

Minutes

Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board

Monday, September 17, 2018, Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building

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

Call to order: Chair Jim Martin called the meeting to order at 4:59 p.m.

Consideration of minutes:

The July minutes were approved unanimously.

Citizen comments:

None

Chair report:

Jim Martin reported on the progress of the Historic District identification signs and said he and Laura Pace Lilley met with Municipal Manager Keith McGill the previous week to talk about the location and construction of the signs. The project is split into three initiatives to let people know we have a historic district. The first part is to have plaques put on the street signs to label it as part of the district and bars put on the bottom of the municipal entry signs noting the town is historic. We are waiting for the municipality to respond with the best material, and then the HPB will put together the specs and put the project out for three quotes.

The second initiative will take longer and be more expensive. There are eight areas that could have signs, depending on what PennDOT and the municipality allows. The signs will welcome people into the historic district, although not necessarily right when you enter. The issue is that a lot of those are within PennDOT rights-of-way. The municipality also is putting a materials list for that type of sign together. Additionally, the signs will fall under the neighborhood entry sign ordinance, which dictates where the signs can be.

Laura Pace Lilley some of the places have no traffic island, which is the required location for neighborhood signs. Jim Martin expects to have specs and locations from the municipality by the end of the month.

Commission report:

None

Staff report:

Staff liaison Laura Pace Lilley reminded the board that the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon would be having its grand opening the following week and that they should RSVP for the ribbon cutting. The center would be open to the public on Saturday, September 29, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with the first exhibit being "Mt. Lebanon Fire Department: 100 Years of Service."

Lilley also informed the board that the planning board voted to recommend the current zoning ordinance be amended to make first floor, street-facing offices and medical clinics/facilities a conditional use in the Central Business District. That means any new offices with that description would need to go to the planning board and commission for approval. The planning board also recommended a limit to the number of total linear feet offices could have in the business district. The commission will need to vote on the zoning change and it would be properly advertised with a public hearing.

Jonathan Hill asked Bill Callahan if restaurants didn't make less sense because they are dark in the morning.

Bill Callahan explained that the Partnership and the Economic Development Council recommended that the municipality make these changes based on feedback we received during the Comprehensive Plan and the Uptown Strategic Plan. The overwhelming request was for the municipality to increase retail, entertainment and food services Uptown. Mr. Callahan said one of the ways to increase the vitality is to limit the amount of professional office spaces. This method was considered during the last zoning review but had been pulled out.

Mr. Callahan, who works in commercial districts professionally, said a mix of different business is important in older districts, and too much office space interferes with it being an active business district. The best practice is the mix should be 10 percent professional office space and 90 percent other. Mt. Lebanon is currently at 25 percent office space.

Existing office spaces would be grandfathered.

Jonathan Hill asked about second floor residential space and he didn't think much had been placed on second floors. Mr. Callahan said zoning is only one tool. But it doesn't do anything without promoting it.

Jim Martin asked if second floor spaces would qualify for tax credit and Mr. Callahan said they would.

Topic of the month:

Bill Callahan, president of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership and Western PA Community Preservation Coordinator, Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission gave a presentation on the value of historic preservation and zoning as a historic preservation tool.

He introduced himself and described the structure of his state department and his function within it.

His presentation put historic preservation into context. He said historic preservation is not anti-development and doesn't seek to turn everything into a museum. But he explained that careful

and contextual projects can lead to economic benefits. He emphasized that no historic designation protects buildings.

Joe Bevins asked about sustainability as it relates to historic preservation. Mr. Callahan said the greenest building is the one already built.

Bill Callahan said the zoning is not mean to stifle development. Mr. Bevins also mentioned he visited Charleston, S.C. and said many new buildings were solidly built of brick and granite but the buildings fit in the neighborhood's context and showed the developers cared.

Yvette Yescas suggested maybe the board needs to have another workshop with property owners to discuss the available tax credits.

Liaison reports:

Jonathan Hill, Historical Society of Mount Lebanon: Jonathan Hill reiterated that the History Center would be opening and that it would be carrying a national exhibit later this year about World War II, from the Heinz History Center.

Mt. Lebanon Partnership: none

Continuing business:

Brick Streets – Yvette Yescas: Yvette Yescas's report was deferred until the next month, so more board members could hear it.

FAQ review: Brendan Kelly — Deferred to next month.

New business: Three-year goals: Deferred to next month.

Jim Martin informed the board that the First Church of Christ Scientist had been sold and that the owner would be looking at a tear-down of the building.

Jonathan Hill said he wanted to be sure he could protect the park and neighbors behind the property.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m. The next meeting is Monday, October 15 at 5 p.m. at 710 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon.