

Minutes
Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board
Monday, May 21, 2018, Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building

Attendance: Present: Jim Martin, chair; Jonathan Hill, Brendan Kelly, Anna Siefken, Yvette Yescas, Laura Pace Lilley, staff liaison; John Bendel, commission liaison. **Absent:** Joe Bevins, John Evans.

Call to order: Chair Jim Martin called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Consideration of minutes:

The April minutes were approved unanimously with one spelling change.

Citizen comments:

None

Chair report:

None

Commission report:

None

Staff report:

Liaison Laura Pace Lilley advised the board that the public information office would like to place a card or other small piece of information in the newcomers packet to give new residents basic information about the Historic Preservation Board. Anna Siefken said she wanted to help on that project. Jonathan Hill suggested the card should include the link to the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon.

Lilley said thanks to Yvette Yescas's idea, former HPB chair Bill Callahan would be attending the June 18 meeting of the board to talk about zoning as a preservation tool. Lilley reiterated that Callahan is an expert on preservation, and is a preservationist with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum commission. Callahan also was instrumental in the HPB's successful application for the National Historic Register. Callahan is now president of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership. Municipal Planner Ian McMeans and the Mt. Lebanon Planning Board have been invited to attend the meeting.

Lilley said she and Mt. Lebanon Public Information Officer Susan Morgans met with Callahan and Dorene Ciletti, also of the Partnership during the previous week to discuss involving the PIO more in Partnership work. In the course of the conversation, Callahan and Morgans discussed adding commercial properties to the Online Design Guide. Morgans will follow up on the idea and Lilley will report back to the HPB on progress. Jonathan Hill and Yvette Yescas suggested the guide also include a piece of information about available tax credits.

Lilley gave a brief overview of early conversations among the planning board, the economic development council and the Partnership about changing zoning in the Central Business District. Conversation centers around potentially requiring new medical office businesses to be located on the second floor only, leaving first floor, street access spots available for retail or dining. These conversations are still preliminary and any proposed changes would go to the commission for approval with opportunity or public input first, but Lilley wanted the board to be aware since the CBD is an important part of the Historical District.

John Bendel said that putting more restaurants and retail on the first floor can increase the vibrancy of a business district and that Carnegie and Beaver have implemented changes in zoning. First floor, front-facing spaces would be affected most.

Jim Martin said he didn't think the HPB had much function in the decision but that preservation could come into play if an owner wanted to change a façade.

Liaison reports:

Mt. Lebanon Partnership: Anna Siefken reported that the Partnership meeting had been rescheduled and she was unable to attend. She has requested notes from staff to stay updated.

Historical Society of Mount Lebanon: Jonathan Hill reported he has spoken briefly with Joel Cluskey during a quick tour of the History Center building project and noted there is still work to be done. He said there is significant reconstruction on the staircase to make it meet code. He also noted he will be getting contact information for the Society from Laura Pace Lilley and will be attending future meetings.

John Bendel said the Society is having a huge exhibit at the end of the year and the first phase of the project should be done by then.

Jonathan Hill asked if the library still had their files of building permits. Jim Martin says he's unaware that it was moved. Hill said it may make sense to move those to the History Center.

Continuing business:

Historic District Design Guide – John Evans was absent, but Yvette Yescas reported the guide is nearly finished. Susan Morgans is having new software installed on her computer to finish editing and the document will be sent to the board. The intention is to get the document on the municipal website by late June/early July. Yescas said that John Evans and Susan Morgans presented the project to the municipal commission in May. Commissioner John Bendel said the project was well-received and that commissioners were appreciative of the work that went into it. He also said it was a good way to use the big investment on the original Virginia Manor guideline project as a way to help the whole community.

Jim Martin said he attended a Realtor continuing education class on the subject of historic structures. He spoke to the professor about the HPB's work on the online guide and said the

Realtors were impressed with the idea. He expects the public's reaction to be positive and strong when the project is released.

Notebook and website review: Joe Bevins was absent but sent an email earlier in the day with suggestions for changes. A subcommittee of Bevins, Yvette Yescas and Brendan Kelly, along with liaison Laura Pace Lilley, will meet to hone the ideas in an effort to update the website before the Online Design Guide is launched so residents will see the newly organized information all at once. Jim Martin wanted to make sure the tax credit information is mentioned. The subcommittee will report back to the HPB in June.

Historic signage: Jim Martin and Jonathan Hill met and identified eight locations for the larger entrance signs to announce you're entering the historic district. Among them are Washington (near Connor and Gilkeson, near Med Express, heading North near where recent drainage work was done, as you get toward the residential part of the road), Bower Hill Road, Castle Shannon Boulevard, Beverly Road by Newburn. Some of the areas are more challenging, such as Washington Road coming from Dormont, because there aren't any municipally-owned pieces of land. Jim Martin said there may be a spot of land on Oak Way at its intersection with Washington Road.

Other signs would be a small medallion to go on top of all street signs in the Historic District. The style would echo that of the contributing structure medallions sold by the Historical Society. Former HPB member Ben Wetmore did some preliminary drawings. The next step is to get some general estimates for costs, finalize specifications and put out an RFP.

Laura Pace Lilley suggested once they have a finalized drawing and estimates that they should go to a commission discussion meeting to show the plan and discuss stages and scalability.

John Bendel said the timing is good now because budget preparation starts in July/August. He also suggested the HPB should have the planning board look at the proposed locations.

Martin said the first stage would be the eight entry signs and then the individual street medallions would follow in a subsequent budget year.

Martin said he would check with Steve Harroum of APCO Architectural signs for some pricing and material availability. Johnathan Hill said to make sure the conversation was clear that it was just an estimate and that Harroum was not guaranteed the work. Laura Pace Lilley mentioned the HPB could also ask Municipal Engineers at Gateway to ballpark the cost of the sign, avoiding any potential conflict from a contractor giving figures.

Martin noted Ohiopyle has cute signs notifying it is a historic district.

Lilley also said she would get a count of the number of municipal street signs in the Historic District from municipal staff.

Brick Streets: Yvette Yescas reported her desktop died and she needs to retrieve her work from her backup drive to finish the priority report on the bricks. Laura Pace Lilley said the municipal IT department could help.

New business: Review of 2018 goals/3-year and 5-year plan

Jim Martin said he wanted the board to review and refine its list of goals for the next three years over the next two meetings.

Lilley said the board could consider ways to bring their expertise directly to the public—perhaps having office hours in the municipal building or library to help people get ideas for projects or to help them solve problems that involve historic renovations. The HPB could put together a group of Mt. Lebanon professionals who want to help other Mt. Lebanon residents.

Yvette Yescas said adding a local historic district should come off the three-year plan because the community is not interested in it. But she said the board could consider other ways to preserve the community that do not require a HARB (Historic Architecture Review Board) or a high level of oversight. The board could consider it if residents bring it forward again, but it should not be a priority, she said.

Jonathan Hill said that zoning could be a key way to protect people's interest, for example, to keep a high rise from being built next to a house.

Martin asked the board to think about historic preservation in Mt. Lebanon and to think about what the board could bring to the table.

Yescas said a goal should continue to be educating the community. Hill suggested an annual event. Hill also said the HPB could partner with the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon to host programs in the new History Center once it is complete. Yescas said the HPB could create it and then pass the torch to the Historical Society to run going forward.

Hill said he was curious as to why the second floors weren't better used within the business district. Lilley told them years ago, zoning code was rewritten to allow loft apartments but that building owners did not take advantage of it.

Lilley reminded the board that the PIO could be involved in that capacity. For example, the PIO has a new graphic designer who is skilled in video creation. The board could create a menu of two-minute video tips that could be pushed out via social media and online, fairly cost effectively, using PIO resources.

Other new business: The board briefly discussed whether it would be able to meet in July and August but ultimately decided to wait until it was closer to those meeting dates to decide which meeting to cancel based on board member availability. The next meeting is Monday, June 18 at 5 p.m. in the Municipal Building.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.