February 9, 2012 7:30 p.m.
Carriage House

The regular meeting of the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission was held tonight. Members present were: Steve Banks, Barbara Bartlett, David Harrower, Lois Hirsch, James McCann, Heidi Morein, Jack Washington, Mary Washington, Joyce Werkman and Tom Wieckowski. Guest present was: Ed Landau. Staff present was: Bryan T. Havir, Assistant Township Manager. (See attached attendance list).

1. ***Call to Order*** – Mr. Havir, Assistant Township Manager, called the meeting to order at 7:35 P.M.

2. ***Reorganization and Election of Officers*** - Mr. Havir asked for the Nominating Committee (Tom Wieckowski, Heidi Morein) to report on a slate of candidates for the Election of Officers for 2012. Mr. Wieckowski reported, on behalf of the Nominating Committee as follows: David Harrower for Chairman and the nominee for Vice-Chairman is Steve Banks. Upon motion of Mr. Wieckowski; seconded by Mr. Washington, there being no other nominations, the nominations were closed. David Harrower as Chairman and Steve Banks for Vice-Chairman were unanimously elected. At this time, Mr. Harrower assumed the chair and thanked all the members for their support.

3. ***Acceptance of Minutes*** – Mr. Harrower asked for a motion to approve the January 12, 2012 meeting minutes with the following corrections:

A. At item 6(D), that it was noted that regarding Ashbourne Country Club, the Historical Commission had no objection to the issuance of Demolition Permits 1, 2, 3 and 4, but that it was recommended that a Demolition Permit 5 for the Cottage House not be issued pending an opportunity to work with the Owner to seek a re-use, as that building appears structurally sound and is historically important.

B. At item 6(D), that while a demolition permit has not been requested for the Club House building, it is hoped that knowing of that building's Design Award in 1954, the Owner may assess greater value for the Club House and consider re-using it in their development of the site.

C. At item 7, the first sentence should read: "Mr. Harrower noted that the concerns of a resident of the Edge Hill neighborhood were brought to his attention, suggesting that the historical information on the Township website regarding the Battle of Edge Hill is inaccurate, and suggesting that it is necessary to expand upon the historical information for Edge Hill on the website."

Mrs. Washington made a motion to accept the January 12, 2012 meeting minutes as corrected; seconded by Mr. McCann and unanimously approved.

**4. *Committee Reports***

A. Education Committee – Ms. Cohen was not present to offer her report. Mr. Harrower announced that the Black History Month lecture, scheduled for February 22, 2012 would focus on "Montgomery County African Americans and the Civil War: Where were they from? Where did they serve? And after the war, where did they go?" The lecture would be held at Curtis Hall commencing at 2:00 P.M. Mr. Harrower also noted that a National Preservation Month lecture will be provided by either Mr. Pickens or Mr. Harrower in May. Mr. Harrower noted he is working on a program which will be called "Transportation Systems and the Development of Cheltenham Township." Discussion ensued regarding the North Pennsylvania Railroad, Cresheim Branch Railway, Northeastern Pennsylvania Railroad, and Trolleys. Mr. Harrower stated that he is scheduled to visit with the curator of the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum in Hamburg, PA on the 19th.

Mr. Harrower noted that the docent schedule was being circulated. He stated that the Museum was closed the last two Sundays, one closing due to weather and the other for lack of a docent. Mr. Harrower noted the absence of Mr. Banks and Mrs. Hirsch was felt, and said he was glad to see them both at the meeting and on the road to recovery. He encouraged volunteers to sign up for a Sunday.

B. Preservation Committee Report – Mr. Harrower stated that since he is now Chair of the Commission, he will be relinquishing his role as Chairman of the Preservation Committee. He invited anyone of the members interested in chairing the Preservation Committee to please contact him.

C. Museum Committee Report – Mrs. Spruill stated that she and Ms. Breen were working on deaccessioning. Mrs. Spruill had placed some items on the meeting table and asked for someone to identify the items (numbered yellow patches). Mr. Havir identified them as belonging to the Historical Commission Market Day banner. It was decided to store them in the VCR Cabinet in the Carriage House. Additionally, two vases which had been stored at Rowland Community Center were displayed which required repair (gluing) and Mrs. Spruill invited members to form an informal group to meet to repair some of the items.

Mrs. Spruill and Ms. Breen reviewed the clothing and textile archival project and felt there was at least 30 hours of work remaining to complete the project. Volunteers will be needed to uncrate boxes and assemble shelving. Mr. Harrower suggested forming a work team to accomplish same. Some dates will need to be discussed. Ms. Morein noted her availability to assist after February 22, 2012.

Mrs. Spruill asked for a volunteer to provide tours at the museum on February 12, 2012. Mr. Banks agreed to assist with tours.

