

**BIRMINGHAM TOWNSHIP, CHESTER COUNTY
RECREATION, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE (RPOS)**

June 19, 2017

Chairman Siemer called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. in the Township Building. The following were in attendance:

Anne Siemer	Chairman, RPOS Committee
Chuck Feld	Vice-Chairman, RPOS Committee
Jim Rosenthal	Member, RPOS Committee
Jim Kelican	Member, RPOS Committee
Mike Shiring	Member, Board of Supervisors
Judy Jensen	Secretary, RPOS Committee

Absent from the meeting was RPOS Member Michael Langer.

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 15, 2017 MINUTES

The minutes of the May 15, 2017 RPOS meeting were approved, as written; all in favor.

BILLS

Mrs. Siemer presented a \$66.14 bill from the Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates for the purchase of Brandywine Flags that will be placed at both Sandy Hollow and Birmingham Hill over the July 4th holiday. She also presented a \$29.70 bill from Brandywine Ace Hardware for the purchase of U.S. flags to be placed at the two parks.

BIRMINGHAM HILL UPDATE

Mrs. Siemer has been in contact with Birmingham Township Historical Commission Vice-Chairman Mike Forbes, who reviewed the text for the next interpretive sign planned for Birmingham Hill. Mr. Forbes suggested one edit to the text, which RPOS agreed to make. Mrs. Siemer will contact Karen Marshall of the Chester County Planning Commission to let her know that RPOS would like to use one of the County maps on the sign. RPOS discussed the possible location for the sign at Birmingham Hill, although a final decision was not reached.

SANDY HOLLOW UPDATE

Mrs. Siemer said that two of the trees the committee planted near the cannon at Sandy Hollow appear to be dead. Mr. Feld said he will check into a replacement for the two trees. RPOS plans to remove the two dead trees before the reenactment that is scheduled for September. Replacement trees will be planted in the fall, after the reenactment.

RPOS also discussed the four trees that were planted along S. New Street at Sandy Hollow. Although the committee does not know who planted the trees, it does appear that two of them are dead. Mr. Feld will remove the two dead trees and clean up the mulch around them. Because RPOS did not request that trees be planted, the committee will have to decide what to do with the remaining two trees. The committee hopes that no more trees are planted at Sandy Hollow without the approval of RPOS because the trees add to the maintenance costs of the park.

At its January meeting, RPOS noted that the paint on the replica cannon at Sandy Hollow is peeling and there is a crack on the top of the cannon. Mr. Langer has been in contact with Forrest Taylor, the maker of the cannon. Mr. Taylor said he will come by sometime during the week of June 26th to pick up the cannon. Mr. Rosenthal said that he hopes Mr. Taylor will make the needed repairs and return the cannon to Sandy Hollow before the September reenactment.

CACCHIO PROPERTY (1370 BIRMINGHAM ROAD)

On March 28, 2017, engineers with Steinle Construction Engineers, a division of Vandemark & Lynch, Inc., visited the Cacchio site to evaluate the barn. In a letter dated April 14, 2017, structural engineer Nicholas Kowalski noted that the barn is generally in fair condition, adding that the observed deficiencies of the roof, gutters and downspouts; windows; and board siding, in conjunction with the general openness of the structure, are all sources of continued water infiltration, as well as entrance points for insects, animals and humans. These issues, Mr. Kowalski noted, will result in continued deterioration of the structure.

Mr. Kowalski also said that the original construction of the barn appears to be less than adequately braced to resist wind loading and would not meet the design requirements of current building codes. In addition, the height of the barn further exacerbates the deficiencies. Without prompt repairs to the specific deficient components, and regular maintenance of the barn, Mr. Kowalski noted that the deterioration of any damaged beams, columns or posts could quickly advance to the point of a very real concern of collapse of these components and then portions of the barn.

At tonight's meeting, Mr. Shiring noted that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has concerns about the ongoing maintenance of the barn, as well as what the structure could be used for if it is preserved. He said the BOS has received an estimate of \$75,000 to fix the roof and stabilize the structure. The estimate does not include any ongoing maintenance costs. The BOS would like a recommendation from RPOS concerning what the committee feels should be done with the barn.

Mr. Rosenthal said he feels that the barn is in such poor shape that additional funding would be needed to ensure the barn's structural integrity. He is concerned about liability issues and ongoing maintenance costs if the Township decides to preserve the barn. Mr. Kelican noted that in addition to the condition of the barn, RPOS, in previous discussions, cannot think of a purpose for the barn. For example, it can't be used as a meeting place for the public in its present condition. Mr. Feld said that the Township already has two parks. Because there is no Township employee to take care of the parks, it has fallen upon RPOS to maintain them, which has become a very time-consuming task for a group of volunteers. Mr. Feld is concerned about who will maintain the barn if the Township retains it on the property.

Mrs. Siemer agreed that RPOS has not been able to develop any practical ideas for the future use of the barn, considering its current shape. However, she said the Township's Historical Commission feels the barn has some historic significance. Carla Westerman, HC Chairman, has noted that the Cacchio property barn is located in the Brandywine Battlefield Historic Landmark and is part of the Birmingham Township's Historic Corridor. The property was part of the Dilworth family compound and has been in the family for over 300 years.

While RPOS does not feel the Township should take over the maintenance and liability costs of the barn, the committee would like to know if Chester County has any interest in the barn before a final decision is made as to its fate. If the County wants to preserve the barn, RPOS would like to know if the County would fund the renovation, ongoing maintenance and liability costs of the structure.

Mr. Shiring said he will inform the BOS as to RPOS' feelings about the barn.

NEW BUSINESS

Concerning the upcoming September reenactment at Sandy Hollow, Mrs. Siemer plans to talk to the Hicks' Brothers about the timing of the mowing of the park. Mr. Feld said that it would be a good idea to mow a few paths from the parking area. He plans to meet with the people planning the reenactment parking and will get a better idea at that time of exactly where mowed paths could be located. In addition, if September is rainy, RPOS agreed that they will put a gravel apron on the low point on New Street. If it is a dry September, then the area should be fine as is.

The next RPOS meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2017.

With no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Jensen
RPOS Secretary