

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
AD HOC PROPERTY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – JULY 13, 2021

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Property Committee of the Township of Lower Makefield was held remotely on July 13, 2021. Mr. McCartney called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He thanked the members for taking this on. He stated he and Dr. Weiss will be serving as Supervisor liaisons.

Those present:

Ad Hoc Property Committee: Fred Childs, Member
 James Nycz, Member
 Bette Sovinee, Member
 Dennis Steadman, Member

Others: Kurt Ferguson, Township Manager
 James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison
 Frederic K. Weiss, Supervisor Liaison

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE ENABLING RESOLUTION
PROPERTY LISTS/PREVIOUS REPORTS/ARRANGING PROPERTY TOURS

Mr. Ferguson stated the next meeting has already been scheduled for August 5, 2021. He stated other staff will be coming to the meetings to provide information.

Mr. Ferguson showed a copy of the Enabling Resolution which includes the tasks of the Committee to identify, assess, and analyze Township property as directed by the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Ferguson stated information on Township properties was provided to the Committee today. He stated this information includes Township properties such as the Municipal Building, the pole barn used by Public Works, and a variety of others that would fall outside of the purview of this Committee.

He stated the Committee was also provided updates via documents that were generated by staff over the last six months regarding properties such as the Golf Course house and properties at Patterson Farm which would be the ones to evaluate. Mr. Ferguson stated if the Committee felt strongly that there was another property that was not referenced as a priority, this could be brought up to the Supervisor Liaisons.

Mr. Ferguson stated the next task listed in the Enabling Resolution is to identify potential uses or re-uses of a property. He stated an analysis has been put together of what it would cost to rehabilitate properties to make them usable but not necessarily rentable or able to be sold if that was something the Committee wanted to evaluate. Mr. Ferguson stated at the next meeting Mr. Majewski, Director of Planning & Zoning, will be present to make a presentation concerning current Zoning for the properties; and if the Committee felt that there were uses that fell outside of the Zoning, they could recommend to amend the Zoning or create an Overlay District so that Zoning could accommodate a broader array of uses if the Committee felt that would be necessary.

Mr. Ferguson stated based upon the recommendations of the Committee it may be that the base level of rehabilitation that the staff had come up with may need to be changed to accommodate a specific type of use that the Committee would like to see.

Mr. Ferguson stated another task of the Committee is a financial review and analysis of not just rehabilitation costs, but what the revenue opportunities could be with potential uses. Mr. Ferguson stated the Committee would also consider whether there was merit to potentially sell any of the properties.

Mr. Ferguson stated the Committee would also outline those properties to which the Board should give top priority. He stated this could be based on what could most easily be done, a re-use or development opportunity with a business, or some other criteria.

Mr. Ferguson stated while these were the basic parameters in the Resolution, if the Committee felt that something different needed to be considered, there are two Supervisors they could discuss that with.

Mr. Ferguson stated included in the distributed property lists are studies that go back ten years or more; and this was to provide as much context as possible as to what has been done in the past.

Mr. Ferguson stated the list provided shows the properties that the Board of Supervisors had recommended to be considered; and if any of the Committee members want to see the properties, there are multiple staff members including Mr. Majewski and Mr. Hucklebridge, Public Works Director, who could arrange for that individually or as a group to meet on site at a time that would be convenient.

Mr. Ferguson stated next Wednesday the Board of Supervisors will be interviewing an individual to be considered for this Committee who has expressed interest and that could result in a fifth member by the next meeting on August 5.

Mr. Childs stated it was indicated that there was a list of the properties that the Board of Supervisors wanted to focus on, and he asked if that was included in the documents that were sent. Mr. Ferguson stated the first e-mail had two links. He stated the second e-mail included a PDF document that lists the various properties on Patterson Farm and a lengthy document from Remington Vernick which looked at a number of properties; and it is those listings from those two documents which totals approximately twenty properties that would comprise the recommended list from the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Ferguson stated when Mr. Majewski presents at the next meeting, there will be a bulleted list of the properties that can be referred to.

Mr. Ferguson stated the document from Remington Vernick deals with approximately five properties.

Mr. Ferguson stated a number of years ago, the Township had gone through and put cost estimates together to rehabilitate properties; and Mr. Majewski went back to make sure that there were no significant changes, and he updated the estimated rehabilitation costs for inflation. Mr. Ferguson stated the properties in the Remington Vernick report were properties that had not been looked at, and he had asked the engineers to assess those approximately half a dozen properties, and that is what is included in their analysis which is a very lengthy report.

Mr. Nycz stated the lengthy report from Remington Vernick has an Executive Summary which lists five separate buildings. Ms. Sovinee stated there are ten buildings on one list and a separate cost listing for the Satterthwaite House.

Mr. Ferguson stated it would therefore total sixteen properties that they are talking about.

Mr. Ferguson stated the staff members will be brought into the meetings to provide an overview. He stated Mr. Pockl, the Township engineer, as well as himself and Mr. Majewski will be looking into Grant possibilities most of which are matching Grants. He stated they could identify some funding sources for some of the properties. He stated he feels the part of the discussion which may not have the clearest direction will be re-use of the properties. He stated Zoning overview in terms of what is allowed

will be provided, and they will also need to consider what uses they could attract. He stated in the Enabling Resolution, the hope was that they could get someone with a Real Estate background on the Committee. He added that Mr. McCartney has a lot of experience in properties and appraisals. Mr. Ferguson stated if the Committee members have people who they feel could provide insight, they could be invited to attend the meetings. Mr. Ferguson stated they could also reach out to those who are developing properties and Realtors as to what their clients are looking for.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Steadman stated he feels it would be useful to have the members introduce themselves. He stated he has lived in the Township for thirty-four years and is a retired CEO in the pharmaceutical industry. He stated he was trained as an economist and born and raised on a dairy farm. He stated he has a love of the land and agriculture. He stated he has been involved in a lot of Real Estate transactions both Commercial and Residential. He stated he currently serves on the Farmland Preservation Corporation. He stated there are great properties in Lower Makefield that he would like to see put to better use.

Mr. Fred Childs stated he has lived in Lower Makefield for twenty-four years. He stated he had been involved with the Financial Advisory Committee which has gone into “limbo” because they did not have enough members for a quorum. He stated he is retired from operations and maintenance in public transit in supervisory and management positions, and prior to that project management for large-scale projects for freight and passenger rail.

Ms. Bette Sovinee stated she has been in Lower Makefield for forty years. She stated she has a background in environmental planning and design and was with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for thirty-three years. She stated she was the training manager for the Agency the last half of her career and prior to that was in various media programs. She stated she is now the coordinator for AOY Art Center which is on the Patterson Farm.

Mr. James Nycz stated he has been on the Historical Commission since October, 2020. He stated he has lived in Lower Makefield for most of his life. He stated he graduated in May from the University of Pennsylvania. He stated he is very interested in local history, preservation, and bringing it into the future.

DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Mr. McCartney stated they would need to elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of the Committee; and he asked if there were any nominations.

Mr. Ferguson stated whoever is the Chair would be responsible to coordinate the Agenda with Township staff and facilitate the meetings as Mr. McCartney did this evening. He stated the Township would work with the Chair on the Agenda; and the Township would send the draft Agenda to the Chair for approval.

There were no nominations at this time, and Mr. Ferguson stated the Committee members could discuss this among themselves along with the fifth member once appointed, and they could vote on the positions in the future. Mr. McCartney could Chair the meeting on August 5.

Mr. Ferguson stated with regard to the Secretary position, it should be understood that individual would not have to be taking the Minutes, as that would be done by the Township Recording Secretary. Once draft Minutes were put together they could go to the Committee as a group, and the Secretary would facilitate that review to make sure that the Minutes are reflective of what happened at the meeting.

It was agreed by the Committee members to wait until the August 5 meeting before electing Officers.