The docent program with Cheltenham High School is no longer working and is not being effectively administered through the Honors History Program as it was in the past. and Mrs. Spruill suggested assistance from other schools. It was suggested that contacts be made at Bishop McDevitt High School and Arcadia University to recruit student docents.

***5. Chairman's Report*** – Mr. Harrower noted Mr. Banks dedication to the Commission and thanked him for serving as Chairman for the past four years.

Mr. Harrower referred to an e-mail he sent to the members regarding upcoming events in the area. If the members find this helpful, he will continue to provide an update on a monthly basis. He mentioned one additional event, which is the Open House on February 11th & 12th, at the Chelten Hills Model Railroad Club, which is at the former Ogontz (aka York Road) train station; Mrs. Washington commented that it is worth a visit.

***6. Staff Report*** –

A. Mr. Havir provided an update on the water damage to the third floor at the Richard Wall Museum. The Township filed an insurance claim. The Township was asked to secure quotes to repair the interior and exterior damage. Insurance will not cover certain maintenance items (mortar and flashing around gables) but will cover interior plastering and painting to correct the interior water damage. Early proposals from contractors for masonry work and roof flashing suggest approximately $30,000 for repairs. These items were not earmarked in the capital budget for 2012. Upon discussion with the Township Manager, the funds earmarked for the upgrades to the archival storage room may need to be reprogrammed for this priority repair project. Mr. Havir noted that a preservation consultant, Preservation Design Partnership, had visited the museum to conduct a cursory survey of the damage. The initial opinion was that the beaded seal used around the chimney flashing had deteriorated. A more in-depth study will be conducted. A

consultant proposal will include recommendations to repair the immediate affected areas, and to check similar conditions at the other chimney. Mr. Harrower noted that PDP is the same firm whose expertise has been appreciated in the recent work at the Cheltenham Arts Center, and previously at Curtis Hall, and, Mrs. Washington added, the Shovel Shop restoration.

B. Shovel Shop Lease – Mr. Havir noted that the current lease term expires on June 30, 2012. A letter was sent to the tenant in accordance with the terms of the agreement about renewal. The new lease agreement would be reviewed by the Historical Commission and need to be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

C. Historic Preservation Ordinance – Mr. Havir stated that the draft was previously reviewed by the Historical Commission last fall. The draft ordinance will be reviewed at an upcoming Planning Commission meeting this spring for recommendation to the Building and Zoning Committee to set the schedule for a public hearing.

D. Richard Wall Museum Window Candles - Mr. Havir noted that staff had been gathering quotes for approximately 45 battery-operated LED photo cell, dusk-to-dawn, replacement candles. Mr. McCann had also made some inquiries for replacement candles.

***7. Old Business***

*A. Status of Museum Cataloguing Project*: Mr. Harrower noted that the additional archival boxes and shelving needed to complete the project have been received. Mr. Harrower had assembled one shelving unit which is located in the Carriage House and noted that he wished to send a note to our local area Home Depot to thank them for discounting their $100 shelf units to meet Lowe's sale price of $65.00 per unit, enabling the purchase to be made within the Township.

Mr. Harrower also noted he would like to have the user access codes to the Pastperfect program from Ms. Karuza and be able to ask her questions if needed, so that he and Mrs. Spruill can start working with the software and using it for its designed purpose.

*B. Report on Framing Two Prints* - Mr. Harrower stated he would like to table this item until late spring as other projects such as the completion of the museum cataloguing project have required some additional expenses and should take priority.

*C. Update on Kerlin Farm* – Mr. Landau provided a brief update. Proposed development of this property is scheduled for discussion at the next Planning Commission meeting scheduled for February 27, 2012 at the Township Administration Building. The Historical Commission's position is to recommend that, as a condition of approval in developing the site, that the proposed lots containing the historic building footprint be set aside so that the Kerlin Farm may be restored and occupied as motioned by Mr. Banks; seconded by Mr. Wieckowski and unanimously approved. Mr. Harrower encouraged Historical Commission members to attend the meeting. Discussion ensued about the Friends Group becoming a 501c3.

*D. Report on Historical Research of:*

Ashbourne Country Club, Cheltenham – Mr. Harrower reported that the Historical Commission, following documentary research on the property, agreed that there is no objection to the issuance of demolition permits for Demolition Permit No. 11-6862-1-D (Half-way House); Permit No. 11-6862-2-D (Pro Shop); Permit No. 11-6862-3-D (Cart Barn); and Permit No. 11-6862-4-D (Ranch House). However, regarding Permit No. 11-6862-5-D (Cottage House), it was agreed that there *is objection* to the issuance of a demolition permit. Mr. Harrower will copy the Township Staff on correspondence to the developer, Matrix Corporation, indicating that the Farmhouse

appears structurally sound and is properly secured and requesting that it be considered for adaptive re-use. (See attached report dated February 9, 2012). Mrs. Washington made a motion to approve the draft letter and research as presented and have it forwarded to the owner; seconded by Ms. Morein, and unanimously approved. Mr. Havir suggested copying the Chairs of the Planning Commission and Public Affairs Committee as well the Township Manager.

