

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike, West Chester
Thursday, August 20, 2015 6:00 PM

In attendance: Commission members Dave Walter, Gail Guterl, Pam Boulos, Eileen Fresta, Patrick McDonough. Township Zoning Officer Chris Patriarca was also in attendance.

I. **Call to Order**

Dave Walter called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

II. **Approval of Minutes from June 18, 2015**

Gail Guterl made a motion to approve the June 18, 2015 minutes, with Pam Boulos seconding the motion. The minutes were approved without comment.

III. **Welcome New Board Member**

Dave Walter welcomed new commission member Eileen Fresta, who fills the unexpired term vacated by Jonathan Hoppe. Eileen's appointment was approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) at their Aug. 17 meeting after the board, Dave and Gail interviewed Eileen during the BOS executive session Aug. 17.

IV. **Public Comment (non-agenda items)**

None

V. **Old Business**

A. **National Register of Historic Places Application for Oakbourne Mansion**

At the request of the BOS, the Westtown Township Historical Commission (WTHC) was asked to solicit proposals to prepare an eligibility application for Oakbourne Mansion to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Jane Dorchester, architectural historian, Historic Preservation Consulting, sent a proposal already and Dan Campbell, of the WTHC, will also submit a proposal. Dave asked WTHC members whether it would be worth it to pursue National Register status for the mansion. What are the concrete benefits? The application process asks for many details including tracing every deed for the property and every usage of the property. WTHC members were mixed in their views whether the effort would result in an advantage for the township and its residents. The BOS will decide at the Sept. 8 meeting if the application expense is worthwhile.

B. **Situation with 1142 Wilmington Pike — Bozzuto Development**

Bozzuto Development has withdrawn its application to build an apartment on the west side of Rt. 202, south of W. Pleasant Grove Road and north of Rt. 926. Bozzuto and Westminster Presbyterian Church, owner of the property on Crebilly Farm, had

agreed to preserve 1142 Wilmington Pike in that apartment application. The Downing Cottage Gothic revival house at 1142 Wilmington Pike is a circa 1870 serpentine stone structure. Chris Patriarca informed the Historical Commission that the BOS is looking into repealing the Special Use Overlay (SUO) that allowed construction of an apartment complex to be considered, so the future of #1142 is unsure. Dave said he would love to see that house preserved, although he has since learned that R1 zoning, which is what the property is now zoned, wouldn't allow for any small business to be conducted in that structure. WTHC will continue to closely monitor developments.

C. Historic Resources List Status

The BOS will discuss the Historic Resources list at one of its September meetings and will seek public comment before making a decision on publishing the list. Chris Patriarca is working with Pam Boulos to create a color-coded map of historic properties according to the classifications, 1-4. Chris asked if Westtown School should be color coded as one historic property and Dave said "yes." The next step would be for the township to send letters to all property owners on the list that ensures them there are no encumbrances on the property under current ordinances just because they are on the historic resources list, and asks them for permission to photograph the property and home(s) and for any historic information they may have on the property.

D. Taylor Burial Ground Marker Status

Susan Van Vonno, a descendant of Col. Thomas Taylor and his sons Titus and Thomas Jr., is seeking to erect a marker to commemorate their involvement in the Revolutionary War and mark the area where they are buried on Tower Course Drive. Her efforts to get a marker from the Veterans Administration (VA) hit a roadblock. Dave explained the VA wants proof that the Taylor's unit, 6th Battalion-Westtown, Chester County Pennsylvania Militia, which fought in the Battle of the Brandywine September 17, 1777, was federalized. Dave said no historian has yet been able to prove that George Washington federalized this specific battalion of militia, but it is likely it was. Also, to provide a free grave marker, the VA requires either an obituary, a certificate from a funeral director, or contemporary proof such as a death notice in the newspaper stating burial place. There is a death notice for Titus but it does not say where he is buried. An 1881 history book stating they were buried in a graveyard on their property is not sufficient. Therefore, present Taylor descendants will seek to raise \$2,000 for a stone to commemorate their service in the Revolutionary War. Dave contacted a local monument dealer who will charge \$1,000 for the stone and \$7 per letter. There also might be some money contributed from the Sons of the Revolution. If all goes as planned, the stone may be ready by Memorial Day 2016.

E. Parks & Recreation Holiday Festival Dec. 6 — Skit Status

Gail learned that the short play we hoped to produce on Westtown resident Isaac Winters who fought in a black regiment in the Civil War, will not be presented at the Holiday Festival at Oakbourne Mansion. Gail was informed all festival activities are geared to small children and the Winters play is not in keeping with the theme Parks & Rec is presenting. Alternatives to this activity were discussed by WTHC. Pat

McDonough wondered if children (in small groups of 3-4) could tour the water tower at Oakbourne Mansion as part of the event. Pam Boulos wondered if we could create some kind of discovery board with pictures of historic homes in the township and by lifting the picture, there is an interesting fact hidden below. Nothing was decided. The WTHC will continue to think of ideas geared to children.

F. Photography Project — Westtown Today

The WTHC is embarking on a project to document what Westtown Township looks like currently. Therefore the WTHC will divide the township into sections, and each WTHC commissioner will take a section and photograph the commercial buildings and any apartment complexes. In 50 years this will be of interest to Westtown residents. Gail and Dave will work on assignments for this photography project.

VI. New Business

A. Ideas for Upcoming Newsletter Articles

Eileen Fresta will write about Westtown School and its early program of teaching American-centric geography; specifically how they taught geography to young women who needlepointed and embroidered geography balls as part of their lessons. This is for the winter newsletter due Nov. 20. (Gail encouraged articles to be no more than 900 words in order to accommodate pictures.)

Dave will write about Thomas Nolan, a Union Civil War soldier held at Camp Elder, who fell in love and married a Westtown woman. This article is due in February 2016.

B. Announcements

The Westtown BOS will attend the next WTHC meeting Sept. 17 at 6 p.m. The BOS will be visiting all township commissions in the next few months.

With the resignation of Jonathan Hoppe, who was secretary of the WTHC, Erica Reilly, co-secretary will take over the duties of secretary.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.