

Minutes

Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board

Monday, January 18, 2021, Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building (Teams)

Attendance: Present: Matthew Moses, chair; Joe Bevins, Alex Ferraro, Krista Ford, Philip Neusius, Marilyn Oberst-Horner, Anne Swager; Commission liaison Mindy Ranney, Staff liaison Laura Pace Lilley. **Absent:** None

Call to order: Board member Matthew Moses called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Citizen comments: none

Consideration of December 2020 minutes:

The December minutes were approved unanimously with one typo change.

Introduction of guest: William Callahan, Western PA Community Preservation Coordinator, Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Administrative Reports

Chair report — Matthew Moses told the board that Anne Swager has volunteered to serve as chair. He asked the board to consider volunteering for vice chair and notify him or Laura Lilley if they are interested. The board will vote on the leadership in March or April. Moses said he was working on a plan to transition to the new leadership, especially with regard to work on the brick streets process.

Commission report — Liaison Mindy Ranney said the CMU whitepaper from the class researching data on brick streets policies has been delayed. While she did not have an exact date, she said the paper is forthcoming.

Ranney said she heard from some residents in the Virginia Manor neighborhood who were upset about a neighbor who planned to tear down a historic home on Valleyview Road and would like to see some restrictions to the ability to tear down historic homes in their neighborhood. She said there was likely no reason why the demolition permit would be declined.

Matthew Moses said he believes such a restrictive policy could be a contentious issue for many reasons. But he said if anyone wanted to advance the discussion the board would be open to it.

Krista Ford asked if the materials would be reused in the project. Ranney reported that the materials could be reused but did not specify if they would be reused for that particular home.

Moses asked if the project was a flip and Ranney said there was no indication it was a flip, but a remodel that required a change to ceiling heights that could not be done with the current house.

The conversation then switched to the guest.

William Callahan said he provides technical preservation assistance to anyone who asks for it, but he works primarily with municipalities. He explained his office's organization and functions.

He emphasized about 1/3 of Mt. Lebanon is located in the National Historic District and that the designation offers no protection to those properties or any rules about work on them.

He detailed several grant programs and certifications that his office offers.

Callahan also explained the types of preservation zoning that municipalities in Pennsylvania can implement, including demolition rules and conservation ordinances.

Matthew Moses said if the board were to approach it, it would have to be done in a very sophisticated way to avoid antagonistic community discussion.

Callahan said it took about 7 or 8 years for Erie to pass preservation zoning, and that it takes time and patience. He said he would be happy to provide any assistance the board would want.

Ranney suggested for the next steps, the board could be strategic by considering some easy low-hanging fruit, such as a demolition ordinance, to discuss a recommendation in the next year or so, and then possibly consider historic preservation as part of the next Comprehensive Plan, as well as part of Commissioner Andrew Flynn's proposed eco district plan.

Staff report — no report

Continuing business

Historic signage: Anne Swager reminded the board she sent them the new design package from Kolano Design. The board decided that intersection sign toppers should say "Historic District." Lilley pointed out that some short-named streets could cause the topper to poke out. The board asked Lilley to cost out the sign to replace short signs and make it longer.

The board chose the entry sign bar without the medallion on it, with clean, straight sides. (Option 6) Lilley suggested the board present the sign designs to the Commission before preparation of bid specs.

Swager said she would get the updated drawings from the designer and the board would go from there.

Brick streets: Matthew Moses said he consulted with Anna Siefken and that she said the white paper would be completed in the next few weeks. He said the board would need at least a week to review the material before discussing it with Siefken and municipal engineers at the February Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Lilley asked if the municipality would be receiving the raw data as agreed to before the study began. Moses said that identifying information from the surveys would need to be removed but that the data in its rawest form is owned by CMU. He said he would speak with Siefken to confirm.

Marilyn Oberst-Horner said she would begin speaking to other communities cited in the CMU presentation as open to working with Mt. Lebanon with brick streets projects.

The board noted there is a time element to these conversations. Anne Swager said she was worried about the fact that the brick street paving moratorium has been lifted and Ranney said she was receiving complaints from residents who wanted their brick streets repaired.

Three-year strategic plan: Matthew Moses said he continues to work on the plan.

Liaison reports:

Lebanon Economic Development Council, Joe Bevins: no report

Historical Society of Mount Lebanon, Krista Ford: Ford said Geoff Hurd has taken over as president of the society in January and she will attend the January meeting.

Planning Board, Alex Ferraro and Matthew Moses: Moses said he would be attending the planning board meeting in January.

Partnership Design Committee, Joe Bevins: Laura Lilley reported the bidding documents would be going out in February with construction tentatively slated to begin in May. Ranney said the issue would be on the discussion agendas for the commission on February 26 and likely again on February 9.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m. The next meeting is Monday, February 15, 2021, at 5 p.m. on Teams.