

**Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of November 28, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by the Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:01pm** in the township building.

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

ABSENT: Matt Bedwell

Others present: Frank Rupp, Jr. and Jose Grande (engineer), Dan Hill (supervisor)

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 24, 2023 meeting. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Review Application for 1391 Old Wilmington Pike (HR#34)

Frank Rupp, Jr., owner of the historic Dilworthtown properties including 1391 Old Wilmington Pike and four adjacent properties, is in attendance this evening presenting the overall plan for the parking at 1391 Old Wilmington Pike as it abuts the 225 Brintons Bridge Road property. They are planning to incorporate public parking for this existing historic property (225 Brintons Bridge Rd) to become a restaurant with the already existing historic properties at 1391 Old Wilmington Pike. Currently there is only a patch of grass connecting the two properties. They are unifying the properties for Mr. Rogers to be able to operate his breakfast and lunch restaurant at 225 Brintons Bridge Rd.

Mr. Rogers has already received his approval to make the necessary changes to the exterior of 225 Brintons Bridge Road, including the addition of a venting fan and condensing units, to support restaurant operations there on the first floor. These proposed parking changes are necessary for the customers to be able to enter and leave the properties safely. There are elements that already exist and some elements that will be added to upgrade the parking – essentially they are proposing changing some grass to blacktop and some blacktop to grass, and adding walkways so that customers don't have to walk on the roadways in the parking areas. There are no changes to the exterior buildings other than adding the necessary venting for the restaurant.

At the HARB meeting, there were concerns about the lighting fixtures. Mr. Rupp brought photo samples of what he is planning to use that will match the existing lighting fixtures.

Mr. Rupp showed on the plan that he projected from his computer where they are proposing to remove the existing 7 parking spaces and replace them with 10 parking spaces – eight of the spaces will be for general parking and two will be identified as handicap accessible spaces. The restaurant building will have an ADA entrance on the side of the building, as well as a main entrance at the rear which has steps.

Mr. Rupp indicated that they currently drive over the grassy area between the properties and this project will be an improvement to the current situation. Mr. Grande is working with zoning to determine the stormwater management needs but stated they will be installing a dry-well to collect the water. Mr. Rupp indicated that there is already existing water management on the property – so this will just be additional management needed due to the changes in parking.

The overall concept plan shows an element that is being proposed (but not required with the contract with the tenant of 225 Brintons Bridge Rd) and it is basically a means to ease traffic at the 5-points intersection. This element will be an entrance from Brintons Bridge Road. It will be a one-way lane, only accessible from Rt. 202 and you will not be able to exit from this lane. Customers will be able to enter from this lane and park in any of the ten new parking spaces or continue to the existing larger parking lot. The breakfast/lunch restaurant will only be open until 3pm, so anyone coming in to dine at the other

restaurants later in the day will not overlap with these customers. The parking will be shared amongst the tenants based on times of operation.

Mr. Rupp noted that they realize that even if the Board of Supervisors provides approval, that PennDOT must approve of the new Brintons Bridge entrance also and that could take time. So, in the meantime (most likely one to two years) they will simply keep that existing driveway entrance chained off.

Ms. Fleming asked for clarification that the only proposed change would be the shoulder area in order to access the driveway entrance. Mr. Rupp confirmed that is correct. Mr. Forbes asked about the existing vegetation along the road. Mr. Rupp indicated that it is mostly weeds – they are going to try to keep some of the evergreens and Yew bush to the eastern side. He noted that this existing plan does not show the entire campus landscape plan and that a much more sophisticated plan will come later.

The background on this is that Mr. Rogers really liked the 225 Brintons Bridge Road building for his restaurant, however from a hospitality purpose, was concerned that it is not attached to the existing parking area. Thus, Mr. Rupp decided to focus on this small portion of the entire campus for the application process. Once this is approved and the restaurant is up and running, then he plans to sit down with the planning commission and design the whole thing. He stated they are not making any huge changes, just integrating and improving the parking. They are not adding buildings or foundations or such – just creating a unified campus. Mr. Rupp stated that he is open to hearing ideas from the community on the plans for the Dilworthtown campus.

All customers will exit the campus on Old Wilmington Pike. The parking in front of the Blue Pear will be maintained as some handicapped and some regular. If the breakfast/lunch restaurant does open in May of next year, customers will be able to use the Blue Pear parking lot as it will be closer to the restaurant than the larger parking lot next to the Dilworthtown Inn.

In terms of the new parking spaces, they are planning vegetation (two boxwoods per parking space) to block headlights from shining into adjacent properties – although since this particular restaurant will be closing at 3pm, it is not needed. However, if and when this parking is used for the other restaurants on the campus, this landscaping will be needed.

Ms. Kelly asked if there will be an ADA entrance for the new restaurant. He confirmed that there will be and noted that they will put easier to use handles on those doors also.

Mr. Rupp showed areas that will have lighting around the new restaurant. There will be a light projected onto the side of the building to show the sign on the building along Brintons Bridge Road. There will also be a sign over the main entrance (facing the inside of the campus) that will be illuminated.

Mr. Rupp noted that this is still very much in the beginning stages as they are at the mercy of the tenants who want to occupy the campus. He stated that he has a list of about ten types of businesses that would work on this campus and when he has a potential tenant for a building then he starts the process of communicating with the township to determine if it will work or not.

Ms. Fleming asked if there are any other exterior changes planned for 225 Brintons Bridge Road. Mr. Rupp stated that they are planning to repaint the exterior but it will be matched to the existing color, the stone will remain, the standing seam roof will remain, the existing aged cedar shake portion of the roof looks a little rough from the evergreens that used to litter on it, but they are now gone and he is hopeful that the cedar will last longer now. They may change the color of the shutters, but they will come back to HARB if they decide to move forward with that.

