

Minutes
Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board
Monday, July 15, 2019, Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building

Attendance: Present: John Evans, chair; Anna Siefken, vice chair; Joe Bevins, Alex Ferraro, Jonathan Hill, Philip Neusius; Staff liaison Laura Pace Lilley. **Absent:** John Bendel, commission liaison; Brendan Kelly

Call to order: Chairman John Evans called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Citizen comments:

Seeing a larger than usual group at the meeting, Anna Siefken thanked the residents for attending.

Sam Harris, 501 Duquesne Drive, said he was frustrated by the lack of transparency with the construction project involving his street (a brick street that will be repaired then repaved with asphalt.) He said the citizens want a say in what happens to their streets. He agreed that the repairs needed to be done but said the brick needs to be put back on.

Dino Copetas, 500 Duquesne Drive, said he moved into his home 26 years ago and that it is one of the last fully intact red brick streets. He said Mt. Lebanon is losing its heritage and history and is beginning to look like every other neighborhood. Once you get rid of the bricks, they're gone forever. The value of brick streets is immeasurable. Not everything new is good. Not everything new is better. He said his street is a cut-through and asphalt would make it a raceway.

Jeanne Downing, 497 Duquesne Drive, spoke about the historic nature of the brick, especially its beveled cut to allow horses and carriages to ride over it smoothly. She said emergency repairs don't take a year.

Michael Steinberg, 427 Duquesne Drive, said the coordination and communication from the municipality about his street's repair was horrible. He said Commissioner Kelly Fraasch told him Duquesne Drive is on the list to be repaired again next year, with more asphalt, although Rudy Sukal said that wasn't the case. Steinberg said he has a rear wheel drive car and gets to his street just fine. He wanted to know how he could have his street moved from a category 3 in the PennDOT report to a category 2. He said it was his fault that he hadn't followed the status and he isn't computer oriented.

John Evans replied that the Historic Preservation Board would be consulted about category 3 brick streets in the future, although it's unclear how that would work. But the key is to get input from the people who live on the affected streets. He also said the board would like the municipality to find a way to store bricks and bid each brick street for bricks and asphalt. He said consultants in the PennDOT report looked at three criteria for rating streets: the structural

condition, the architectural integrity and whether or not the street is in the Historic District. He said the third point was really what pushed Duquesne into the third category. Evans said streets like Duquesne do have historic value and should be preserved.

Anna Siefken said she agreed with the residents and proposed that the board would write a letter to commissioners in partnership with the residents in hopes of delaying the process and focusing on the unique nature of the street. She asked where the project was in the process. Laura Pace Lilley said the matter had been discussed at public meetings, a contract list was proposed and the commission approved it. Siefken said the board has an ongoing goal of preserving the brick streets. She suggested the residents put together a map and have residents sign next to their homes in a petition format.

Jonathan Hill said the board is very sympathetic to the residents. But he said the cost is usually brought up, plus the attitude about bricks being hard to navigate. So commissioners need to see a group of residents concerned about the brick streets. He said the board's interests don't end at the Historic District.

Philip Neusius asked if the PennDOT report was policy for Mt. Lebanon. Laura Pace Lilley said it was not.

Eric Kepler, 416 Duquesne Drive, said he moved here about a year ago from Virginia and the brick streets were definitely a selling point. He also said the asphalt won't slow traffic on his street. He hoped it wasn't too late.

Amanda Harris, 501 Duquesne Drive, said she has two young children and that she is concerned with speeding on the street. She has asked the police to ticket people for speeding there. She said her kids' ears were trained now to get out of the street if they hear the loud noise of the fast cars on the brick. She also worried about property values.

Alex Copetas, 500 Duquesne Drive, pointed out that the Municipal Building is the nicest building in Mt. Lebanon and was preserved well but if the bricks are taken out of her street, they are never coming back. Then, there's nothing special. She could get a two-car garage in Upper St. Clair. She said she could live with the street in the current condition. She said it's her taxes so she should have a say.

William Kennedy, 412 Duquesne Drive, said the only reason the residents knew about the work was because there was a meeting in their neighborhood and it was discouraging.

Nancy Kennedy, 412 Duquesne Drive, confirmed that the board was going to write a letter.

Consideration of minutes:

The May minutes were unanimously approved

Chair report: None

Commission report: None

Staff report: Laura Pace Lilley confirmed that the board liked the new GIS map of the Historic District for use at First Friday in August.

She also reported that the commission approved a bond issue for roughly \$2.8 million in improvements to the Central Business District, which is in the Historic District. The project also includes more than \$1 million in grant money to augment tax funds.

Liaison reports:

Mt. Lebanon Economic Development Council, Joe Bevins: He reported that \$1 million of the bond is a robust addition toward the public art component of the streetscape improvement. John Evans said the Partnership was working on a master plan for the artwork.

Historical Society of Mount Lebanon, Jonathan Hill: No report, but Johnathan Hill will speak with director Mike Cahill about the HPB's proposal for a sign near the History Center.

Planning Board, Brendan Kelly: none

Mt. Lebanon Partnership Design committee, John Evans: None

Continuing business

Historic Signage, Anna Siefken: no report but John Evans worked on a first draft and will speak to the commission in August about the board's wish for historic signage.

Brick Streets, John Evans: Covered in citizens' comments

Strategic Plan Update, Anna Siefken: None

Community Education Plan: Philip Neusius said it would help to pass out information about the Historic District at the First Friday presentation. He was going to try to secure some literature.

New Business: None

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m. The next meeting is Monday, August 19 at 5 p.m. at 710 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon.