

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike
Tuesday, December 12, 2023 - 7:00 PM

In attendance: Chair Pamela Boulos (PB), and Members David Walter (DW), Dan Campbell (DC), Patrick McDonough (PM), Stephen Wahrhaftig (SW), and Stephen Dabrowski (SD). Absent was Paul Vartan Sookiasian (PVS). Also present was Mila Carter, Assistant Township Manager.

Call to Order

Pam Boulos called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Adoption of Agenda (SW/DC) 6-0

Stephen Wahrhaftig made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Dan Campbell seconded. Mr. McDonough requested to change the description of the agenda item pertaining to land development applications to say: "Discussion on the Township Manager's recommendation on how the Historical Commission engages during the land development process involving historic resources and providing proper notification to the Historical Commission of land development projects involving structures on the Westtown Township historic designation list". All were in favor of the amended motion.

Approval of Minutes (SD/DW) 6-0

Stephen Wahrhaftig made a motion to adopt the minutes as presented. David Walter seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Public Comment (Non-agenda items)

None

New Business

1. Land Development Applications

Pam Boulos acknowledged that the HC received an email from the Township Manager pertaining to the HC's participation in the most recent Planning Commission's meeting where the sketch plan for a potential land development was discussed. She summarized his recommendations, including that all items shall be first placed on the HC agenda and discussed with a subsequent motion prior to any action being taken by the HC. Patrick McDonough recapped the PC meeting that he and Mr. Wahrhaftig attended. He raised a concern that the HC should be notified when an application pertaining to historic resources is submitted to the Township. Ms. Carter explained that the Township was notified prior to the PC meeting that the potential tenant for the property decided not to proceed with the project, therefore there was no pending application. She also noted that she intended on making the HC aware of the project at their upcoming meeting. Mr. McDonough argued that the HC should have been notified when the sketch plan was submitted. Ms. Carter reminded that there was no process established in the existing ordinance for the review by the HC. Dave Walter suggested for the Township to notify the HC as a courtesy. Mr. McDonough recommended monitoring the PC's agendas in the future. Mr. Wahrhaftig

believed that it would be a good idea to explore the history of the property to be ready when such application comes in. Mr. Walter recapped that John Hoppe (former HC member) previously researched the history of the property and suggested sending a copy of that document to Kurt Wolter, who is the owner of 1032 and 1036 Wilmington Pike. Mr. Wahrhaftig volunteered to do so.

2. Priorities for 2024

Pam Boulos asked the HC members to weigh in on the priorities for the next year. She acknowledged that the amendments to the historic preservation ordinance were the priority for the next year. Ms. Carter provided an update that the Township solicitor was still in the process of reviewing it. The HC discussed focusing on the following additional items: continued development of oral history, development of design guidelines for historic resources, participation of Westtown in America250, and potential establishment of a history center. Stephen Wahrhaftig noted that the oral history initiative was reliant on the former HC member who stepped down in 2023, therefore, there was not much progress made. He volunteered to take the lead on the project. The HC agreed. Patrick McDonough suggested for the HC to work on developing the design guidelines to support the amendments to the historic preservation ordinance, which will serve as a policy guidance document when reviewing applications. The HC agreed. There was a detailed discussion on the celebration of America250. Mr. McDonough suggested focusing educational efforts on Oakbourne Park. He commented that the most attended event at the park was the Rustin High School senior photo day. He believed that the HC's participation in that event was a good opportunity for education and outreach. There was a discussion on planning for the potential establishment of the history and/or heritage center in Westtown. The HC were in agreement that Darlington Inn would be a great location for such center. Dan Campbell suggested that it might be similar to the history center in Kennett. Dave Walter believed that before any planning, the HC should ask for a feedback from the Board. Ms. Carter recommended for the HC to write a memo with the preliminary proposal for the proposed use of the building. The HC agreed that more discussion was needed on this subject.

3. Wreaths Across America

Patrick McDonough explained that the Wreaths Across America organization focuses on celebrating veterans by placing simple wreaths with a red bow on military gravesites around the country. He believed that it was an honorable initiative to participate in and suggested for Westtown to take a part. Dave Walter raised question about potential sites. He wondered whether the Taylor Memorial and Camp Elder sign would be appropriate locations. The HC agreed to participate next year.

4. Chester County Heritage Tourism Marketing Campaign

Dan Campbell provided a quick recap of the presentation on November 16, 2023 on findings and recommendations by SWELL, a marketing agency, which was hired to develop messaging for the Chester County Heritage Tourism Plan. He explained that the presentation focused on a variety of marketing materials are in the process of being developed to be utilized by municipalities. Pam Boulos suggested for the HC to continue partnering with Westtown School on future educational tours and potentially incorporating FarmerJawn for educational lectures on agriculture.

Old Business

1. Community Education

A. Historic Markers

Stephen Wahrhaftig recapped the feedback from the Board questioning the selection criteria for historic markers. He acknowledged that Sarah Starkweather was not a resident of Westtown, but believed that installation of signage at the school building which was named after her was a good thing to do. The HC agreed. Other members suggested potential sign markers for the Huey Ruins site, Oakbourne Mansion or at the site where serpentine quarry once operated. Mr. Wahrhaftig suggested that more research was needed to verify whether Starkweather was the first female superintendent in the United States. He believed that the next step would be to reach out to the National Teacher's Association with the discovery to get their feedback. The HC agreed.

Public Comment (All Topics)

None

Announcements

1. Ms. Carter announced that a special meeting to render an oral decision on the Stokes Estate flexible development application is scheduled for December 27, 2023.
2. Ms. Carter announced that if the HC intends on advertising the schedule for the next year's lecture series in the spring issue of Westtown gazette, it needs to be finalized. She suggested to come up with the list of lectures series and potential dates. Dave Walter noted that the HC has already compiled a list and just needs to determine which lectures to do this upcoming year.

Adjournment (DW/DC) 6-0

David Walter made a motion to adjourn at 8:37 pm. Dan Campbell seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Next HC meeting: **January 9, 2024 @ 7:00 PM**

HC Representative at next Board of Supervisors Meeting:

- **Tuesday January 2, 2024 @ 7:30 pm** – Stephen Wahrhaftig

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Dabrowski
Historical Commission Secretary