Ms. Fleming stated that for purposes of this committee, the main concern is the three historic buildings. Therefore, she asked for clarification that the proposed water management will be designed to keep storm water away from the historic structures. Mr. Grande stated that they are installing drainage underneath the proposed parking area to the rear of the 225 Brintons Bridge Road structure. There will

be a seepage bed – the water will be directed toward the edge of the parking where there will be a stone trench that will collect the water and infiltrate it underground. It is calculated to control the water drainage.

Mr. Rupp stated that the barn/garage will remain and that he may have a tenant interested in using it for a home décor manufacturing and retail store.

Mr. Forbes asked about the impervious coverage changes and whether they have been reviewed by the Zoning Board already. Mr. Grande indicated they are adding some impervious coverage, but they have incorporated storm water management to capture any additional water and direct it into the seepage bed. He is planning to submit the paperwork for the land disturbance and zoning permits on Wednesday, November 29th.

Ms. Fleming asked for more clarification about the elevation and the seepage bed near 225 Brintons Bridge Road as it's difficult to see where the water will flow. Mr. Rupp showed on the concept plan where the low point is behind the patio of 225 Brintons Bridge Road – indicating that the water will flow in that direction rather than toward the building. Mr. Grande confirmed that they will be compensating for the drainage as they are required to do so.

Mr. Rupp noted that they are working with the Brandywine Conservancy and Natural Land Trusts to attempt to make this a heritage center/site. They may incorporate signage that will indicate what the various buildings have been throughout their history. They may also use the Clouser house to display old photographs and artifacts from the area.

Mr. Rupp indicated that he would like to incorporate ideas that people have for this area before finalizing the overall plan for the campus – in terms of native plantings and such. Ms. Kelly stated that he should reach out to Mark Gormel from the Brandywine Conservancy as he is extremely knowledgeable about native plants.

Mr. Forbes stated that he has a process question –because of the way the property lines lay, 1391 Old Wilmington Pike is technically the old Dilworthtown Inn property. Is your intent to go to the BOS for approval of this project for both 225 Brintons Bridge Road and 1391 Old Wilmington Pike? It appears you are not changing the structure of the Dilworthtown Inn building – because the Historic Commission is normally focused on changes or modifications to actual historic buildings. Mr. Rupp confirmed that they are not planning any changes to the actual Dilworthtown Inn structure.

Considering this discussion, Mr. Forbes does not think that it is necessary to go through the required 10 question form since this proposed plan does not affect the actual historic structures. Ms. Fleming stated she thinks there is some correlation between “building vs. site”. After some further discussion, it was determined that the form should be completed despite the minimal land disturbance that will be caused. Mr. Grande stated that this is why it was considered land disturbance and not land development.

Mr. Forbes reviewed the required form in the meeting. The applicant also provided the list of neighbors who were notified of the proposed plan and this meeting tonight. Forty-two neighbors were notified, and two are in attendance this evening.

Mr. Forbes made a motion recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed application for 1391 Old Wilmington Pike (HR#34) and ultimately for 225 Brintons Bridge Road (HR#36) as outlined. Motioned seconded by Ms. Kelly and approved unanimously.

America 250th Celebration and Chester County Tourism Plan

Mr. Forbes is reporting back from the America 250th Celebration meeting that he attended at the Chester County Historic Preservation Network meeting on 11/11/23. They discussed the plan as being broken down into three themes:

1. Chester County as a place and the history of Chester County in its role of developing the colonies and the state of Pennsylvania.
2. Chester County as an incubator of ideas – for example: iron working, farming, etc
3. The Philadelphia Campaign

They are suggesting that the surrounding areas all focus on these three themes as they plan out their specific celebrations. The celebration's goal is to make this celebration more of a "living history" than the 1976 celebration was since that was only a one-day event. They are hoping this will be a yearlong celebration throughout the area and ultimately countrywide.

Ms. Fleming and Mr. Ponticello attended another meeting more focused on the marketing of the celebration. Mr. Greg O'Loughlin headed this meeting – and talked about the marketing campaign for the entire celebration. He talked about who the audience is that they are focusing on and the 8 "Chester County Originals" they are focusing on:

1. Happy hour – taverns
2. Fixer Upper – barns
3. Turning Point – battlefields
4. Do Not Disturb – parks and preserves
5. Home Office – arts and culture
6. Beating Hearth – iron and steelworks
7. Social Network – historic downtowns
8. Underground Railroad

Mr. Forbes indicated that they would continue to attend these meetings and feed the information on to the BOS and whoever else from Birmingham township will be working on this celebration for the township. He knows that the Brandywine Conservancy is interested in planning a re-enactment at Birmingham Hill and there should be a discussion among members from Birmingham township and the Brandywine Conservancy about this plan.

New Business

Ms. Fleming created a google form for submission of updates to the Historical Property Inventory Listing and sent it to the committee for review. This form will be provided to the office to be completed whenever ownership of historic resources within the township is transferred. However, she would like to review the actual process that will be followed for these updates and create a step-by-step instruction sheet. Finalizing this process will be on the agenda for the first meeting in 2024. Mr. Forbes would like to involve Mr. Bedwell in this discussion as he would like to have cross-coordinates into the google file that shows the surrounding properties to each of the historic resources. Ms. Fleming agrees with this and would like to have a link to Chesco-views in the instruction sheet for the office to see this information visually.

Mr. Forbes reiterated that the December HC meeting will be cancelled since it is the day after Christmas.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:22pm. Seconded by Ms. Fleming and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be January 23, 2024 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary