

Lower Makefield Township Historical Commission Meeting
May 11, 2022

Attendees:

- Joe Camaratta, Historical Commission
- Helen Heinz, Historical Commission
- Thomas Argentieri, Historical Commission
- Victor Fiori, Historical Commission
- Daniel Grenier, Board of Supervisors

Absent:

- Chris Greeley, Historical Commission
- James Nycz, Historical Commission

Joe opens the meeting by inviting a guest to speak before the agenda.

Ron Schmid, Chairman of the Pennsbury Society joins the meeting. Ron extends an invitation for to the Commission members to attend the Spring Celebration on May 21 at 5p at Pennsbury Manor. Pennsbury Manor looking to reach out to other community groups that care about history. Also offered to have the Commission hold a meeting at the Manor as well.

[Mr. Schmid leaves the meeting]

Approval of minutes from April – Helen provides comments which are captured in the action items at the end of these minutes.

Helen – motion to approve the minutes as amended. Tom, seconds. All approve.

Joe: Board of Supervisors has set aside two meetings to discuss how to spend the sewer funds. One at end of May, one in June.

Joe: PA Historic Preservation Newsletter – doing a survey of historic places. This is the second year of the survey and next year is the last year. If there are places we want to include in the survey, now is the time to include those.

- Helen – Octagonal School House – it has relevance for the abolitionist movement.
- Helen – Quarry Road Graveyard. May have an early Presbyterian Minister who is credited with being one of the 5 ministers who moved the seminary to Princeton (making him a founder of Princeton University)

[Daniel Grenier joins the meeting]

Dan – Only issue is Octagonal School House is on private property. Mr. Majewski has been in contact with the owners of the property.

- Helen – Edgehill Garden, the first planned community in Bucks County

Joe: Request from Dan on funding

Dan: It wouldn't hurt to add more information to the conversation. The Ad Hoc Committee talked about some of this. If there are other items that require funding that are not in the budget, why not add them?

Background on these meetings – the first meeting is the day after Memorial Day. The next meeting is June 9. The BoS is fairly unanimous around the idea of creating a trust to protect the majority, if not all, of the funding over the long term. So, these could be very brief meetings where we say we'll set up a fund for low interest returns and we can only use the principal through an agreed upon process and use the interest and protect the principal. If there is a laundry list of items that this group would like to see funded, it would be good to have for the annual budget process and if there are special projects, it may be more appropriate for special funding. Please get a list together.

Dan: We have had two recent resignations. The Township Manager is leaving at the end of June and the Public Works Director is leaving mid-June. Some of these items may have to coordinate with new staff.

Joe: New Edgewood Village proposal.

[Joe brings up the plans for sharing]

Conversation ensues about the proposal:

- The developer made some changes in the latest proposal. They added the sidewalk and porches and broke up the building the way Mr. Heinz recommended.
- The new proposal does not make a change about taking down the Quill House and reconstructing it. Taking down the building is a non-starter, as is the addition on the back of the existing building.
- They may bring this back to HARB. Generally we think it is going in the right direction, but it isn't there yet. They may go to the zoning hearing board for a response before HARB. I would like them to go to HARB.
- The way that plans are drawn, you can't differentiate the historic and non-historic buildings either, which is an issue.
- The property is zoned for 9 units but the current plans show 14. That is probably too many units. One alternative is to permit the 9 units plus two units in the preserved buildings.
- The Quill House is in extreme disrepair owing to neglect, leaky windows and roof and animal infestation.
- If this goes to the HARB or ZHB, the Commission should make its stance known.
- Joe should write a memo outlining this Commission's stance and address it to Mr. Majewski.

Joe: Update on the dendrochronology proposal at Patterson Farm.

Helen: I did work on it and we had a meeting with the dendrochronologist on Friday May 6. Mr. Majewski was at that meeting too. There is a report from that meeting that Helen will circulate. The meeting was focused on finding appropriate timber for dendrochronological review.

