

**Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of February 27, 2018**

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:24 pm** in the township building.

PRESENT: HC Members: Kelly Fleming, Mike Forbes, Kate Marshall, John Ponticello

ABSENT: Matt Bedwell

Others present: Peter Anastasiadis, Realtor for applicant for 1360 Old Wilmington Pike (HR#28);
Jeanette Zarelli, Realtor for the seller

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2018. Ms. Marshall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Application for demolition of 1360 Old Wilmington Pike (HR#28)

Mr. Forbes asked Mr. Anastasiadis if he received a copy of the letter from Rich Jensen, the township BCO & Zoning Officer with his input on the necessary repairs and potential costs of those repairs. Mr. Anastasiadis states that he did receive and review the letter. He was encouraged by the letter. He also notes that Mr. Jensen's letter confirms their engineer report and in fact notes that the cost estimates provided by the applicant may be low.

Mr. Forbes asked the seller's realtor if they have any comments on the letter. Ms. Zarelli states that the seller did not receive a copy of the letter and thus has no comment.

Mr. Forbes states that there was some question as to the notification of neighbors in a timely manner. Mr. Jakob Speksnuder, resident of 1336 Brinton Run Dr., is in attendance tonight. He indicates that he did not receive the notice of the January meeting until after the meeting occurred. Mr. Forbes summarizes the discussion from the January meeting for those who were not able to attend. For the record, since the last meeting, Mr. Anastasiadis has provided the additional 25 return receipts he has received as well as 5 letters that were undeliverable.

Mr. McKnight, resident of 1327 Crest Drive, notes that they did not receive the letter. Ms. Hiver indicates that she received the green card and signed and returned that, however, never received the letter. Discussion ensued about the process of notification and requirements of the ordinance.

Ms. Fleming asked if aside from the timing/notification issue, if anyone has any other questions. A question is asked about the sewer. Ms. Fleming states that the purview of this commission is simply the possible demolition of a historic resource within the township. All the questions regarding the sewer, subdivision and future building of single family homes would be handled by a different township committee.

Ms. Walter states that one of the points of this committee is to protect HRs in the township from being demolished. She asked if there are any pictures of the historic resource. She is provided pictures from the Engineering Report to review.

Mr. McKnight asked if the HC is simply looking at the historic structure or also the historic piece of property? Mr. Forbes states that the historic resource is the house, not the barn which is just an

ancillary structure. He also notes one of the other complications of this situation is that there is another HR directly next door to this house and the HC is concerned with the impact that any new construction would have on this HR.

Ms. Fleming asked the applicant if the cost to repair this Historic Resource is more than 50% of the value of the structure. Mr. Forbes states that the letter from Mr. Jensen indicates that the 50% rule would be applicable if the house were to be totally renovated. However, if the house was purchased and occupied as is, or repairs were done one at a time, the 50% trigger would not apply.

Ms. Marshall asked if the applicant has the financials that were requested at the last meeting for the cost to repair all the problems in the house. Mr. Anastasiadis provided this information directly to Mr. Forbes. However, Mr. Forbes did not forward this information to the rest of the committee. Ms. Zarelli has a copy and provided it to the committee for review and discussion.

Ms. Fleming asked if there is any penalty for the current homeowner for allowing the home to come into disrepair. Mr. Forbes indicates that this is more of a question for proposed changes to the ordinance.

Ms. Marshall asked about the individual cost of the roof repair. Mr. Anastasiadis answered that from the applicant's perspective each individual cost is not the issue; it is the total of all of those costs.

Ms. Walter asked if the sale is pending or if the property is already sold. Ms. Zarelli states it is a contingent sale.

Mr. Forbes provides two options to the committee for tonight: He notes that the Historic Commission is simply a recommendation board and that ultimately the decision will be up to the BOS. Ms. Fleming notes that in Mr. Jensen's letter he states that if the house is sold and occupied as is, there is no requirement for any repairs or upgrades per the township code. She feels this means the house is habitable and that the HC should preserve the historic resource.

Mr. Ponticello asked what the historical significance of this resource. Mr. Forbes states that the way the township is currently classifying the resources, it is a class II resource, built in 1875, of a particular vernacular structure indicative of that time period in Dilworthtown.

Ms. Zarelli comments that on the seller's behalf they find the comments that the house has fallen into disrepair somewhat insulting. She states that the house was built 150 years ago and isn't really an historical architectural masterpiece; it's simply an old house.

Mr. Forbes asked for any additional comments by the members before a vote is made. Ms. Fleming asked if there is anything in any of the reports that the structure is not sound. Mr. Forbes references Mr. Jensen's letter which again states that the house could be sold and occupied as is, indicating the structure is sound. Mr. Anastasiadis notes that Mr. Jensen's letter also indicates that the house has had several additions and renovations over the years and that other than the bones of the original structure, offers very little. His challenge is what is the historical significance of the structure.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to deny the request to demolish this historic structure. Ms. Fleming seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously. The denial is based on the following reasons:

1. The structure is not in such a state of disrepair that it cannot be inhabited.
2. Based upon the letter from Mr. Jensen indicating that there are items that can be repaired but none that are required by the township.

3. That it is an historic structure that has been on the list of Historic Resources for over 20 years; a side hall plan that is indicative of the 1870's.

Mr. Boorse also asked Mr. Forbes to provide the historical significance of this property to the BOS in the denial letter. Mr. Forbes states that this recommendation will be sent to the BOS and they will review this at their meeting on March 5, 2018.

New Business

Mr. Forbes asked Mr. Boorse if the BOS needs any additional information or input from the Historical Commission regarding the proposed changes to the ordinance that they submitted. Mr. Boorse stated that the BOS is still taking it under consideration and they will reach out to the HC if they have any questions.

Ms. Fleming notes that there are two action items that have come out of this for her: (1) timing of notification of neighbors; (2) notification to property owners when they purchase an historic house within the township so they know what their responsibilities are.

Mr. Forbes notes that Karen Marshall of the Chester County Planning Commission will be attending the Historical Commission meeting in March to discuss preservation activities with regard to the battlefield for which they would like to enlist the HC's assistance.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. Seconded by Ms. Fleming and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be March 27, 2018 at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary