

**Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of September 28, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by the Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:22pm** in the township building.

PRESENT: HC Members: Kelly Fleming, Mike Forbes, Pat Kelly, John Ponticello

ABSENT: Matt Bedwell

Others present: Dan Hill, Caroline Hicks and William Sawyer, Mary Sue Boyle

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 24, 2021 meeting. Ms. Kelly seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Discussion of condemnation of Historic Resources due to Ida: HR#1, HR#70

The township has been notified that two Historic Resources were significantly damaged during Hurricane Ida and subsequently are now at least partially uninhabitable. The two properties are HR #1 (located at 1315 Lenape Road) and HR#70 (1075 Creek Road). The township received an email last week regarding HR#70 with initial plans to remodel the white barn, demolish the red barn, removing utilities and such out of the way of future damage from floods. They will most likely be on the October agenda as they need to send neighbor notifications prior to the meeting and be prepared to address all the items they plan to address with the various buildings on the property.

The sister of the owner of HR#1 is not quite as far along in the demolition process yet, however due to the condemnation of the building, they will need to figure out the next steps. Mr. Forbes spoke with her on the phone and they did not have a specific timeline yet. He advised them of the steps of the process that he is familiar with at this time.

As the current members of the Historical Commission have not been through a demolition yet, they need to familiarize themselves with the guidelines that must be followed.

These items will most likely be on the October agenda so the owners have time to send neighbor notifications prior to the meeting.

Update on the status of Battlefield Interpretation Plan

Mr. Bedwell is not in attendance to provide an update on his portion of the project. Mr. Forbes stated that due to the damages that Hurricane Ida had on the Brandywine Conservancy he has not been able to get an update on the project either. Mr. Forbes, Ms. Fleming, and Anne Siemer (RPOS) met with Jeanne Spears to discuss the placement of the battlefield sign at Birmingham Hill and they have tentatively agreed to its location. They need to have additional conversation with the Conservancy about this placement and Ms. Siemer is also planning to verify the location with Chief Nelling in terms of the placement relative to Birmingham Road.

Additionally, we have a new business item that is also relevant to the Battlefield Interpretation Plan. Mr. Forbes turns the floor over to Ms. Boyle. Ms. Boyle (President of the Board of Directors of Linden Farms at Brandywine Battlefield) is in attendance tonight to present an idea to the Historical Commission. Ms. Boyle indicates that her organization has been negotiating with the property owner

(Brenda Aiken) of Linden Farms about creating a museum on this property. Linden Farms is located at 1225 Birmingham Road. The property consists of the land where the first actual skirmish of the battle of the Brandywine occurred. The house had sustained an English cannonball in the side of the house during that skirmish. There is also evidence that when General Lafayette returned to the area in 1824, he visited Samuel Jones the property owner at the time.

Ms. Boyle is working on the title search currently and has gotten as far back to a patent from the 1860s showing John Jones and company. The other partner was John Jennings and they had a 500-acre parcel which was adjacent to the Brinton's 450-acre parcel. She has all of the documentation thus far and is still continuing her research. They have finally received an approved letter of intent with the owner today that has been 6 months in the works. The Board of Directors consists of Ms. Boyle, Adrian Martinez, Michele Thackrah, and Ron Gibbs. The current 12-acre property consists of a house (3 story serpentine), a Chester County Bank Barn, a spring house, a four-seater serpentine outside, and a harness/tack building. It is under a permanent easement with the Brandywine Conservancy and she has a meeting with them tomorrow to discuss the conditions in the signed letter.

There are several conditions in the contract upon Brenda Aiken's death: (1) have all township approvals in place; and (2) raise \$2 million dollars in binding pledge letters that donors can spread over three years.

Mr. Forbes asked if they have confirmed that the residence can be used for something other than a residence. Ms. Boyle confirms that it is zoned R-1, but since it is located within the Historic District Overlay area it can be a museum.

Mr. Forbes then added that at the last meeting he had mentioned to Ms. Fulton that this may be an opportunity to include this museum in the Battlefield Interpretation plan that is being overseen by the Brandywine Conservancy. He hopes that this can be an item of discussion for Ms. Boyle tomorrow at her meeting. He mentioned that the Brandywine Conservancy contact people for this Battlefield Interpretative plan are Kathleen McCaig and Sheila Fleming.

Ms. Fleming asked if there are any other stipulations for the inside use of the museum. Ms. Boyle responded that they will plan to have permanent exhibits inside the house and also to have it be part of future reenactments. They will have two or three events each year to allow the public to have a visualization of that time period. These are future decisions. At this time, she is focused on what the next steps would be to get township approval to move forward – is it a zoning variance, is a conditional use hearing - what is the process and what is the time frame to get the applications started. She mentioned that Mrs. Aikens health is not the best and thus there is a sense of urgency to get this moving. Mr. Forbes noted that Ms. Boyle will need to be in touch with the township solicitor, Kristen Camp. He knows that the email that Ms. Boyle sent to the township has been forwarded to her already.

Review HR#67, 1215 Creek Road application (agenda item moved to the third item as they were expecting their builder to be in attendance to present the application)

The applicant's builder did not show up this evening. Mr. Sawyer is in attendance and will present the proposed garage renovations for the historic resource. He purchased the property in 1989. The house had undergone extensive renovations prior to him purchasing it, however the garage was built in 1953 and never had anything done to it. Ms. Hicks is a professional weaver and is planning to use the renovated upstairs of the garage as her weaving studio with her looms. They provided a photo of the existing garage and explained that the only real change to the structure is the addition of the dormers to the roof of the existing garage. These dormers will allow for natural light to enter the studio. The plans

show that the new garage will have siding and windows to match the historic resource which is actually the house. He stated that the renovations will have no impact to the outside of the historic resource.

Mr. Sawyer provided proof of the required neighbor notifications which were sent on September 15, 2021 to 8 neighbors. There are no neighbors in attendance this evening.

Mr. Forbes answered the questions to the required HC form during the meeting.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to recommend that the BOS approve the proposed changes and expansion of the garage located at 1215 Creek Road, also known as HR#67. Seconded by Mr. Ponticello and approved unanimously.

New Business

None.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm. Seconded by Mr. Ponticello and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be October 26, 2021 at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary