

Birmingham Township Historical Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of January 26, 2010

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Commission was called to order with a quorum present at 7 p.m. Attending were Chairman Lloyd Roach, Vice-chair Mark Gross, Scott Garrison, Will Snook, Ed Zaloga, Betty Organt, and new member Matt Bedwell. Also present were architect Art Bernardon and geographer Carolyn Keene.

The minutes of the November 24 meeting were approved with all in favor. (Zaloga, Organt) Mr. Zaloga requested that future minutes include the names of absent members.

Mr. Roach welcomed Mr. Bedwell and asked him to tell about himself. Matt said he had grown up in East Bradford, that his great-grandfather had lived in the Radley Run mansion house, that his neighbor Mark Gross had interested him in the Historical Commission, and that he is interested in the history of the Battle of the Brandywine. Mr. Roach added that he thought Matt's knowledge of the construction industry would help the Commission.

Arden Forge: Representing owners Gary Whelan and Anthony Diver, architect Art Bernardon displayed site plans showing the existing conditions and the proposed re-use and development plan for the property familiarly known as Arden Forge in Dilworthtown. Mr. Roach explained that the consideration of this plan by the Historical Commission had not been advertised, so no decision would be made at this meeting. Mr. Bernardon displayed many pictures showing the condition of the two sections proposed for demolition – the log house and the stone infill section. Mr. Bernardon explained why he has concluded that the log house was the oldest part and a residence, and that the infill was added between the log section and the stone building to its west. The pictures convinced the Historical Commission members that the two sections are beyond a point at which they could be restored. On a motion by Mark Gross, seconded by Betty Organt, the members voted unanimously to grant permission to raze the two sections. Following up on an email that had been received by Mr. Roach a few hours earlier, written by Mr. Shiring (attorney for neighbor John Abramson), there was discussion about the demolition process. Mr. Bernardon believes the demolition will be done partly manually and partly by machine, so as to preserve some reusable stone and logs, but that the neighbor is too far away to be affected by it. Mr. Bernardon agreed to give the Historical Commission five days' notice in advance of a two-day opportunity to further photograph the soon-to-disappear structures and examine them for any historical clues, since very little historical information about them exists. Mr. Bernardon also agreed to supply electronic versions of the photographs that he had presented. At the end of the discussion, the members agreed that, since no one attending any of the public meetings about this development has raised an objection to the demolition, the Historical Commission will let their decision stand, in spite of the lack of advertising the meeting to the neighbors.

Signs in Meetinghouse Corridor: Mr. Roach reported that the Supervisors would like the Historical Commission and RPOS to discuss signage. Mr. Snook agreed that they need to work together and suggested that RPOS begin with Sandy Hollow signs (perhaps replacing the ones that have disappeared). Mr. Roach agreed to meet with an RPOS member, but asked the members for their input. Mr. Garrison said the historical information would be helpful but the question remains as to how it should be presented. Mr. Gross asked that the Supervisors give the Commission some guidance. Mrs. Organt reported on a discussion she had had with a staff member at the Brandywine Battlefield park; the person "was horrified" that Birmingham would

clutter the battlefield with signs, but said the park group would like to collaborate with Birmingham and receive Birmingham money. The same person mentioned a Brandywine Battle presentation that had been given at Radley Run; the Historical Commission members were very surprised not to have been informed of it or invited to it. Mr. Bedwell had heard from his parents that it was excellent and said that Tom McGuire (author of *The Philadelphia Campaign*) was working with Chester County. Mr. Roach promised to invite Supervisor Bush (HC liaison) to future meetings, to write to the Commission members what the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance charter them to do, and to set up a meeting - at or before a Supervisor meeting - to request general guidance from the Supervisors about the mission of the Historical Commission. Commission members will be notified of the meeting in advance.

Carolyn Keene, a geographer from Chester County Parks and Recreation, is working on a project to produce an atlas of the Brandywine Battlefield. Chester County is trying to identify all of the areas at risk, the sites as yet unprotected. There will be a stakeholders meeting in February. Miss Keene showed a draft of a map showing the structures already identified in Birmingham and asked that future sites be identified with their tax parcel numbers.

Historic Resource Inventory Teams: Will Snook apologized for the delay in completing the survey forms. He explained the project to Mr. Bedwell and promised to send the link. The teams will survey a site, fill in the online form, include the latitude and longitude, and submit the form to Will with 4 or 5 pictures of the elevations. Other pictures can be added later, but the project is for current information. The teams are:

Team 1: Mark Gross and Matt Bedwell

Team 2: Lloyd Roach and Scott Garrison

Team 3: Ed Zaloga and Betty Organt, assisted by Sean Kennedy

Will Snook will maintain the site.

Announcements: Mr. Roach distributed an article about advocacy from *The Alliance Review*, a publication for preservation commissions. Mr. Roach said he would like to invite Michel Lefevre, Community Preservation Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, to speak at a future meeting to give members better insight into their roles as Historical Commission members.

Mr. Zaloga showed a page from the Thornbury Township website and asked if Birmingham's Historical Commission page could be made similarly clear. Mr. Roach assigned Mr. Zaloga to address the issue with Township Secretary Quina Nelling.

Mr. Gross asked about terms of office on the Historical Commission. Mr. Roach said the custom is to be reappointed if there is no reason not to be. Mr. Roach suggested that the next Historical Commission meeting be a reorganization meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m. (Snook, Zaloga, all in favor)

Respectfully submitted,

Jacquie Roach

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