

Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of January 25, 2022

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:10pm** in the township building.

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

ABSENT: Matt Bedwell

Others present:

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 26, 2021 meeting. Ms. Fleming seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (one abstention, Mr. Ponticello who was not present in November).

Reorganization of Committee for 2022

Mr. Forbes opened discussion for new officers for this calendar year. Ms. Fleming asked if he still wants to be chairperson. He noted that he would like to see the Battlefield Interpretation Plan through to completion. Mr. Ponticello nominated Mr. Forbes as Chairperson for 2022; seconded by Ms. Fleming and passed unanimously.

Mr. Forbes opened the floor for discussion for the Vice Chairperson position. Mr. Forbes nominated Ms. Fleming again for 2022. Nomination was seconded by Mr. Ponticello and it passed unanimously.

Discussion on next Steps for Battle of the Brandywine Signage Project

Ms. Fleming provided an update that approval has been granted by the Brandywine Conservancy (Kevin Fryberger) to place the sign at Birmingham Hill in the area that was previously discussed. This will be the tall blue signs that are around the area noting an historic event that happened at that location. Ms. Fleming spoke with Anne Siemer (who was the Chairperson of RPOS last year). Ms. Siemer has rolled off that committee this year and now Chuck Feld is the new Chairperson and has taken over the project. Ms. Fleming has not spoken with him yet to see if he has had a discussion with Chief Nelling about placing the sign.

Mr. Forbes stated that he needs something in writing indicating that the Brandywine Conservancy has provided their approval. It can be as simple as an email indicating approval. Mr. Forbes states that the next steps are:

1. Get something in writing indicating Brandywine Conservancy approval for the township to erect the sign at said location;
2. Chief Nelling approval of the actual location along Birmingham Road – allowing for proper distance from the road;
3. Ms. Nelling, on behalf of the township, will need to sign off on the contract;
4. The Sons of the American Revolution will need to sign off on the contract;
5. Ms. Speirs, on behalf of the Brandywine Battlefield taskforce, will need to sign off on the contract;
6. Then a prototype of the sign can be made and reviewed by all the appropriate parties, with their signed approvals;

7. At this point, the actual sign can be produced.
8. Once produced, the township will have the sign installed.
9. And the last step, is the Sons of the American Revolution will reimburse the township for the actual sign.

Update on Brandywine Battlefield Interpretation Plan

Mr. Forbes provided an update – there have been multiple emails between Mr. Shirring, Ms. Nelling and Mr. Forbes. Ms. Sheila Fleming is requesting the township sign off on the final plan and make payment of the final invoice. Mr. Forbes indicated this is not the correct process. This VPP (Vision Partnership Program) is a collaboration between multiple municipalities which all need to agree to the final plan prior to Birmingham Township (who is the lead municipality) signing off on it. Mr. Forbes noted that it is important to follow the correct steps in the process since there is grant money from the Vision Partnership Program that is supposed to fund this plan. All of the participating municipalities will need to be in agreement on the final plan before moving it forward to the Chester County person who is in charge of the VPP for their approval. If they have any comments, those will need to be reviewed by the other municipalities; if the VPP has no comments, the plan can move forward. Mr. Forbes is going to reach out to Sheila Fleming to remind her of the process.

Mr. Forbes is going to reach out to Jeanne Spears to get another 6-month extension for the Interpretation Plan. There was an extension granted during the height of Covid and now an additional extension is needed to fulfill the steps mentioned above.

Mr. Forbes asked if any members attended the public meeting in December 16, 2021 at 7:00pm. Unfortunately, the meeting was poorly attended as you had to pre-register in order to attend the Zoom meeting. Ms. Fleming asked if there is a transcript or summary of that meeting on their website? Mr. Forbes will ask that.

Ms. Fleming asked if there were any significant changes discussed. Mr. Forbes indicated that there was discussion about the cost estimates, but nothing was definitive.

Discussion ensued about the overall plan for the Interpretation Plan and the fact that it does not include the Brandywine Conservancy's plans for the O'Dell property. Ms. Fleming noted that some of her neighbors are concerned about the latter and traffic implications that those plans may have on Meetinghouse Road. She is hopeful that at some point in the near future, they will plan a public meeting to alleviate some of these concerns for adjoining property owners.

As for the Interpretation Plan which will include Heritage Centers (at Dilworthtown Center), interpretative sites with new signage at Birmingham Hill and Linden Farm. If Linden Farm gets up and running, there will most likely be a connectivity trail between there and the Heritage Center located at Thornbury Farm. Mr. Forbes indicated that Thornbury Farm will actually be the national Heritage Center for the battle also. Our Heritage Center in Dilworthtown will focus on the retreat from the battle. Mr. Forbes is planning to schedule a meeting with the owner and the HC committee members in the next month or so.

The goal of the Interpretation Plan is to allow for a self-guided tour through the key areas of the battlefield beginning at the gateway sites of West Chester or the Brandywine Battlefield location on Route 1. Another key goal is to provide standardization of the signage throughout the tour.

New Business

Mr. Forbes asked Mr. Hill if he had any update on the Ordinance changes. Mr. Hill indicated that it is currently with the township solicitor to incorporate the most recent changes from the last meeting. Once the new draft is available, it will be shared with the Historic Commission members for review and comment.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:38pm. Seconded by Mr. Ponticello and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be February 22, 2022 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary