

**Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of January 26, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:15pm** in the township building.

PRESENT: HC Members: Matt Bedwell, Kelly Fleming, Mike Forbes, John Ponticello

ABSENT: Matt Bedwell

Others present: Janet Rodden, Susan and Tim Allabashi

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 26, 2020 meeting. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Reorganization of Committee for 2020

Mr. Forbes opened discussion for electing new officers for this calendar year.

Ms. Fleming made a motion to reappoint Mr. Forbes as the Chairperson for 2021. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to reappoint Ms. Fleming as the Vice Chairperson. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Application for repair/modification on property at 1090 Country Club Rd. – The James Painter Jr. House AKA Mansion House at Radley Run (HR#5)

The applicant's representative, Ms. Janet Rodden, is in attendance to present the proposed repairs that need to be done to the roof of the ballroom portion of the Mansion House. Ms. Rodden confirmed that the notification letters were sent out on Monday, January 11, 2021. They were sent out by Radley Run and were to be returned to Radley Run. She does not have the list of who returned their green cards but will get that information tomorrow. Per a follow-up email from Ms. Rodden, eleven notices were sent out and ten green cards were returned.

Mr. Ponticello asked if the repairs have already been completed. Ms. Rodden confirmed that the repairs have definitely been started, if not already completed, as the tree fell on the roof in the fall. There was copper that also needed to be replaced. Mr. Forbes confirms that the replacements were in kind and no alterations were made. Ms. Rodden confirmed that they simply repaired what needed to be fixed from the tree damage. The undamaged roof remained and they simply married up the replacement to it with the same materials.

Mr. Forbes completed the required Form for this application during the meeting.

Mr. Forbes stated that based on the information provided and the fact that the repairs have already progressed there is no reason to stop or alter the repairs. Mr. Forbes made a motion to recommend that the BOS approve the proposed repairs to the roof of the Mansion House at Radley Run (HR#5) per the documentation presented. Seconded by Ms. Fleming and approved unanimously.

Update on Battle of the Brandywine Signage/ Project to review and update Birmingham website with new historical descriptions for park trail signs

Ms. Fleming shared the document proposing the signage for the Birmingham Hill location. There was a meeting with Karen Marshall, Randall Spackman, Andrew Outten and Kelly to propose this wording. There are some requirements for these signs: 1) the location must be marked on the sign, 2) the date must be marked on the sign and 3) the wording must be less than 87 words. The sign will be similar to the blue State signs located throughout the region. However, this one will have the township insignia at the top. The proposed wording is:

Crisis on the Field of Battle, September 11, 1777

By late afternoon, after receiving reports that the Crown Forces had successfully outflanked his defenses, General Washington moved a portion of his army near this location on Birmingham Hill to repel them. Divisions under Generals Sullivan and Stirling were positioned as the left and center of the American line. The elite British Guards and Grenadiers charged across the field and fierce fighting ensued. Poor communication and terrain resulted in a major gap in the American line and they were eventually overwhelmed and fell back to the southeast. (87)

Thornbury township will continue the story on their sign. People will get the bigger picture and more detail of the battle story by participating in the driving tour which will include the QR codes allowing them to use their phones for an interactive audio narrative from location to location. This narrative will provide details about what was happening with General Washington, General Sullivan and many other regiments on that day. Mr. Forbes had invited a member of BT RPOS Committee to join the HC group tonight to explain their thoughts for the linkage between the QR codes and the website. This will be an important step prior to being able to set up a resource center and will be addressed at another meeting.

Mr. Forbes noted that he thinks there also needs to be sign placed in the future at the corner of Meetinghouse Road and Birmingham Rd to provide the historic significance of the Meetinghouse during the battle.

Discussion ensued about the wording to make it more exact than “near” this location. Ms. Fleming said “near” could be changed to “at” but would need to be confirmed as accurate. Another option would be that “Washington extended his forces in a half mile to the right and half mile to the left of this location” – to give people the impression of how big this battle was. Ms. Fleming will tweak the wording and send it back out to the group. Once the wording is finalized, Ms. Fleming will touch base with Karen Marshall about the next steps in terms of getting the sign placed, etc. The idea is that people will get a better picture of the entire battle by using the QR code and using the driving tour.

Mr. Hill asked for an update on the QR code linkage. He noted that this is a good time to verify that the content is the most up-to-date and also make sure that the QR codes lead to a valid page on the website that gives the correct narrative.

Review of status of Historic Resource Center/Interpretative sites

This is the multi-town project being assisted by the Brandywine Conservancy. There have been subsequent meetings with the planning group and various other participants since the original joint Birmingham HC and PC meeting. The final outcome of these many meetings is that the Historic Resource Center will be at Thornbury Farm and Birmingham Hill will be an interpretative site. Birmingham will be a low-impact site where people can actually see the terrain and the physical location

of the battle. The actual Resource Center will be at Thornbury Farm and that will focus on the battle and what takes place a Sandy Hollow. There was another meeting that discussed Washington's strategic retreat and the conclusion of the battle – it overlaps what takes place at Dilworthtown and down by the 1704 House. At this meeting, Frank Rupp (new owner of the Dilworthtown Inn) was present. He has graciously agreed to create "a history house" at the house that is attached to the Inn Keepers Kitchen. This will be utilized that as the resource center. There was no further discussion about the details of what this will actually look like in terms of staffing, funding, etc.

New Business

Mr. Ponticello has a person who is interested in joining the HC. Mr. Forbes has offered to reach out to her to see if she has any questions.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. Seconded by Ms. Fleming and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be February 23, 2021 at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary