

BIRMINGHAM TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting of May 24, 2011

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Commission was called to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Township Building. Former Chairman Will Snook having resigned, Vice-Chairman Mark Gross presided as the new Chairman. Present also were Scott Garrison, Ed Zaloga, Lloyd Roach, Betty Organt and Matt Bedwell.

Minutes of the April meeting were corrected to show that Scott Garrison was in attendance and that (under New Business) a vote to schedule six meetings per year was passed with six in favor and one opposed. With those corrections, the minutes were approved (Roach, Organt).

Mr. Gross reported that he had had a positive conversation with Supervisor Al Bush and felt that the HC should speak with one voice so that the Supervisors do not receive conflicting information. Mr. Gross will be the liaison.

Potential Merger with HARB: The merger proposal from the Supervisors was discussed by HARB whose members agreed that properties in the Historic District should be examined by HARB and the HC if they are historic, but only by the HC if they are outside the Historic District. Mr. Gross said he agrees the commissions should merge, but the details need work. Mr. Gross said that, since the HC meets regularly, the HC Chairman should be the Chairman of the merged group and the HC Vice-Chairman should be the Chairman of HARB. Mr. Gross suggested not replacing Mr. Snook until the merger proposal is resolved. Mr. Gross acknowledged that HARB requires an architect, the Township Building Inspector and a real estate broker, but suggested the merged group be required to all be residents of the Township (unlike the present HARB). Mr. Gross suggested the details be resolved by representatives of both groups. Dr. Garrison repeated the need for unified guidelines. The result of further discussion was that the HC members agreed that there should remain two separate commissions but that they should have a joint meeting whenever HARB receives an application affecting a historic resource.

325th Anniversary Celebration: Mr. Gross and Mr. Bedwell reported on a meeting they had attended. Mr. Gross committed the HC to man a tent or a table in a tent with some artifacts on display and HC members present to talk about township history. Betty and Lloyd volunteered.

Mr. Gross proposed signs welcoming travelers to the township. All agreed and Mr. Gross will take the proposal to RPOS and the Supervisors.

Dr. Garrison will ask Will Snook whether or not he plans to continue working on the map he started that shows the historic properties. Mr. Bedwell and Mr. Roach will start work on creating a file for each property.

Demolition by neglect: Mr. Gross reported that the Steele/Schultz property is now in court and that the Dilworth Farm property will be on the Supervisors' next agenda. Mr. Gross congratulated Mr. Roach on pursuing the issue. Mr. Bedwell asked what the HC would like to see happen to the Dilworth house. Dr. Garrison said the only options were moving the house away from the road or tearing down the house, but that the house is now in irreparable condition and that nothing will happen until the property is sold. Mr. Roach suggested creativity such as reusing the stone on a new structure. Dr. Garrison cautioned against appearing belligerent. Mr. Roach will attend the Supervisor meeting. Mr. Zaloga suggested including creative ideas with HC recommendations. Mr. Gross asked Mr. Zaloga to assemble some suggestions.

New Business: Mr. Gross announced a Battlefield Task Force meeting at the Battlefield on May 25th.

Mr. Gross announced that the remaining meetings for the year will be July 26, September 27, and November 22.

Potential Projects: Mr. Gross suggested guidelines and Dr. Gross suggested reviewing the list of resources the members had examined.

Mr. Gross commended Mr. Bedwell for his tree restoration project. Mr. Bedwell offered an American chestnut tree to be planted on township property, but it must be in a place allowing for the trees growth.

Mr. Gross suggested having scouts cleaning up and identifying old (abandoned) roads and sites in the township, perhaps with markers. Mr. Bedwell cautioned against attracting tourists too numerous for safety. Mr. Gross said homeowners would be able to opt out. Mr. Zaloga raised the idea of phone-guided tours. There was discussion of what might be the right balance between preservation education and too much public awareness.

Mr. Gross called for a vote on sticking to six members until the merger is resolved. All agreed.

Mr. Zaloga suggested taking license plate (originally Will Snook's idea) orders at the 325th celebration. Members agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m. (Roach, Bedwell)

Respectfully submitted,

Jacquie Roach