

Lower Gwynedd Historic Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting
March 16, 2023

Committee Members Present

Matt Metcalf
Gloria Jones
Joseph Langella
Fawn Ostriak
Allison Klinger
Michael Brockway

Committee Members Absent

Linda Sacks

Supervisors Present

Janine Martin – via zoom
Danielle Duckett

Lower Gwynedd Staff

Michelle Farzetta (not present) Took minutes from recording

Call to order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. at the Lower Gwynedd Township building. Roll call was taken.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Metcalf asked for a motion to approve the February 16, 2023 minutes. Mr. Langella made a motion. Seconded by Ms. Klinger. Motion passed 5-0. (Ms. Jones had not joined the meeting yet)

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Written Communication

Mr. Metcalf acknowledged an email he received from Ms. Carmina Taylor regarding the Historic Markers in Penllyn. No additional written communication was received.

Audience Participation

Ms. Taylor joined the meeting via zoom. Ms. Taylor spoke of the historical significance of Penllyn. She is concerned that the history of the city is being lost as the area gentrifies; she also noted there are less than ten people left who can speak directly of the history and experienced that history of Penllyn's prime as a historically black settlement. She also spoke of the Penllyn School, which was a predominantly for black children many years ago. Here is nothing acknowledging that school today. Ms. Taylor understands that a process is being developed to identify areas and places with historical markers; however, she feels that it is a bureaucratic process. Penllyn was and still is the only predominately black community in Lower Gwynedd Township. Acknowledging the Village of Penllyn is the right thing to do.

Mr. Metcalf stated that recognizing Penllyn with a Historical marker is a top priority for the committee this year. We are working on the process and plan on having this in place by the summer so markers can start being placed in the fall. Mr. Metcalf also expressed interest in meeting with Ms. Taylor to discuss the oral history and her stories of Penllyn.

Board of Supervisors - Liaison Report

Ms. Martin stated we are excited to receive recommendations on historical markers. She also mentioned that the Park and Recreation Committee will be meeting with our Engineers to discuss upgrades and improvements to Ingersoll Park. These improvements would include the parcel with the McCormick house. Ms. Martin would like them to bring her their thoughts and feelings regarding the house, so she can relay them to Parks and Rec when discussing improvements to Ingersoll Park.

Ms. Duckett mentioned that Reverend Quann wanted to attend to discuss the feedback he received regarding his communication on the change in street name and the historical marker for the anniversary of Bethlehem Baptist Church. He wanted to speak of the process and the look and location of the marker. Ms. Duckett is going to ask him to attend next months meeting.

Monitoring of Historic Properties

The committee had a discussion regarding 1348 Sumneytown Pike, the Owen Evans Property. As of now there is only a plot plan for the property showing 10 houses, with the existing house remaining. Ms. Martin pointed out that the developer will need to seek relief from the Zoning Hearing Board to subdivide those lots, so the plot plan is not an ideal proposal. There was an active discussion regarding concerns from the neighbors on Sunset about the development of the property and the reasons for preservation. For example, are we looking to preserve the open space, the house or the history of property as a whole to Lower Gwynedd as the first farm. Mr. Metcalf noted that the historic preservation field now generally looks upon a property holistically as a "cultural landscape" in which the buildings and land tell a story together, not separately. Also, that you cannot divorce the site from its context.

Old Business

- **Social Media and Communications** – Mr. Metcalf stated that he communicated with Jamie Worman regarding Facebook posts. She clarified that all posts need to go through the township. Mr. Metcalf suggested making a schedule assigning a member each month to provide a Facebook post. After a discussion it was decided that a post will be sent to Ms. Worman on the first of each month via email and a schedule was established for the next seven months. Mr. Metcalf made a motion, seconded by Mr. Langella. Motion passed 6-0.
- **Ingersoll Partnerships** – Mr. Langella stated that he spoke with Gail Farmer from Wissahickon Trails who then put him in contact with Neil Trueblood. He has not connected with him yet to discuss options. Ms. Farmer also mentioned that the volunteer committee that runs Evan Mumbower's Mill might be interested in looking at the house and offering some input. Mr. Langella also stated that he received the report for Jane Douglas regarding her visit to the house and its uses. They will plan on discussing at a future meeting in more detail. Mr. Metcalf asked if someone could possibly reach out to Del Val University to see if they have any interest in a partnership. Both Mr. Langella and Ms. Klinger will try to connect with someone there to see if they have any interest.

New Business

- **Planning Ahead: Fall Fest (9/23/23)** – There was discussion regarding having a table at Fall Fest. Mr. Langella mentioned that he spoke with Sandi Feight and they already have two tables for the Wissahickon Valley Historic Society. Lower Gwynedd's Historical Committee can be set up next to them if they want. Ms. Martin suggested having information to pass out or a QR code for people to scan. Mr. Metcalf would like to bring the time capsule at the township building to display. Ms. Martin said she will get Mr. Metcalf the form to reserve the table just to finalize the spot.
- **Preservation Easement Template** – Mr. Metcalf would like to ask Mr. Stein, our solicitor, to create a historic easement template for residents to use at the time of sale that would put a restriction on the deed regarding destruction or upgrades. Mr. Brockway suggested a conservation easement be drawn up, as well. Ms. Martin recommended making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to authorize Mr. Stein to draft these templates. This should be sent to Ms. Gleason to put in the weekly packet.
- **Gwynedd School/McCormick House Discussion** – Members weighed in with their opinions of the property. While the McCormick house was one of four original one room school houses in Lower Gwynedd, one member believed there was concern that alterations had changed the building significantly. One member also asked about the possibility of restoring it entirely. Other members suggested they would like to see the building me used in some capacity by the Little League whether it be as restrooms,

concession stands, meeting room or a play area for parents to take little ones during games to play. Many members agree that a plaque or sign of some form should be at the site to commemorate the Gwynedd School and its history. Ms. Martin explained that she has asked about using the building for other purposes and was told it would be difficult as, it is too far from the fields to be a concession stand, it is more cost effective to bring in prefab buildings and last the building would need to be ADA compliant, which it is not. Mr. Metcalf would like to gather some more history before making any recommendations. He and a few other members are going to look for more information and will discuss this topic at the next meeting in April.

- **Historical Markers Framework** – Mr. Metcalf introduced the framework that he has drafted for identifying historical markers within Lower Gwynedd Township. He went through the process step by step. There was a discussion regarding if marker priority should be based on the age of the suggested location or its historical importance to the community. Mr. Metcalf is going to send the document with additional links to all members for further review. He asked all members to note any changes and bring them to the April meeting. Mr. Metcalf would like to finalize this document at the April meeting.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

Mr. Metcalf made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 pm. Motion passed 5-0.