

Historical Commission of Birmingham Township
Minutes of the meeting of January 28, 2020

The regular meeting of the Birmingham Township Historical Committee was called to order by Chairperson, Mike Forbes at **7:15pm** in the township building.

PRESENT: HC Members: Matt Bedwell, Mike Forbes, John Ponticello

ABSENT: Kelly Fleming

Others present: Mike Christopher (Bancroft Homes), Paul Redman (Longwood Gardens and the homeowner)

Mr. Forbes made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 26, 2019 meeting. Mr. Bedwell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Reorganization of Committee for 2020

Mr. Forbes opened discussion for new officers for this calendar year. He noted that he had a discussion with Kelly Fleming and she is willing to be the Vice Chairperson. Mr. Bedwell made a motion to appoint Ms. Fleming as the Vice Chairperson for 2020. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Bedwell made a motion to reappoint Mr. Forbes as the Chairperson for 2020. Mr. Ponticello seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Application for renovation on property at 1230 Birmingham Road (HR#16)

The applicant sent notification letters to all neighbors within 500' of the Historical Resource regarding the proposed renovations. The letters were sent to 11 neighbors via return receipt certified mail. Two neighbors are in attendance this evening and are in support of the proposed renovations.

The applicant's representative, Mr. Mike Christopher of Bancroft Homes is in attendance to present the proposed renovations that the owners intend to make on the historic resource, The Hawthorne Estate, a circa 1850's house. He reviewed some of the previous renovations to the house on the interior. He also noted that the exterior of the house is very intact – windows, porch and porch roofing appear to be original. The applicant currently has no intentions to do exterior modifications. However, in the future they may return to the HC with the intention of replacing a pressure treated deck with something more appropriate. The current renovations are for the bathrooms on the second and third floors and the laundry room.

There was a brief discussion about the date of the house – as the township listing has it as 1777 and clearly it is not from that time period. Ms. DeNadai confirms that this information should be updated when the township adopts the proposed changes to the list.

Mr. Forbes completed the required Form for this application.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to recommend that the BOS approve the proposed renovations to the second and third floor bathrooms and the laundry room located at 1230 Birmingham Road (HR#16) per the documentation presented. Seconded by Mr. Ponticello and approved unanimously.

Update on Vision Partnership Program

In light of Jeff Janofsky's resignation from the committee, someone else will need to step up and take the lead on this project with Sheila Fleming. Discussion ensued about where the project is at this point and what the time commitment is. Mr. Bedwell is willing to take this on at this point, hoping that the time commitment is not extensive. Mr. Forbes will forward all the information he has on this project to Mr. Bedwell.

New Business

Mr. Bedwell asked if there is any feedback from the BOS on the proposed ordinance changes or any overall plan for the HC to work on this year. Mr. Hill stated that the ordinance has been reviewed by the supervisors and the township solicitor and they have some feedback, however, due to some outstanding issues in the township this item has been tabled and will be revisited at a later date this year.

Ms. Mary DeNadai stated that this issue has been outstanding since the special ad hoc task force was first formed in April 2016. The report from that task force was submitted in September of 2017 and they have not had a response since that date. She is in attendance tonight to get a status update because many people spent many hours on this project. She noted that she sent a letter to the township last year and has not received a response; she is also planning to attend the Board of Supervisors meeting on Monday night to ask this same question during the New Business portion of the agenda. Mr. Forbes is also planning to send a formal letter asking for an update on a time frame for this item.

Mr. Redman asked if the changes the task force proposed would have eliminated the need for his interior renovation project to be reviewed by this committee because this seemed out of the ordinary compared to other municipalities. Mr. Bedwell stated that the proposed changes were to streamline the process. There was discussion about the lack of clarity within the ordinance and how it is interpreted.

Ms. Kate Marshall also stated that some of the proposed ordinance changes that were recommended while she was on the Historic Commission were to address new structures within the township. Ms. DeNadai agreed with this statement and noted that there are new structures being built on Meetinghouse Road that Mr. Jensen noted are in compliance and by-right and there is no ordinance overview of those properties.

Mr. Pratap Kesarkar asked if this is the item that was on the BOS agenda in September or October of 2019 and was removed from the agenda? Mr. Forbes said he thinks it is.

Mr. Kesarkar is in attendance to get clarification on a couple items that seem to be contradictory. He stated that when he was doing his renovations back in 2016 (removing old siding), he uncovered a concealed door on the north side of the house. He states that he does not see any documentation from those 2016 meetings regarding this item – he sees commentary about the rear balcony but not the door. He states that he built this deck more than two years ago in order to be able to use this door. Mr. Forbes asked if Mr. Jensen (Zoning Officer) has reviewed the deck and approved it? Mr. Kesarkar says no. The deck is less than 30 inches high and doesn't need a railing. Mr. Forbes stated that unfortunately because it is a modification to an Historic Resource it needs (needed) to come to the HC through the normal process. Mr. Kesarkar states that when looking at the ordinance, it states that an accessory structure less than 250 square feet does not require a building permit. He did not think that he needed a permit as the deck is less than 250 square feet. Mr. Bedwell states that any modification to

a historic resource needs to come through the HC process to be recommended for approval – it should have been done prior to the modification – but can be done in retrospect. Mr. Kesarkar stated that he thinks the ordinances are contradictory. Mr. Forbes reiterates that the HC is a recommending body and can only recommend regarding Historic Resources within the township. Mr. Kesarkar asked if it is necessary to do the neighbor notifications for this. Mr. Forbes confirms that this part of the process and the office will assist him with the process.

Mr. Forbes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:59pm. Seconded by Mr. Bedwell and voted unanimously. The next meeting will be February 25, 2020 at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Boorse
HC Secretary