

Schuylkill Township Historical Commission

Minutes of Meeting – May 15, 2017

Members Attending: Sandy Momyer, John Gregory, Khalil Hihi, Dianne Cram, Dorothy Bedford, Jay Stearly, Ginny Stearly

Others in Attendance: William Bolla, Attorney and Bob Wise, preservation specialist representing Schuylkill Township Historical Commission (HC)

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

Minutes from the April 2017 meeting were approved.

Announcements:

- June 8, 7:30pm at Phoenixville Country Club – Lecture on historic barns by Jeff Marshall.
- June 28 – Annual banquet for Chester County Historic Preservation Network at Yellow Springs

Pennsylvania Heritage 2017

Sandy and John were asked to present at the state wide conference in Carlisle. John will be available to do so.

Anderson Barn

John said he was uncertain if Bill Brennan has filed the liens. The sheriff's sale had been postponed, and the next sale may be scheduled for June 15.

Stream Naming Project

Dorothy reported that her search with the Morris Arboretum sources was not productive.

Phoenixville Area School District (PASD)

The next Task Force meeting is not yet scheduled. PASD has rescinded their application for demolition which now allows the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to participate. PASD has been asked to broom-sweep clean the buildings to make them more presentable for potential lease. PASD is willing to negotiate a lease to developer or business. Fred Parry, liaison with PASD said he will ask BOS for ideas and mentioned a possible use by the Phoenixville Library. John stated that it was PASD's responsibility to maintain the buildings. Sandy will call Dr. Fegley to schedule the next meeting.

Old Business:

- 29 South Whitehorse Road – There is some work being done with permits to repair and support the porch.
- Freedoms Foundation (FF) – Money for open space preservation was awarded to FF and Sandy wants to put this back on our agenda since if the HC had known we could have had some input about preservation of the buildings. Fred Parry said that he did not believe the tract acquired by open space funding included the structures.
- Valley Park Road bridge – Khalil mentioned that the bridge being repaired is on our survey as #791. Sandy will ask Mary Bird about the repairs.

New Business:

- A new magazine *Schuylkill Living* is being planned and gathering information about “interesting” people in the Township. Sandy asked for ideas on who should be included.

Whitehorse Road-Phoenixville, LLC (Wawa)

Julie Von Spreckelsen, Attorney for Wawa addressed the meeting and said that they had heard our comments and feedback in regards to preserving the Rossiter House and have drawn up a revised proposal that puts access to the Wawa slightly north in order to preserve the building, but they are still asking for demolition of the carriage house. She said that there will be issues with Penn DOT, but they wanted to compromise with the HC. She said that the roof leak at the house has been fixed.

John asked if the original proposal was “off the table” all together and if the revised proposal was rejected by BOS would the original proposal be brought back. Julie responded that their time and energy spent at this point will have them move ahead with the revised proposal.

The question of subdivision was raised because Township ordinance requirements allow for only one principal use per lot and it is commonplace for Wawa to have multiple uses per property: food, banks, drug store, etc. John commented that he was pleased that Wawa is presenting plans to save the house but his concern is that the building is squeezed into the proposed development and if it will remain a commercial retail building. Bill Dion, representing Wawa, stated that historic structures present challenges for retail business and it will take a lot of time and energy to make it appealing to renters. John pointed out that this building has been in continual commercial use for many years and that both buildings have been rented by retailers. Dorothy asked if the present tenants have been asked if they are interested in remaining there. John asked about parking and Julia pointed out parking spaces along the side and back of the house and said that Penn DOT’s concern is keeping the access as far from the intersection as possible. Discussion continued about the obligation to meet zoning ordinance requirements by not allowing multiple uses on each lot and also not allowing for parking up to a property line.

John pointed out that there are many historic structures within the 300 ft. radius that will be impacted and if Wawa had considered another location such as the corner of Starr Street and Nutt Road. It was determined that location would also impact historic structures. Julie stated that they have not completed designing buffers but are open to including fencing and landscaping. Bill Bolla commented that the quality and consistency of the buffer is yet to be determined.

Sandy asked about the building materials and if they would use brick and/or stone and would the canopy for the gas pumps reflect a design also. Jay suggested the use of McAvoy brick or using all stone to blend in with other buildings in the area. Bob Wise commented that ultimately it will be a benefit for us to work closely with Wawa and developers as they move forward with design.

Bob Wise also mentioned his concern about the buildings on Route 23 closest to the gas pumps and that a landscape architect is needed, although the Rossiter House, itself, acts as a buffer to the structures closest to it. Bob advised that a preservation plan be adopted for the renovations and continued use of the Rossiter House as rental space and that it also include dedicated parking space for this building since it potentially can change the orientation of the structure. Bill Bolla pointed out that renovation plans will have to come back to the HC for approvals. Bill Dion commented that the house must be kept aesthetically pleasing and that Wawa’s record of maintaining properties was very good and he felt that the project will be successful.

John suggested that identification of a preservation plan be included as part of the recommendation to BOS. He pointed out that Wawa's initial application is still missing some required parts.

John asked what the time line for construction is, and the response was "as quickly as possible" with ground breaking in approximately two years.

Sandy explained that our utmost concern is for historic preservation. John commented that he welcomed Wawa's "spirit of cooperation" to save the historic structure, but emphasized the importance of including a preservation plan and landscaping plan in our motion to BOS allowing for conditional use.

The question of payment for Bob Wise's consultation came up and John pointed out that Section 906 requires the applicant to pay for consultant fees.

The wording of the motion to be made was discussed. Mr. Bolla suggested that a rehab preservation plan be part of future planning approvals and Mr. Dion pointed out that until engineering plans are finalized it would be impossible to have a preservation plan ready for BOS approval of the conditional use. Mr. Bolla stated that an important part is their willingness to allow for a preservation plan as a condition of the conditional use approval. Mr. Dion said they would also want to work with the tenant's needs.

The following wording of the motion was agreed upon:

The Historical Commission recommends the granting of conditional use approval by the Schuylkill Township Board of Supervisors to allow demolition of the "carriage house" on proposed lot # 2 subject to the following conditions:

1. Preservation of the "Twin Bays" house, also known as the "Jacob Rossiter" house consistent with the requirements of the Schuylkill Township Historic Resource Protection Standards;
2. Development of proposed lots #1 and #2 substantially similar to the "Alternate Conditional Use Plan" prepared by Bohler Engineering, dated May 9, 2017, as may be modified by the Schuylkill Township Board of Supervisors during land development;
3. A Preservation Plan is included for reuse of the Rossiter House to be approved by the Schuylkill Township Board of Supervisors as final land development plan.

John made the motion to accept, Dorothy seconded, all voted in favor.

John will write the recommendation to the BOS based on our meeting discussion including the accepted motion and submit it within the timeframe proscribed by our historic ordinance.

Sandy thanked everyone for their efforts. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Submitted by
Dianne M. Cram

Next meeting will be held on June 19, 2017 at 7pm.