, those should be pursued. He stated we should also determine if there is some other help that can be gleaned from non-profits that may be available to participate.

Ms. Sovinee asked Dr. Weiss for an update as to when the Committee could expect some direction. Dr. Weiss stated at the last Board of Supervisors meeting the Board had beginning discussions as to how they would allocate the Sewer proceeds and the Patterson Farm came up. He stated he believes that there is Board consensus to proceed with Phase I recommendations, but nothing formal has been decided by the Board at this point.

Dr. Weiss stated with regard to an Oversight Board, he likes the idea, but is trying to understand how it would be different from the current Ad Hoc Property Committee. He stated he does not know how the Board of Supervisors would feel about an Oversight Board. Dr. Weiss stated once uses are found for the buildings, the money will be spent to restore/renovate what they must; and if there are Grants available, they should be applied for. Dr. Weiss stated at this point he does not see anything that would stand in the way of moving forward other than finding uses especially for the Satterthwaite House. Dr. Weiss stated the Board is prepared to spend significant dollars to do what they want.

Ms. Sovinee asked Dr. Weiss if he sees the development of the Master Plan for the Farm being done by the Township engineers or would the Board of Supervisors be looking for recommendations for an external firm. Dr. Weiss stated the Township engineers review Plans; and if the Ad Hoc Property Committee or an Oversight Board were to develop something further, and the Board of Supervisors approved it, it could be done by the Township engineer or someone else. Ms. Sovinee asked if it would have to go out for an RFP; and Dr. Weiss stated it believes it would for something of this magnitude since they are looking at lead mitigation and a number of other factors that have to be dealt with.

Dr. Weiss stated as Mr. Marshall indicated at one of the first meetings, they have to find the proper use so that the buildings can stand the test of time, and we do not waste our money or our efforts. Dr. Weiss stated he hopes that the Board of Supervisors will approve proceeding with Phase 1 recommendations. He added that he has not heard anything from the other Supervisors about an Oversight Board since the favorable response to the initial presentation. He stated if there is anything specific the Committee would like him to take to the Board he would do that. Mr. Steadman stated they appreciate the feedback. Dr. Weiss stated he believes that the Board of Supervisors is very comfortable with the Ad Hoc Property Committee, and their recommendations will carry a lot of weight going forward.

Mr. Childs stated the Ad Hoc Property Committee did have specific tasks that were in the Charter, and they have completed what was required by the first quarter of this year. He stated he believes that there are some differences between the Ad Hoc Property Committee and the concept of a longer-term Oversight Board that may include people who are not part of the Ad Hoc Property Committee. Mr. Childs noted that Mr. Steadman is on Farmland Preservation, Mr. Nycz is on the Historical Committee, and Ms. Sovinee is with AOY but there are other individuals who could become part of an Oversight Board as opposed to the Ad Hoc Property Committee which had a specific task which they have completed. Mr. Steadman stated he agrees with Mr. Childs and there would be a landlord/tenant management relationship as well as long term planning and execution that a property of this size, complexity, and importance deserves.

Dr. Weiss stated it is possible that there could be a professional management team that would manage the properties and work as a professional adjunct to the Township. He stated Township residents could be on an Advisory Board but there would be professionals managing the properties. He stated there are a number of ways that this could be handled. He stated he feels the Board of Supervisors will make a decision within the next two months to proceed to the next step. He stated he believes that spending the \$975,000 for Phase 1 is in the realm of possibility. Mr. Steadman stated he feels it is important to get input from the residents which helps assure continued community support as well.

Dr. Weiss stated he does not believe that the Board of Supervisors will consider just making the buildings look nice, and they want there to be a solid use and long-term value for the Township.

Mr. Steadman stated the fourth element is to review the current Leases, and he feels that should be done by the Oversight Board although the Ad Hoc Committee could start doing that if that were determined to be the best approach. He stated they should look at the Farm Lease and make sure that it is structured in a way that is consistent with the long-term uses that we are trying to achieve, and the same is true with AOY and Ms. Attara. He stated they also need to review Public Works' role on the property.

Mr. Steadman stated the fifth element was to stabilize and secure the nine buildings that are not prioritized, and that is a near-term potential expenditure.

Mr. Steadman stated the Phase 1 immediate next steps were estimated to be about \$320,000 which is a third of the \$975,000 of Phase 1, and that could be started shortly if the Board of Supervisors decides to proceed.

Mr. Steadman stated with regard to the Slack House, a Feasibility Study and Engineering Assessment would put the Township in a good position to make a well-informed decision as to how profitable a venture might be and what would be the magnitude of the investment. Mr. Steadman stated he believes that for an investment of \$65,000 to \$75,000 the Township would be in a much better position than the speculation done today on this idea.

Mr. Steadman stated he had discussions with Mr. Ferguson who was interested in staying apprised if there were any near-term expenditures that might be necessary or a first priority and what the magnitude of those would be; and an estimate was put together for the immediate next steps of Phase 1.

Dr. Weiss stated he understands that a copy of the Power Point was sent to Mr. Ferguson, and he suggested that an e-mail be sent to Mr. McCartney to have this put on the Board of Supervisors Agenda for consideration. He added that this is part of the discussion as to what to do with the Sewer proceeds. Mr. Steadman stated he will ask Mr. McCartney to bring this to the Board of Supervisors for further discussion.

Dr. Weiss stated with regard to the Slack House since Spirit is interested in partnering with the Township it would be good to contact Spirit and ask them to present a letter of commitment that they would be willing to partner with the Township in a Feasibility Study as it would probably go further than the Township doing it alone. Mr. Steadman agreed to reach out to Mr. Attara.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

There was one from the public wishing to speak at this time.

#### ACTION ITEMS AND ASSIGNMENTS: Ms. Sovinee

1. Mr. Steadman – E-mail Mr. McCartney about being put on the Board of Supervisors Agenda
2. Mr. Steadman – Contact Spirit Golf



FUTURE SCHEDULE: All

Mr. Steadman stated the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Property Committee is scheduled for April 21, and they will see what the needs are when it gets closer to that date.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Sovinee stated AOY did have some contractors out to look at a few buildings on the Patterson side. She stated the estimate for the Patterson barn was \$1.5 to \$1.8 million, the pack house around \$300,000, and to turn the garage into a studio would be about \$175,000 because utilities would have to be brought in. Mr. Steadman stated they had discussed turning the garage and the pack house into potential art studios. Mr. Steadman asked what the end product was for the Patterson barn at \$1.5 to \$1.8 million; however, Ms. Sovinee did not know. Mr. Steadman asked if a written report was available that could be shared, and Ms. Sovinee stated she will look into that. Ms. Sovinee stated they also priced renovating the third floor of the Janney House, and that was \$75,000 to bring it up to a usable space. She stated the floors need to be replaced, plaster needs to be patched, and utilities need to be brought up to the third floor.

There being no further business, Ms. Sovinee moved, Mr. Childs seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bette Sovinee, Secretary

