

HISTORICAL COMMISSION EAST BRADFORD TOWNSHIP March 18, 2014

The March regular meeting of the East Bradford Township Historical Commission was held on March 18, 2014 in the Township Building, 666 Copeland School Road, West Chester, Chester County, Pa., 19380-1822.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mary Sue Boyle
Erik Freeland
Rick Kirijan
Jean Renshaw

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Peggy Scholl
Ann Armstrong
Richard Gallagher

STAFF/PROFESSIONALS PRESENT: Brenden Beaumont

GUESTS PRESENT: Kathryn and Patrick Comerford, Timothy Barnard (counsel to the Comerfords), P. Andrew Schaum (President & CEO Children's Country Week Association - Paradise Farm Camps), Frank Rutan (CCWA Board member and Treasurer) and Robert Korbonits (CCWA Board member)

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mary Sue Boyle.

MINUTES: Rick Kirijan made a motion to approve the February 18, 2014 minutes; Erik Freeland seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

HR #41 - Robert Kerr House 905 Connor Road (owned by Kathryn and Patrick Comerford)

Mr. Barnard asked about the Historical Commission's position regarding the Robert Kerr House for purposes of planning for the Comerfords' tract of land located between Sunset Hollow Road and Conner Road (which includes the lot on which the Robert Kerr House sits). Mr. Barnard stated that there is nothing wrong with the house from a structural standpoint, but if they were allowed to demolish the house, a new residence could be built in a "nicer setting." Mary Sue Boyle stated that the Historical Commission does not comment on demolition unless a permit application has been filed. In response to Mr. Barnard's inquiry regarding removing one or more of the more recent additions to the house, Jean Renshaw stated that although there is precedent, the Historical Commission cannot comment unless a permit application has been filed.

HR#6 - Caleb Mercer Barn (not House) 1250 Valley Creek Road (owned by Children's Country Week Association)

Mr. Schaum discussed the March 14, 2014 permit application for "selective demolition" of the barn which is described in the application as "remove non-historic rear forebay, metal roof & timbers. Stone walls will be lowered to 8' height. Future restoration of remaining walls." In response to numerous questions from the Historical Commission, Mr. Schaum stated that:

1. The barn is currently a safety risk. Two structural engineers have advised CCWA that the barn is unsafe. Photographs presented at the meeting show the risk of collapse. The camp entrance that guests will start using mid-April winds around the barn.
2. Because the barn is structurally unsound, no adaptive reuse is possible in its current condition.
3. Estimates of the cost to rebuild the barn range from \$300,000 to \$500,000; if the barn were used for education, the estimate increases to \$750,000 (because of ADA compliance, etc.).

CCWA does not have the funds for this and has ruled out third party funding for various reasons.

4. The selective demolition will be performed by hand; no mechanical demolition arm or wrecking ball will be utilized. The estimated "hard costs" of the selective demolition are \$30,000 - \$32,000.
5. After the selective demolition, CCWA intends to have the remaining 8' walls repointed and capped and make other necessary repairs. The remaining structure would then be used as an open-air educational forum. The estimated "hard costs" of this process are \$33,000.
6. For the first time in many years, CCWA has the funds for the selective demolition and restoration of the remaining 8' walls.
7. Should something inadvertent occur during the selective demolition (e.g., the total collapse of one or more walls) CCWA fully intends to take actions so that the barn's appearance and use will be as described in item 5 above (e.g., the collapsed wall(s) would be rebuilt to 8' above grade, pointed and capped).

Mr. Schaum requested that the Historical Commission take action at the current meeting to recommend immediate approval of the selective demolition by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Section 115-125D of the East Bradford Code. Although the application includes drawings of an aerial view after stabilization and stone wall capping detail, Historical Commission members remained concerned that they did not have a clear snapshot of what would remain after the selective demolition. Erik Freeland suggested that CCWA provide photographs of the existing walls marked to show CCWA's meaning of selective demolition. The Commission voted unanimously to delay taking action until the photographs are provided.

A Historical Commission special meeting will be held on April 1, 2014 to reconsider the permit application and additional materials provided by CCWA.

OLD BUSINESS:

The Oral History Project will be discussed at the April 1 special meeting. Eleanor Thompson and Marie Boisvert, volunteers for the project will be invited to attend.

The Commission requests that their files and awards be stored in, and future meetings be held in, the Copeland School.

The next special meeting of the East Bradford Historical Commission is Tuesday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m. The next regular meeting of the East Bradford Historical Commission is Tuesday, April 15 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business, Mary Sue Boyle adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Renshaw