

Lower Gwynedd Historic Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting
June 15, 2023

Committee Members Present

Matt Metcalf
Gloria Jones
Fawn Ostriak
Linda Sacks
Allison Klinger

Committee Members Absent

Joseph Langella
Michael Brockway

Supervisors Present

Janine Martin

Lower Gwynedd Staff

Michelle Farzetta (not present) Took minutes from recording.

Call to order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:15 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 May 18, 2023, minutes. Ms. Klinger made a motion, seconded by Ms. Ostriak Motion passed 5-0-0.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Written Communication

There was no written communication.

Audience Participation

There was no audience participation.

Board of Supervisors - Liaison Report

Ms. Martin spoke regarding the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the survey for the public

is out. This is the time for the public to prioritize historic preservation into the plan.

Regarding Historic Markers, public works has been working on finding vendors for the signs, but they are having trouble finding a vendor that can supply a sign sooner than a year. The Committee discussed possibly using temporary signs until the cast iron signs could be made and/or possibly using another material to complete the signs sooner. The Committee wants to make sure the sign is durable while still demonstrating respect for the history.

There was also conversation regarding using a QR code on the marker and the amount of text that would be put on marker. Ms. Ostriak offered to create some mockups for the marker.

Monitoring of Historic Properties

- **Springhouse Innovation Park – Building #1-** Mr. Metcalf received an email regarding concerns with Building number one's renovations. The committee discussed the structure and design of the building. Mr. Metcalf offered a brief architectural description: "It certainly bears the marks of Modernism (Mid-century with aspects of Brutalism). Its overall shape is highly geometric: it looks like a perfect square rising from a perfect square. Concrete is its dominant material (also a trait of Mid-Century era design); geometric slabs are hung as a curtain wall supported by structural steel beams. The concrete "fins" join the facade at 90-degree angles emphasizing the geometry of the overall shape and the paired fixed windows that, when taken together and viewed straight on, form a rhythmic pattern on the facade. That only gets more interesting with the shadows and shapes as the sun or the viewer of the building changes position (new views and new shadows)! In the Modernist tradition, the construction materials ARE the ornament (no S-scrolled brackets, pendants, or classical Palladian windows here). Stone walls support that concept and speak to two Modernist ideals: use of building materials in large "blocks" and a connectivity to nature. The stones at the base are intentionally arranged in an artistic manner- almost like a painting and serve to contrast with the smooth, angular concrete. The concrete aspects of the building rise from the stone... almost as if this were a tree (with the shadows of the fins creating a sort of shadow-canopy). Mid-Century design sought to create a synergy with nature; the base was a design choice, different from unlike 18th century Pennsylvania stone buildings which often were built with fieldstone by necessity (clear the field for planting). The heft of Building #1 and its materials imply permanence; its design: cutting edge, speaking to choices made by a company that wished to convey its efforts to advance the modern world through science and the science of design."

Ms. Klinger concurred and referenced texts with aspects of modern design from which the architects likely drew.

Ms. Martin noted that a few community members feel it does not fit into the area.

Mr. Metcalf responded that this was a business park not a residential neighborhood- and had been since prior to the construction of homes.

Ms. Martin contributed that this is an existing building not covered by the historic preservation ordinance. Had the developer chosen to knock it down, they would go

through land development and the township would be able to shape the work (if desired). Ms. Martin believed Beacon is receptive and open to conversation. The Committee voted to send a letter of inquiry about the plans for the building and whether they would consider modifications. Ms. Klinger made a motion, seconded by Ms. Sacks, to have Mr. Metcalf draft a letter of inquiry to the builder. Motion passed 5-0-0.

- **Old Bethlehem Pike Bridge** – There is concern about the destruction of the historic bridge (first mentions of a bridge in the area date to 1730) remains. Ms. Martin stated the project has not gone out for bid yet, but our engineer has put a cost estimate together based on a particular bridge. It will not be made of stone. Some members asked why the bridge was being replaced. Ms. Martin said this project must be done as the bridge is not safe and has failed inspections. Large trucks, such as trash trucks and emergency vehicles are not able to cross it. The committee would like to see some pictures and possibly have some questions answered regarding the design and the use of some historic materials in the new bridge. Ms. Martin will contact Gilmore for a rendering.

Old Business

- **Preservation Easement Template** – Mr. Metcalf shared copies of easement templates provided by the township solicitor, Mr. Stein. A preservation easement would allow a property owner to protect certain aspects of historical property through an easement on their deed. A realtor would disclose the easement at the time of sale. The committee will review the documents and then choose one to recommend to the Board of Supervisor (BOS).
- **Historical Markers: Submission Worksheet, Process for Submissions** – Mr. Metcalf informed the committee that he attended the BOS meeting on May 23rd. He outlined the proposed Historic Marker program and answered questions that the supervisors had. Ms. Sacks inquired about the level of research necessary for this and how quickly this can be set up. Mr. Metcalf imagined the form would ask for about 300 words (about 1 page) with citations. He will draft a version for HAC and township staff to review. The program can be up and running the month after the HAC reviews the submission form. Groups like Bethlehem Baptist Church, which is eager to apply, can do so immediately thereafter. Mr. Metcalf will reach out to Jamie to set up a space on the web page.
- **Historic Preservation Component of Comprehensive Master Plan** – The HAC would like to see the Historic preservation component of the LGT Comprehensive Plan align with the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan. The HAC will recommend the township pay for a professional historic survey of the township. A township-wide survey has never been conducted and would gather information about historic resources throughout the

township to enable preservation planning (and general municipal planning) as related to preservation of historic resources.

- After some discussion a motion was made by Ms. Sacks, seconded by Ms. Klinger to have Mr. Metcalf draft a letter asking the BOS to set aside money for such a survey. Motion passed 5-0-0.

New Business

- **National Historic Register District: Penllyn Village** – This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

Ms. Jones made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 pm. Motion passed 5-0.