

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike, West Chester
Thursday, June 18, 2015 6:00 P.M.

In attendance: Commission members Dave Walter, Gail Guterl, Dan Campbell, Erica Reilly, and Jonathan Hoppe. Township Manager Rob Pingar was also in attendance.

I. Call to Order

Dave Walter called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes from May 28, 2015

Gail Guterl made a motion to approve the May 28, 2015 minutes, with Erica Reilly seconding the motion. The minutes were approved without comment.

III. Public Comment (Non-Agenda Items)

None.

IV. Old Business

A. Historic Resources Listing Status

Dave Walter reported that he and Mrs. Guterl had been summoned before the Board of Supervisors (BOS) as representatives of the Historical Commission (HC) to discuss the next steps for the historic resources listing. The BOS informed the HC that Township property owners will be sent letters informing them of the creation of the list at the same time the list is posted publicly, to permit them the chance for comment. Public comment is slated for inclusion on the September BOS meeting agenda. Residents will be encouraged to comment on the list, with the understanding that inclusion of their property thereon does not create addition regulations, encumbrances, etc.

B. Taylor Burial Ground Update

Mr. Pingar reported that the BOS signed off on the applications to erect markers for the Taylor veterans submitted by Mrs. Van Vonno, and that they would be forwarded on to the Veterans Administration. Mr. Walter noted that it would be some time before any action could be expected, and that no living descendants of Thomas Taylor, Jr. have yet been identified. Mr. Hoppe noted that no descendants of John Faucett have been identified, either.

C. Parks & Recreation Commission Holiday Festival - HC Participation Update

Mrs. Guterl reported that participation from Bayard Rustin High School students in the play is a no-go, with no students in the drama program having the capability to undertake an extracurricular activity of this magnitude. B. Reed Henderson High School has also proved to be a non-start. Mrs. Guterl will contact West Chester and Cheyney Universities to gauge their interest.

The play is planned to run three times during the event, at 12:30, 1:30, and 2:30 for about 15-18 minutes in the chapel area of the Oakbourne Mansion, given permission from the BOS.

D. Township Photography Project

To document commercial structures and public spaces of future historical interest, the WTHC decided to divide the Township into quadrants, assigning members to photograph each quadrant.

E. National Register of Historic Places Application for Oakbourne Mansion

Mr. Walter introduced the matter of having the Oakborune Mansion considered for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Mr. Pingar said that the BOS would like an outline from the HC about the positives and negatives of the undertaking and potential consequences thereof.

Mr. Campbell described the application process, noting that first a ruling would be handed down to determine if the Mansion was eligible for the NHRP, and then, if so, if it should be included. Mr. Campbell noted that having the Mansion placed on the NRHP would open up the possibility of receiving federal and state grants for its upkeep, restoration, etc., but to fulfill the terms of the grants the Township would have to abide by strict guidelines. Mr. Pingar asked for further clarification, which he would write out in the future.

Mr. Walter noted that there would be cultural benefits for having the Mansion listed, to which Mr. Campbell added that there could be economic reasons such as tax breaks.

Mr. Campbell agreed to prepare information regarding NRHP listings for the BOS review, as he is familiar with the process as part of his architectural practice. He will represent the HC at the next BOS meeting to answer their questions regarding this process.

Fall Newsletter Article

Mrs. Guterl reported that her article for the fall newsletter is complete. She interviewed a 94 year-old Township veteran about his experiences in the Second

World War, and he reviewed the article she has written.

V. New Business

A. Donations to Township File

Mr. Walter added to the file copies of the complete register of soldiers at Camp Elder in 1863, obtained from an online search of records. Mrs. Guterl donated a pamphlet describing the Smith Convalescent Home that was once housed in the Oakbourne Mansion. Mr. Hoppe donated photographs he took of the now-demolished PNC Bank building, on West Chester Pike near the intersection of Route 352.

B. Mr. Hoppe's Resignation

Mr. Hoppe reported with much regret that he had taken a position in another city, and was moving out of Westtown Township. Because he would no longer be a resident, he therefore had to resign his position on the HC. He noted, however, that his extensive knowledge of local history would still be offered as a resource as needed.

C. Eusebius Barnard House

Mr. Pingar noted that Pocopson Township had started restoration of the historic Eusebius Barnard House, on Wawaset Road near the Chester County Prison. He noted former Westtown Township Manager, Bob Layman, was involved with the project.

D. Chester County Historic Preservation Network Volunteer Recognition Celebration

Mr. Campbell reported on the celebration, being the HC representative in attendance. He reported to that group on the HC's involvement with maps, newsletters, and the Camp Elder Historic marker. He noted State Senator Andy Dinniman spoke at the event, the topic of his speech being the threat of gas pipeline right-of-way expansion to the historic properties they run near. Mr. Pingar noted for the record that there are three pipelines running to Marcus Hook that pass through Westtown Township.

VI. Public Comment (All Topics)

None.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

The next Historical Commission meeting is Thursday, August 20, 2015 at 6:00 PM. Due to an expected lack of quorum, the July meeting of the HC will be cancelled.