- Satterthwaite - Without further demolition of surfaces, we did not find any wood eligible for dendrochronology. All the visible wood is close to 1820s and is mostly hemlock harvested from the Poconos and brought down through the canal. Foundation looked old. We were advised not to waste money on a survey because it won't yield the results we're looking for. We didn't get into the last space. If there is demolition in the future we can call him back.
- Carriage House outbuilding was inaccessible (including to Mr. Majewski). Wood was identified as local oak and tulip poplar that predates all wood found in the house. It is eligible for accurate dendrochronology.
- The large barn was also inaccessible.
- Looked at the joist beams in the artist cabin and had some disagreement about the age of the cabin. Helen has been working to document her position around corner stoves and has been looking for a pamphlet authored by William Penn to potential settlers advising what they should bring to settle Pennsylvania. Considerable beetle damage. Expert was unsure as to whether he could pull samples. The expert felt that if he took samples from the attic window that he would damage it. If he comes back to do the basement beams, we'll have someone to repair the window. He wants to see the attic timbers as well. They may be worth dating.
- If he starts to do the timbers in the basement and his bore hits a beetle nest, it blows up and there is no wood to date. If that happens more than twice, he'd stop.
- We'd like to proceed with the cabin and the wagon shed site, with a contract of no more than \$5k.

Helen: Request from the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) to Helen in her capacity with the Patterson Farm Preservation asking how they could help on Patterson Farm. Want to give money to a 501(c)(3) that is working with the township to preserve the farm. Going to ask DAR to pay for the dendrochronology. Helen will write a proposal and write a letter to the DAR to help pay for this. It will also create a history of the Patterson Farm 501(c)(3) and the township working together.

Joe: What we need is permission from the township to access the property to carry out the first phase of the project – the drilling.

Dan: BoS will have to give the Township Manager direction to pay the money (if the Township is paying) and direction to let it happen. I would run it by the manager and copy me for the process to follow.

Joe: Let's get an answer from DAR and when we do that, we'll know what we are asking the Township Manager for.

Joe – Reviewing the Ad Hoc Property Committee Materials

Joe: Reviewing the book from the ad hoc property committee and putting together a position statement on it. Things we feel strongly about. Victor and I went through it and created a draft document. My issue was with the consultants who gave recommendations. Some were inappropriate from a historic preservation perspective. Did anyone review the report?

Helen: Your comments were spot on. On the National Registry requirements, it was dead on. After meeting with the dendrochronologist, I think all of the structures need to be handled by the individuals most interested in the houses. Someone has to come take ownership of that. For the township to do it, it is going to be prohibitively expensive. I think – where is the harm having a group try to stabilize the structures and have them used by residents or a particular group like the AOY House. That may be the most economically correct thing for us to do.

Joe: A master plan is a really good idea and understanding what they want to do with the buildings so we can help preserve them.

Tom – Motion to Adjourn

Victor – Second

Meeting adjourned.

Post Meeting Action Items (as captured by Joe):

- Update April minutes as follows (Joe):
 - Update comment on Pennsbury Manor to "The original Pennsbury Manor was demolished."
 - Update "Hoff House" to "Hough House"
 - Change "retention manager" to "Township Manager"
 - Delete comment "we thought about cleaning it up and Weiner gave us permission to take down the vines and it ended up being a disaster because people stole the stone"
 - Clarify that the Octagonal School House property has a tax valuation of \$400 (not a total value)
- Submit the following properties for consideration as part of the PA State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Baseline Survey (Joe):
 - Octagonal Schoolhouse site (given its role in the Abolitionist Movement)
 - Quarry Road graveyard
 - Edgehill Garden (as first planned community in Bucks County)
- Circulate list of 2022 - 2023 funding priorities for comment. Send to Dan Grenier in advance of the May 31 Board of Supervisors Meeting (Joe)

- Clarify with Jim Majewski the process for review and approval of Troilo proposal in Edgewood Village. Write a letter to the Zone Hearing Board expressing concerns of the Historical Commission (Joe).
- Follow-up with Daughters of American Revolution on funding of the dendrochronology project at Patterson Farm. Send a letter to the Township Manager requesting access to the site to conduct the project (and, potentially, budget to fund it). (Helen)