

Minutes
Mt Lebanon Historic Preservation Board
Monday June 16, 2014. 5 p.m.
Mt Lebanon Municipal Building

Attendance: Yvette Yescas, chair; Joel Cluskey, vice-chair, Bill Callahan, Michelle Zmijanac, Ben Wetmore, John Bendel, commission liaison; Susan Morgans, staff liaison.
Absent: Jim Martin, Anna Siefken

Call to Order: Chair Yvette Yescas called meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Citizen Comment:

Dan Gigler, Washington Road, introduced himself as a representative of the historical society. Either he or Gwen Creedy will attend meetings regularly. He congratulated the board on progress with National Register designation. The board thanked the historical society for its resolution in support of the effort.

Marcy Jordan, Rae Avenue, spoke about her neighborhood's concern that at the conclusion of a sewer project their brick street is to be resurfaced with asphalt. She and other residents feel that brick adds character to their neighborhood and want the brick to be retained. The board advised her to write a letter expressing that opinion and to have neighborhood representatives speak to the Commission about the issue at a public meeting and present the letter in person. Susan Morgans said we have a policy to replace brick streets with brick whenever possible. Architects on the board commented that while there are times it may make sense to replace brick with asphalt—in particular if the street is a main road, in terrible disrepair or poses a safety hazard—but agreed that in general brick should be retained in residential neighborhoods because it not only beautifies but serves as a traffic calming measure. Bill Callahan suggested that the Commission research this issue and have a broader discussion about brick. He does not think that in most cases it is three times as expensive to restore brick. He added that when state or federal funds are used for a road, such as Castle Shannon Boulevard, there is a requirement to seek ways to avoid or mitigate the adverse affect on a historic environment. Yvette Yescas will try to attend the next Commission meeting and speak to these issues.

Consideration of Minutes: The May minutes were approved with one correction.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Virginia Manor: Yvette Yescas reviewed what has taken place so far with Virginia Manor's request to create a local historic district. Bill Callahan said that no one should be concerned if people have questions or seem negative, as that is typical and people usually are fine once they have correct information. Board members should send questions to him. The next step will be to find a consultant.

John Bendel should find out within the next month whether the Commission will provide startup funding now with a commitment to fund the entire consultant in 2015. If funding is available, John Bendel and Susan Morgans will meet with Steve Feller to determine the process by which the municipality would issue the RFP for the consultant after getting input from the board and how consultant would be supervised.

Susan Morgans will work with board on a Q & A about local historic districts that can appear in the magazine and on-line in September, as that will counter any “rumor mill.”

National Register: Michelle Winowich-Zmijanac and Bill Callahan reported on the state historic preservation board’s positive review of our National Register District nomination and its recommendation that the nomination move on to the National Parks Service. Letters from the commission and other elected officials were greatly appreciated, as were the personal appearances at the meeting of State Sen. Matt Smith and State Rep. Dan Miller. Special thanks to Laura Ricketts of Skelly & Loy for her stellar work in writing the narrative and for attending the meeting. The board thanked Michelle for making the trip to Harrisburg on their behalf.

OTHER BUSINESS

Resource guide or list: The board discussed how to respond to residents’ requests for expertise. Would it be possible to develop a resource list for old houses? Yvette Yescas will call Louise Sturgess at Pittsburgh History and Landmarks and ask if they have a list they could share. Susan Morgans suggested that since the Design Center has downplayed its RenPlan program, Mt. Lebanon could start our own program.

Comprehensive Plan John Bendel liked the idea of various boards reporting to the planning board on progress made on initiatives assigned to them by the comprehensive plan and would like to ask boards to do this prior to 2015 budget deliberations. John will speak to PB Liaison Keith McGill about this. Bill Callahan will send a list of bullet points delineating the HPB’s progress to Susan Morgans, who will compile a short document for the planning board/Commission.

Next Meeting: There is no July meeting. The next meeting is Monday, August 18 at 5 p.m. Bill Callahan will make a PowerPoint presentation at the meeting. Also, the board will discuss the meeting/workshop it will hold for owners of income producing properties. Susan Morgans will get a mailing list of multifamily and commercial properties.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30.

