

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

**April 17, 2017**

Chairman Siemer called the meeting to order at 7:10 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
Michael Langer	Member, RPOS Committee
Mike Shiring	Member, Board of Supervisors
Judy Jensen	Secretary, RPOS Committee

**APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 20, 2017 MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 20, 2017 RPOS meeting were approved, as written; all in favor.

**BILLS**

There were no bills to review at tonight's meeting.

**BIRMINGHAM HILL UPDATE**

During the cleanup day that was held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, RPOS cleared brush and sticks off the Birmingham Hill trail and replaced 19 rails and two posts along the fencing. After inspecting the trail, RPOS determined that they do not need to replace wood chips on the trail this year. Also, MAJIC Landscaping has mulched the plant bed at Birmingham Hill and trimmed the shrubbery.

**SANDY HOLLOW UPDATE**

At the November RPOS meeting, Mr. Feld noted that due to the rapid growth of Canadian thistle at Sandy Hollow, he felt the edges of the trail along S. New Street should be mowed with a bushhog. As a result of his suggestion, RPOS obtained cost estimates from various landscapers for mowing the thistle.

At the December meeting, RPOS discussed the cost estimates they had received. The lowest estimate was from Lakeside Cultural Care (LCC) at a cost of \$75 per hour. The committee passed a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors hire Lakeside Cultural Care to mow the invasive plants, including the Canadian thistle, growing along the trail at Sandy Hollow.

At tonight's meeting, RPOS members agreed that LCC did a great job cleaning out the thistle. Mr. Feld noted that if the Canadian thistle continues to grow, the edge along the trail will need to be mowed again with a bushhog in July or early August before it has a chance to go to seed.

RPOS members also considered the idea of spreading a clover/wildflower seed mix along the trail edge to impede the growth of the Canadian thistle. Since the committee is not planning to replace wood chips on the Birmingham Hill trail this year, RPOS decided

to use the \$300 budgeted for wood chips on the purchase of a clover/wildflower seed mix. Mr. Langer made a motion to authorize Mr. Feld to spend up to \$300 on a clover/wildflower seed mix that will be spread along the perimeter area of the Sandy Hollow Trail. Mr. Kelican seconded the motion. The motion was approved; all in favor.

Mrs. Siemer noted that the "Leave No Trace" sign at Sandy Hollow has fallen down. Mr. Langer and Mr. Feld will take a look at the sign to see if they can reattach it to the pole.

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 order the necessary parts and will pick up the cannon around mid-April to make the needed repairs.

Mr. Langer said that four small trees have been planted at Sandy Hollow along S. New Street. RPOS does not know who planted the trees, but the committee is concerned that work was done at Sandy Hollow without permission granted by either RPOS or the Township.

### **CACCHIO PROPERTY**

At last month's meeting, RPOS passed a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Township hire a structural engineer to evaluate the integrity of the existing barn on the Cacchio property.

On March 28, 2017, engineers with Steinle Construction Engineers, a division of Vandemark & Lynch, Inc., visited the 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.

Mr. Kowalski said the barn, even if repaired and maintained, would not be adequate or appropriate for any use beyond that which would be classified as a Risk Category 1 Utility Structure, which represents low risk to human life in the event of failure. A change of use to any higher risk category, such as a meeting place for public use, would require substantial modifications to the structure in order to support code required design loads, including gravity, wind and seismic loading.

In conclusion, Mr. Kowalski said that it is their opinion that the barn is currently fit and safe for limited human habitation, as it is currently used with the following recommendations for repair and maintenance:

- Repair all roof leaks.
- Install gutters along all roof edges and downspouts. Extend downspouts to discharge at least ten feet from the barn to move water away from the foundations. Grading may also be performed to slope a minimum of 6 inches vertically away from the barn for the first ten feet horizontal distance.
- Repair or replace all damaged siding.
- Repair or replace all broken windows.
- Repair or replace all damaged upper level floor boards or sheathing, making sure that the sheathing is properly fastened to the supporting joists and beams.
- A contractor specializing in insect infestation should determine the full extent of area affected by insects and determine appropriate remediation to remove insects, as required, and mitigate future insect activity.
- Repair or replace all damaged upper framing level timber beams.
- Repair or replace all damaged timber posts.
- Repair areas of damaged stone pilaster and missing mortar at stone retaining walls.

Mr. Shiring asked RPOS for their opinion about possibly preserving the barn. After a discussion, RPOS agreed that, at this point in time, they do not have a vision of what the barn could be used for. They also recognize that if the barn is used as a meeting place for the public, then extensive repairs need to be made. However, it is difficult for RPOS to make such a recommendation because the committee does not have any idea as to the cost of needed repairs. There is also the question of liability to the Township if the barn is kept on the property, especially in its current state.

RPOS discussed whether the Brandywine Conservancy or Chester County would have any interest in the barn. If, for example, the County is interested in preserving the barn, then perhaps the County could take over the liability and repair/maintenance costs. RPOS also wondered if the County or the Brandywine Conservancy felt the barn had any historic significance, which would make the structure worth preserving.

Mr. Shiring said he will contact David Shields of the Brandywine Conservancy, as well as Karen Marshall of the Chester County Planning Commission to discuss the possible historic significance of the barn. If Ms. Marshall feels the barn has historic significance, he will ask if the County has any interest in helping preserve the barn, including providing funding for continued maintenance of the structure. Mr. Shiring will also talk to Jim Hatfield of Vandemark & Lynch concerning the kinds of costs that might be involved in renovating the barn.

Mr. Langer said he and Mrs. Siemer will talk with Sheila Fleming of the Brandywine Conservancy about the barn and whether she feels it should be preserved or removed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Rosenthal asked about the Town Tours and Village Walks, a summer program of the Chester County Planning Commission. A sponsor of the event is the Birmingham Township Historical Commission. The tour will begin at Thornbury Farm and end at the Meeting House. It does not appear that either Sandy Hollow Heritage Park or Birmingham Hill will be on the tour agenda.

The next RPOS meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2017.

With no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Jensen  
RPOS Secretary