

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike
Tuesday, May 14, 2024 - 7:00 PM

In attendance: Chair Pamela Boulos (PB), commissioners David Walter (DW), Dan Campbell (DC), and Stephen Wahrhaftig (SW). Also present were Township Manager Mila Carter, Township Supervisor Tom Foster, and Township Solicitor Patrick McKenna. Absent was Commissioner Patrick McDonough.

Call to Order

Pam Boulos called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm. David Walter made a motion to move some business discussion forward, so as not to burden Tom Foster and Patrick McKenna with those discussions. Pam Boulos seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda (SW/DW) 4-0

Pam Boulos made a motion to adopt the agenda as modified. David Walter seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Approval of Minutes from April 9, 2024 (PB/DW) 4-0

Pam Boulos made a motion to approve the minutes. David Walter seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Public Comment (Non-agenda items)

None.

Old Business

1. Historic Preservation Ordinance

Tom Foster discussed his concerns about some of the implications of the proposed ordinance, in particular, delaying approval of building permit applications. He felt that the Commission has spent an inordinate amount of time on this project. Patrick McKenna offered his observations on some inconsistencies in the proposed ordinance language. He mentioned that he expected residents to be offered an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal and asked about the process for doing this. There was a discussion regarding the difference between special exception and conditional use. Patrick pointed out that conditional use process is more expensive for the applicants. Pam Boulos suggested that the Commission be given an opportunity to review pertinent building permit applications in order to make recommendations to the Zoning Hearing Board. There was an in depth discussion on the permit issuance process. Patrick McKenna felt that the current draft ordinance amendments citing Pennsylvania code was doubtful, and expressed that timelines are not well specified in the state law.

David Walter brought up the subject of demolition of historic resources, which prompted a discussion of timelines for building permit approvals. Mila Carter noted that the Township responses are required within 15 business days for residential building permit approvals and within 30 business days for commercial properties. She pointed out that the Commission meets once a month, making it challenging to meet the timelines for permit issuance.

Patrick McKenna brought up the confusion in using the terms “historic map” verses “historic list.” He suggested that the Commission considered using the list as the official reference for historic properties. Patrick McKenna also asked to clarify the term “objects”

pertaining to historic resources. Dave Walter provided an example, such as a corn crib, signage, and markers. Patrick McKenna asked whether such objects were included on the list. Dave Walter responded that they were not.

Tom Foster suggested that prior to implementing the draft ordinance, the Township should arrange a comprehensive review and update the historical resources list. He recommended that it should be done by a competent consultant.

Patrick McKenna offered his thoughts on the proposed additional use provisions. He cited examples, such as the modification of accessory dwellings including multi-family dwellings. Mila Carter mentioned that there was a recent inquiry for a potential use of a winery at one of the Crebilly Farm lots.

The Commission also discussed facade easements. In principle, Patrick McKenna had no problem with encouragement of construction styles, but felt that imposing a façade easement might be problematic, considering that the current inventory of historic resources does not include information about architectural styles of specific buildings. It was suggested to require permit applicants to provide photographs as a part of the review process.

Patrick McKenna discussed the applicability and administration of the Secretary of the Interior standards in the review process. The Commission agreed to attach an appendix containing these standards to the draft ordinance. Patrick McKenna also suggested not to use 'non-contributing resource' because all proposed provisions are only applicable to contributing resources. He suggested to provide a definition for a contributing resource.

Tom Foster suggested that given the additional work required on the ordinance and the priority of completing the land acquisition of the Crebilly Farm, the proposed ordinance might not be finalized until the end of 2024. He anticipated that the final review and potential approval to be completed in spring of 2025.

2. Westtown Day 2024

Stephen Wahrhaftig proposed having a table at the event with information about the Commission, its activities, and copies of the Westtown history book for sale. The Commission questioned the need to continue doing the archaeological dig activity, and brainstormed other potential ideas for interaction with the public. The Commission also discussed details of offering tours of Oakbourne Mansion during the event. David Walter asked about the possibility of moving Westtown Day to a Saturday, which may be more convenient for residents, with fewer conflicts with football games.

3. Westtown250

The Commission briefly reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings held by Chester County and other organizations to discuss combined efforts for celebration activities. Mila Carter suggested that the Commission provide a list of ideas to the Board at the upcoming workshop for a feedback.

New Business

1. History Lectures

David Walter reminded everyone that he will be giving the next lecture, at 10 am on Saturday, June 22nd. The topic will be the History of Westtown. Stephen Wahrhaftig suggested manning a table promoting the sale of the Westtown history book and collecting contact information from attendees. He felt that this would free up Mila Carter from having to work both the entrance and the on-line streaming of the lecture.

2. Stream Name (Chester Creek watershed)

David Walter prepared a detailed summary of his research on the name of the stream and associated family history. Based on his research, the creek was known as Taylor's Run until the USGS maps started to depict it as Walton's Run.

David Walter made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to retain the name of the creek locally known as Taylor's Run. Dan Campbell seconded the motion. The motion has passed. (DW/DC) 4-0

3. Markers for Taylor Militia Monument

David Walter distributed information regarding the offer from the Philadelphia Continental Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) to affix SAR 'lug' medallions to the markers installed on Township open space near the Pleasant Grove pump station. He explained that this would be done at no cost to the Township.

David Walter made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors the acceptance of the proposal the Philadelphia Continental Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) for installation of lug medallions. Stephen Wahrhaftig seconded the motion. The motion has passed. (DW/SW) 4-0

Public Comment (All Topics)

None.

Announcements

1. Mila Carter announced that the applicant intends to present the settlement proposal for the Stokes Estate Conditional Use application to the Board of Supervisors at their workshop on June 3rd.
2. Mila Carter also noted that the property owner of former Abbey Greene motel is proposing to demolish the motel portion of the building and to utilize the retail portion for FenceWorks business operations.

Adjournment (DW/PB) 4-0

David Walter made a motion to adjourn at 9:11 pm. Pam Boulos seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Next HC meeting: June 11th 2024 @ 7:00 pm

HC Representative at next Board of Supervisors Meeting:

- **Monday, June 3rd @ 7:30 pm** - Stephen Wahrhaftig/Patrick McDonough

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Wahrhaftig
Historical Commission Acting Secretary