Dr. Weiss suggested that the Committee provide their e-mail and phone numbers. Mr. Ferguson stated his Assistant provided the e-mail addresses today, and he asked that she be included in the master list of e-mail addresses and phone numbers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Steadman asked Mr. McCartney and Dr. Weiss to discuss the issues that the Board of Supervisors have that led to the formation of this Committee. Mr. McCartney stated that Ms. Blundi came to him about the issue of the Township properties that were in disrepair. He stated he feels they want to maximize the assets and consider the highest and best uses for the properties. Dr. Weiss stated he agrees with Mr. McCartney, but he would also like the Committee to understand that while the Board wants to rehabilitate and find a use for the buildings, there are also finite resources. He stated the list of estimates of what it would cost to renovate or replace the buildings is well over seven figures. He stated he hopes the Committee will help the Board form a priority list as well as possible uses for the properties with funds to maintain the buildings in the future. He stated in the past the Township has purchased properties, but did not have the money to maintain them; and they are trying to change that dynamic. He stated they would like to be able to repair them, use them, and find a source of income to maintain them so that they are an asset for the Township for generations to come.

Mr. Ferguson stated when he started with the Township, they looked at the Patterson Farm site and realized that the buildings had lead-based paint on the buildings and on the ground which involves costs that were higher than the Board was aware of. He stated people have different answers as to how the buildings should be used.

Mr. Ferguson stated there have been remote meetings for some time, and the Governor's Directive as to the Emergency Declaration has expired. He stated the law requires that there is a public gathering that is not virtual for people to come to; however, Second Class Townships such as Lower Makefield, can hold hybrid meetings which would mean they could still have remote meetings, but people could also come into the building for the meeting. He stated there is no requirement that Board members or staff members have to be on site, and Board members can still participate virtually and still constitute a quorum for the meeting. He stated there are Committees in the Township that fall under that same requirement that have to provide a public gathering place including the Board of Supervisors, Zoning Hearing Board, the Planning Commission, the Environmental Advisory Council, and the Park & Recreation Board which have to provide for a physical meeting place. Mr. Ferguson stated they will be doing hybrid meetings for the Board of Supervisors, Zoning Hearing Board, and the Planning Commission that are upcoming; and the Board of Supervisors will be weighing

in on whether or not to do any other hybrid meetings. Mr. Ferguson stated for Committees like the Ad Hoc Property Committee, they could keep the meetings entirely virtual if they want as that would not be a violation and there would still be a public component; and the Sunshine Law would not apply in terms of having to provide a physical meeting place. Mr. Ferguson stated the August 5 meeting has already been advertised as virtual, and the Committee will need to discuss how they would want to proceed with meetings. Mr. Ferguson stated he does not feel that they will be doing hybrid meetings for sixteen Committees; and if they want to get together physically to meet, they will need to make sure to arrange for use of the meeting room. He stated a virtual meeting could not be held at the same time another Committee is holding a virtual meeting.

Mr. McCartney stated the Committee should decide how they want to go forward with this adding that from a convenience standpoint, if someone is not able to attend a meeting physically, it is nice to have the option to attend virtually.

Mr. Ferguson stated if the Committee decides that they would like to stay virtual at this point, that does not mean that they would have to do that for the duration; and they could transition one way or the other, and the Township would just have to advertise accordingly prior to the meeting.

Mr. McCartney stated they have budgeted for this type of format through 2021, and Mr. Ferguson stated that is true for the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Ferguson stated the Board of Supervisors is going to have to consider how to handle hybrid meetings in the future.

Mr. Steadman stated his availability on August 5 was relying on the remote connection as he would not be in Lower Makefield. He stated he would be agreeable to meeting in person if his schedule permits. He stated they may want to decide organizing tours of the properties. He stated if the Committee could tour the properties all together it would be a great opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas among the Committee members which he feels would be productive. He stated this would not be an official meeting, but it would be a tour. He stated he would like to see if they can come up with a date that works for everyone to be on site together.

Ms. Sovinee stated they would not be able to tour the Janney House Monday to Friday from 8 to 4 because they have Summer Camp during that time with children on the premises. Mr. Steadman stated it may not be every property at one time.

Mr. Ferguson stated they would not recommend having the Committee walk through the Satterthwaite House but they could go around the perimeter and look inside. He stated the Committee could pick a date and the properties they want to visit. Mr. Nycz asked if this could be done after business hours or on the weekends, and Mr. Ferguson stated they would make sure that staff would be available whenever the Committee members are available.

Mr. Nycz asked when would be the earliest they could get in contact with the fifth member so that they could coordinate with that person as well. Mr. McCartney stated he understands that the individual is being interviewed on July 21, and the Board could make the appointment that evening. Mr. Nycz stated he feels they would like to include that individual when they are setting up a time to visit the properties. Ms. Sovinee asked if they want to do the site visit prior to August 5, and Mr. Nycz stated he would like to do that so that they would be able to see what they are dealing with before they start discussing the properties. Mr. Ferguson stated if there is limited availability on the part of the Committee they could do some of the visits prior to the meeting on August 5, and do another group after that meeting. Mr. McCartney stated he will put together some dates that are prior to August 5 and they will coordinate this with Township staff. He suggested that they try to see the higher priority properties first.

Ms. Sovinee stated there are engineering recommendations and cost estimates from Mr. Majewski on the properties. She asked if there is a prioritization by the Board or are they expecting the Committee to come up with that. Mr. McCartney stated he feels there should be a consensus between the Committee and the Township professionals of what the hierarchy of restoration of the properties would be. Ms. Sovinee asked if they will not be meeting with the engineers until August 5. Mr. Ferguson stated the engineer will be telling the Committee what they saw when they looked at the properties. Mr. Ferguson stated he believes that most of the attention from the Board of Supervisors and staff have to do with the Satterthwaite House because of the prominence of the property and the understanding that it is in disrepair. Mr. Ferguson stated the engineer and Mr. Majewski can talk about what has been examined at the properties

and the challenges of the properties. He stated there are also two Supervisors who are working with the Committee who can assist with a prioritization, adding it was one of the tasks of the Committee as to how to prioritize.

Mr. McCartney stated the Board has an understanding that there are going to be properties that are toward their end of their effective age, and those are the ones they want to examine. He stated they also want to examine the exit strategy of those properties and how to make them useful from a financial standpoint and offset some of the expenses of renovating the properties and the five to fifteen-year plan as far as the use of the properties. He stated they are looking to the Committee for ideas similar to what was done by the Artists of Yardley for the building they are using. Mr. McCartney stated they know which buildings need the most work at this time, but equally as important is what is to be done with the buildings after the work is done.

Ms. Sovinee stated that one of the documents that was distributed this afternoon was the Agricultural Assessment, and there is a carve-out which she presumes is around the buildings that are not protected on the Agricultural Easement. Mr. Ferguson stated when Mr. Majewski is present, he will be able to go into depth on all of this. Mr. Ferguson stated questions can be e-mailed in advance so that Mr. Majewski will be able to speak to those questions at the August 5 meeting.

Ms. Sovinee asked if the Slack House is a historic property. Mr. Ferguson stated he does not know if it was given that designation through PHMC, and that can be discussed with Mr. Majewski as well.

Mr. Steadman asked about the deadline for the Committee. Mr. McCartney stated because of the current physical status of some of these buildings, time is of the essence. Mr. Ferguson stated the Resolution provides a date for a report to be delivered to the Board of Supervisors by the first quarter of next year.

Mr. Childs stated it calls for an initial presentation no later than September 1 so they need to address that with the Board of Supervisors whether or not that is feasible at this point. Mr. McCartney stated there will be leniency as far as that deadline in September which he feels is unrealistic at this time. He stated the first quarter of 2022 for the report is more realistic. He stated the sooner they can get out to look at the properties, the sooner they will be able to brainstorm as to a plan for each building, exit strategies, and long-term strategies. He stated once they get into winter, inspection

of the buildings is probably not feasible, so he feels they should work on the inspections within the next sixty days so that the majority of the Committee members can look at all of the properties. Ms. Sovinee stated she feels the inspections should be done in the next few weeks or they will not have anything to discuss.

Dr. Weiss stated he appreciates the effort of those on the Committee which he feels will be a monumental task and require a lot of thought and discussion. He stated the Board of Supervisors is counting on their recommendations, and would like to have a preliminary plan in place next year to start restoring the buildings. Mr. McCartney stated he agrees, and he feels the cornerstone of our community are some of these historic buildings and the Patterson Farm.

Mr. McCartney stated he will send out an e-mail to the Committee members of available dates for on-site inspections. Mr. Ferguson stated they could also take out two separate groups if one date does not work for everyone.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison