

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike
Tuesday, August 13, 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. Absent was Commissioner Patrick McDonough.

Call to Order

Pam Boulos called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

Adoption of Agenda (SW/DW) 4-0

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

Approval of Minutes from May 14, 2024 (DW/DC) 4-0

Dave Walter made a motion to approve the minutes. Dan Campbell seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Public Comment (Non-agenda items)

None.

Old Business

1. Priorities and Budget 2025

Stephen Wahrhaftig compared budget items between 2024 and 2025 requests and provided recommendations for 2025, such as honorarium for lecture speakers, another historic marker, America250 interpretive signage for Oakbourne Park, stewardship award, subscription to a newspapers.com, display case for the Huey Ruins artifacts, and general expenses for a total of \$8,000. Dave Walter thought there was no need to budget for 6 speakers. Stephen further provided that the planned interpretive signage in 2024 for the Huey Ruins site was not complete, because the archaeological work was still ongoing. The Commission discussed the cost of a historical marker, curation of artifacts, and the estimated cost of display cases to house such artifacts. Dave mentioned there were 20,000 citations for Westtown in newspapers.com and advocated for subscription. Mila Carter asked about a potential location for a display case. Pam Boulos suggested to follow up with the West Chester University (WCU) to find out about the number of items to be displayed. She also suggested that items can be circulated from time to time and that Stokes Hall, the Township building entrance, or Oakbourne Mansion might be appropriate for displays, because they provide easy public access and exposure.

Stephen encouraged the Commission to consider budget for brochures, signage, or display materials to be utilized at Oakbourne Mansion for the Township's America250 initiative. There was a discussion about what it might look like and the status update on the wayfinding signage recently installed at Oakbourne Park. Pam suggested pamphlet holders at the park. Stephen supported that idea, because he believed that people would have expectations to learn about the history of the park while visiting.

Stephen felt that the budget request was minor. Mila stated that the 2025 budget is tight, with higher than anticipated costs for capital projects and she expected the Board of Supervisors to consider budget requests very carefully.

Dan Campbell made a motion to recommend the proposed 2025 budget to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. Dave seconded. The motion was approved. Stephen volunteered to produce a revised sheet detailing only the 2025 budget, without 2024 comparisons.

2. Preparation for Westtown Day 2024

Stephen noted that many items were needed to prepare, including handouts, blurb about America250, Westtown history books, copies of gazette articles, and others. The Commission discussed details for a table with materials about the Commission's activities and upcoming history lectures. Stephen believed that archaeological dig had nothing to do with Westtown and suggested for the table to be geared towards adults. There was a discussion on how to attract participants. Pam suggested to have their table next to the reenactors and other history related activities or to have an actor in a history appropriate costume. She wondered what else could be done to attract families to visit the table and to engage with the Commission.

Stephen suggested for the Commission members knowledgeable of the history of the mansion to be available for self-guided tours and to engage with visitors. Dan and Dave volunteered. Dan suggested producing a 'tour card' handout. Stephen volunteered to look at the photo and descriptive materials located at the mansion. Stephen felt it was important for the Commission to be present to interpret the pictures to visitors.

Dave expressed a desire to update the Westtown history book. The Commission agreed that it should be updated in time for America250 activities. Stephen talked about 'print on demand' services that might reduce the cost of producing the book.

The Commission also discussed the Good Steward award. Mila noted that a request for nominations was published in the Westtown Gazette and is on the HC page of the Township website. She asked about time frame. The Commission agreed that all submissions should be received by September 10th, to allow time for consideration and award plaque production. Dan volunteered to arrange for plaque printing.

3. Plans for America250 Celebration

Stephen suggested to produce a write up for the community about the celebration and to get their feedback on potential activities. He also suggested getting the community involved in volunteer opportunities and to drafting a list of various possibilities at Oakbourne Park for the entire year. Dan noted that the County asked the stakeholders to focus on main themes and summarized the meetings he has attended regarding the County plans. Stephen suggested holding a public meeting to gather resident input on what the Township focus should be. Mila suggested to advertise it during the Westtown Day. The suggested date was Saturday, October 19th at 10 am at Stokes Hall. Mila asked the Commission to draft some details about the event to be posted on the Township website and distributed to the public. Stephen noted he would work on drafting that.

4. Huey Ruins Artifacts

Pam stated that she has been in contact with the WCU regarding the artifacts found at the Huey site, and the possibility that a student would volunteer to help curate and describe the materials, when they are returned to the Township. Stephen suggested scouring consignment shops for low-cost furniture that could be used as display cases. Pam offered to visit shops and get more details from WCU about the artifacts.

Dave talked about having a dedication ceremony once the materials are displayed and the marker is installed and suggested to invite decedents of the Huey family who might live in the area. The Commission agreed.

New Business

1. Commission Membership

Stephen pointed out that the Commission remains unsure whether Pat McDonough intends to remain on the Commission. Pam suggested contacting him at his new email address. Stephen also suggested contacting Paul Sookiasian to determine his interest in rejoining the Commission. Mila noted that notices of vacancies have been published and mentioned in various Township meetings and publications. She stated that it has been challenging to find volunteers.

2. History Lecture - Gen. Lafayette at the Battle of Brandywine

Dave stated that Bruce Mowday confirmed his attendance. He noted that there would be no PowerPoint slides. Stephen volunteered to handle the door greetings, so that Mila can monitor the online broadcast and recording of the lecture. Dave expressed the hope that the Township supervisors will attend as well.

3. Historical Commission YouTube Channel

Stephen pointed out that the Commission has several history talks recorded and ready to upload to the HC's YouTube channel, including previously led history lectures and oral history project related content. He suggested to create a proposal for the Board to consider.

4. Oral History Project

Dave and Stephen recapped the recent interview with Jim Lees. He also summarized his recent conversation with David Robinson, who expressed interest in an interview after the Crebilly land acquisition. Stephen stated that Mr. Robinson mentioned a history of Crebilly book that he gave to the Township that may contain valuable information. Mila said she would ask the staff about the whereabouts of this book. Stephen also mentioned that Mr. Robinson suggested contacting the Carriage Association.

Dave proposed to reach out to Elaine Adler, former Planning Commission member and Township Director of Planning and Zoning, for an interview.

5. Newsletter Article

Pam mentioned that she has been working on a piece on Sarah Starkweather. Dave suggested writing an article on the Doc Martin Lima Beans, which were developed in Westtown and are still popular among home gardeners today. Stephen talked about his recent visit to Westtown School's observatory and his interest in telescope history from the 1800s. He provided some pictures and offered to write an article.

6. Route 926/U.S. 202 Retaining Wall Aesthetic Treatment

Mila showed renderings of the proposed wall design for the intersection. She recapped that PennDOT asked for the Township's feedback on the wall cap details prior to finalizing the construction plans. The Commission discussed options and expressed doubt that sufficient amount of serpentine stone is available for capping the wall. Pam felt that more stone would be needed for repairs in the future. Dan then suggested that colored concrete would be more practical and a better long term solution. There was a brief discussion about the placement of the wall, its location, construction, and maintenance.

Dan made a motion to recommend to the Board the approval of proposed stained concrete cap for the retaining wall to match the serpentine stone. Stephen seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Public Comment (All Topics)

None.

Announcements

1. Mila announced that the Stokes Estate settlement proposal was not finalized yet.
2. Mila summarized the recent proposals for the use of former Abby Green property.
3. Mila also announced that there might be an application for the Commission to review for a proposed stone garage at Pleasant Grove Road and Westwood Drive in the future.
4. Stephen recapped the presentation by Natural Lands at the Board's workshop on update for the Crebilly land acquisition.

Adjournment (DW/PB) 4-0

David made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Dave seconded. All were in favor of the motion.

Next HC meeting: September 10, 2024 @ 7:00 pm

HC Representative at next Board of Supervisors Meeting:

- **Tuesday September 3, 2024 @ 7:30 pm** – Dave Walter/Pamela Boulos

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Wahrhaftig
Historical Commission Acting Secretary