

Lower Makefield Township Historical Commission Meeting September 13, 2023

Attendees (in person):

- Joe Camaratta, Historical Commission (remote)
- Helen Heinz, Historical Commission
- Thomas Argentieri, Historical Commission (joined 8:04p)
- Chris Greeley, Historical Commission
- Victor Fiori, Historical Commission
- Lisa Pellegrino, Historical Commission (remote)
- Mitch Palin, Historical Commission
- Jeff Bedser, Historical Commission
- Cathy Hanville, Historical Commission
- Jim Sachs, Historical Commission
- John Lewis, Board of Supervisors (joined 8:26p)
- Monica Hinden, Volunteer

Agenda

Existing Business (7:30p start)

- Joe reviews the agenda for the meeting
- June minutes
 - A few errors noted. Motion to accept the minutes as updated passed unanimously by those present. **Chris to send corrected minutes to Katie for posting.**
- July minutes
 - A few errors noted. Motion to accept the minutes as updated passed unanimously by those present. **Chris to send corrected minutes to Katie for posting.**
- HARC Grant (Chris)
 - The HARC Grant program was cancelled for 2023 due to budget shortfalls.
 - Rather than waiting for the HARC Grants to be funded in the future, we'll pursue this project through a budget request.
 - There was a brief discussion of the Recordings at Risk grant program as a potential path to digitize the audio and video material (**post meeting note**: Our project is too small for this grant).
- Slate Hill Update (Monica)
 - Work on the Ghost Tour is underway (with an acknowledgement that next year we should start the planning process a little earlier). It is planned for Oct 14 4-8pm with a rain date of Oct 15.
 - Financial goal for the event is breakeven. Any additional proceeds will be earmarked for the restoration of gravestones in Slate Hill Cemetery.
 - We are working to self-fund the Ghost Tour - there is no pot of money to pull from so everyone is self-funding. From what we understand, this is how the last Ghost Tour was organized as well.

- Committee had a discussion around how to earmark revenue for future uses.
 - Joe will follow-up with David Kratzer on proceeds and how those will be handled.
 - If anyone knows anyone that would be interested in acting or participating at all, please let Monica know.
 - Cleaning is picking up next week (Sept 20) - meeting Wed at 930a and doing it for an hour.
- Ad Hoc Property Committee
 - Sept 26 - Second Public Forum at the Township Building at 630pm. The committee is at the point where they are putting out potential uses for the buildings.
 - There has been a market study done around potential uses and how much revenue each of those would generate - non-profit type businesses.
 - The architects are estimating the costs for adapting the buildings to those uses. Then there is an ROI attached to it. That is the meat of the presentation.
 - The township will probably put a management company into place to manage the buildings and tenants. The master plan will guide the uses of those buildings.
 - Joe has been pushing back against the option to sell the property and let the new owner go through the preservation costs. There is a fear of demolition through neglect of the existing buildings.
- Training topics
 - Joe went back and talked to Megan McNish (PA SHPO) to brainstorm some fundamental training topics. The initial list:
 - Historic Resource Surveys—what they do, what they don't do, how they can be used
 - An overview of the National Register program—review/listing process, benefits, what it does not do, how to use National Register nominations
 - Understanding the Secretary of the Interior's Standards—what do they mean and how can they be applied; why you may need more
 - This one may be more appropriate for HARB
 - Interpreting ordinance and design guidelines (this would be a good one for us to understand the zoning for the Edgewood Village historic district)
 - The group was aligned on Historic Resource Surveys, overview of the National Register program and interpreting ordinance and design guidelines.
 - We may want to add a line to the budget for training
 - Township has some money set aside for training, maybe we can use that

[Tom joined us at 8:04p]

- One of the benefits of training is socializing with other CLGs. Joe to talk to Megan about when and where these opportunities might be available.
- Community Day (Helen and Victor)
 - 200-300 people stopped by
 - People were excited to see us and they were interested in the Octagonal school house

- If we do it in the future we should have a banner made - we had cardboard signs.
- Sept 23 - Victor will do Harvest Day and give out flyers for the Ghost Tour - he is doing blacksmithing and has a personal booth
- CLG Mini-Grant Update (Tom and Monica)
 - Next step was to get the three web developer bids required to submit the grant for the website development.
 - Tom is trying to work through Jim and Katie to get a bid from the company utilized by the Township. They'll reach out to Megan to make sure we have everything and then they'll put the grant together.
 - After the three bids are in hand, Tom will reach out to Megan McNish to make sure we have everything together for the grant.
 - General agreement that we would put the Township's matching requirement in the 2024 budget request.
 - Cathy is still working on finalizing the group of 25 for the first round of QR codes.

New Business

- 2024 Budget Requests
 - Joe circulated a recommendation for a 2024 budget based on the overall goals that we had this year and the various projects that we were working on.
 - Joe met with David Kratzer yesterday and asked if there were other projects he wanted us involved in. They went through some municipal owned properties and there will be some things to get involved in, but nothing that is relevant from a budget perspective.
 - For the 2024 budget request, the only new project is a request for funding to update this historic research survey. We should update every 10 years and now it is 17 years old. That is covered by our CLG grant.
 - One of the requirements is that the data has to go to PA Share - a GIS System. It isn't a matter of filling out forms. It'll make the information more accessible.

[John Lewis joins us at 8:26p]

- For existing projects, Joe looked at what would need to be done in 2024:
 - For Slate Hill, Tom and Monica put together a Master Plan (v3) and that was used as a blueprint for budget requests.
 - Monica noted that we should add a budget request for the supplies to do the next 25 QR codes
 - We want to do another submission of the Keystone Grant which is 50% match and \$1k for cleaning materials.
 - Second project is the wall assessment - \$1k for an assessment.
 - On the annual community cleanup - \$500 was the number - privately funded.
 - Ghost Walk is privately funded
 - Joe put the project that we scoped for the HARC Grant into the budget.

- We are adding a line item for training.
- Octagonal School House
 - Located on Oxford Valley Road where the CVS is. There is still a foundation for it there. The land is owned by a private citizen and it is up for sale.
 - Helen provided some historic background on the Octagonal School House
 - There is an opportunity for us to raise awareness with the Board of Supervisors to buy the land or add zoning restrictions so the foundation can't be disturbed.
 - John noted that when the Township obtains property it is not done in a public meeting. The Township can't pay for property over the appraised amount. The challenge with the listing is that it isn't buildable.
 - John believes that all the current Board Members are aware of the historic significance - everyone has pictures and have been briefed on the email exchanges.
 - The Board may consider if there was a real opportunity around acquisition at or below the appraised price. The Board is not likely to want to use eminent domain or condemnation to take property.
 - There isn't available county open-space money available right now.
 - We'll revisit this in the Spring.