

Westtown Township Historical Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, 28 March, 2013

In attendance: Dave Walter, Brian Giunta, Robert Reidenbach, Daniel Campbell, Township Manager, Bob Layman, and Tom Haws, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. Patrick McDonough arrived late.

The Commission decided to meet at Oakbourne Mansion at 6pm on the last Thursday of each month. (October, November, and December meeting dates - to be determined due to holidays.)

Election of officers:

Dave Walter - Chair, 3 year appointment

Brian Giunta - Vice Chair, two year appointment

Robert Reidenbach - Secretary, 3 year appointment

Patrick McDonough, one year appointment

Dan Campbell was appointed to a two year term, contingent upon his formal appointment to the Historical Commission by the Board of Supervisors. He was asked to submit his resume to the Board for their review.

Mr. Walter asked everyone to review the ordinance creating the Historical Commission, paying particular attention to its function and duties. He stated that Karen Marshall, County Historian from the Chester County Planning Commission, will be present at the next meeting (April 25) to give some direction.

Mr. Walter said one of their first priorities is to create a Historic Resources Map identifying historic properties in the township. He mentioned that he saw in the paper that West Whiteland Township was asking its residents to nominate historically significant properties and suggested we could use the website or the next newsletter to solicit recommendations from our residents.

Discussion followed regarding the criteria for historic significance. Mr. Campbell stated criteria used by the National Register of Historic places:

1. An association to a historical person.
2. An association with a historically important event.
3. Architectural significance in terms of the design, the architect, or the style.
4. Pre-historical sites (archeological sites)

The Commission thought that asking residents to recommend sites would be a good way to engage the public. Mr. Giunta suggested that they should clearly define their criteria first.

Mr. Walter stated that another function of the Commission is to help educate and inform residents of historical events that have occurred in the Township. Mr. Layman mentioned that the Commission would be expected to provide an article to be included in the quarterly Township newsletter. Mr. Walter suggested that if the Civil War Camp plaque at Trellis Lane and Oakbourne Road is approved, then he will write an article about that for inclusion in the summer newsletter. Each member could write something for subsequent issues. Dave would also like to see a map of historic places in Westtown on our website.

Mr. Layman will ask Elaine about any files with historical information at the Township building. He also mentioned that the Chester County Historical Preservation Network (CCHPN) would be a useful resource.

Dave asked everyone their thoughts on the priorities and purpose of the group:

Dan - create a historic resource list and map; act as a historical society; educate the public on historic Restoration and maintenance, and compile a list of contractors who do historical restoration

Rob- suggested bringing people in from other townships for feedback on how they do things. He has a friend who sits on East Bradford Historic Commission who would be helpful.

Pat - protection of historical properties, knows Jim Garrison West Brandywine, who is currently writing a book on Richard Okie (architect), suggested holding future meetings at Oakbourne Mansion and hosting a series of lectures there and at Westtown School. Pat said he has a fairly good knowledge of the mansion history. He said an application was made to have it put on the National Register, but wasn't approved. He mentioned that the West Chester Historic Society gives an award every year to a citizen who has restored or improved a historic property.

Brian - offered assistance with getting content for our website from surrounding townships and other sources. He will check with CCHPN, the West Chester Historic Society. Dave mentioned there are also historic records in the basement at the Government Services Center on Westtown Road.

The Commission exchanged email addresses and the meeting was adjourned.