Mrs. Washington is continuing her research and presented further findings. It was agreed that this research makes a fascinating story, which deserves to be formalized with an article or an exhibit.

Ms. Morein noted that she was planning to contact Mr. Thalheimer, son of the Architect, to conduct an interview about the design of the 1954 addition to the Ashbourne Country Club House. Perhaps he may wish to make a presentation on the subject in the future.

1811 Willow Avenue, La Mott – Ms. Werkman noted that there has been no action at the property and the February BHAR meeting had been cancelled.

E. Mr. Harrower shared with the members the recommendations of the committee tasked with reviewing concerns regarding the accuracy of the historical information for Edge Hill found on the Township's website and the importance of the events in that locale. The committee found "no gross inaccuracies" on the website, but recommended five minor changes to the history section of the township's website. Regarding Edge Hill, it is recommended that it be clarified that some of the Battle of Edge Hill occurred in Cheltenham Township, and that name of 'Guineatown' is a local name and not a formal name. Further recommendations pertain to clarity of navigation in the history section of the website. Mr. Harrower made a motion that these

proposed changes be forwarded to the Public Information Officer, seconded by Mr. McCann, and unanimously approved. Messrs. Harrower and Wieckowski agreed to further develop corrected verbiage regarding Historic Districts prior to submitting the recommended changes.

F. Mr. Harrower announced that he had picked up the CD with electronic scans of Mr. Skalar's slides dating to the time of the Wall House restoration. He would like to review the copies before the original slides are returned to Mr. Skalar. Post-Meeting Note: Mr. Harrower reports that the images on the CD are acceptable, and the slides may be returned.

***8. New Business –***

A. Mr. Banks made a motion to recommend subscription renewals for Preservation Pennsylvania ($35); National Alliance of Preservation Commissions ($80); and Forum National Trust for Historic Preservation ($115); seconded by Mr. Washington and unanimously accepted.

B. The discussion on the NEH Preservation Assistance Grant regarding cultural resource surveys will be continued to the next meeting.

***9. Other Business***

Mrs. Spruill announced that she had received a deed of a gift from the Knauer Foundation for items heretofore on loan and displayed in the Colonial Bedroom and Kitchen; the document listed the actual dates of the items from the 1700-1800's. Mrs. Spruill will follow up with an acknowledgement to the donor and the information will be filed in the archives.

Mr. McCann inquired about the demolition permit for Cheltenham Elementary School. He would like to photograph what is there before it is taken down.

Mr. McCann noted that he noticed that the rain gutters at the Shovel Shop building were full of leaves and that the mulberry tree adjacent to the building needed trimming. Mr. Havir

stated he would follow up. (Following the meeting, it was noted the leaves had been removed from the gutters on the Tuesday before the meeting. The Facilities Supervisor will follow up on the tree trimming).

**10.** ***Adjournment*** - There being no further business, upon motion of Mr. McCann, seconded by Mrs. Spruill and approved by the Historical Commission, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

David G. Kraynik
Township Manager

Submitted by: Kathryn McDevitt

# MEETING ATTENDANCE LIST

## Historical Commission Regular Meeting @ 7:30 P.M.

## Thursday, February 9, 2012

### Carriage House

**One Wall Park Drive, Elkins Park, PA 19027**

*(Please Print Clearly)*

| Print Name | Mailing Address (only if different) | Telephone Number (only if different) | E-mail Address (only if different |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mary Washington | | | |
| Lois Hirsch | | | |
| Jack Washington Sr | | | |
| Barbara Bartlett | | | |
| James J. McGann III | | | |
| Tom Wieckowski | | | |
| Stephen Banks | | | |
| J Werkman | | | |
| Ed Landau | | | |
| D. Sprivill | | | |
| David Harrower | | | |

February 9, 2012

Mr. Robert Conklin
Matrix / Ashbourne Assoc., LP
3 Centre Drive
Monroe Twp, NJ 08831

**RE: Demolition Permit Applications for Various Structures at the Ashbourne Country Club, 1100 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham**

Dear Mr. Conklin,

The Cheltenham Township Historical Commission, at its meeting on January 12, 2012, reviewed and discussed Matrix /Ashbourne Assoc. LP's Permit Applications to demolish several vacant structures on the premises of the Ashbourne Country Club at 1100 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham.

This matter was first presented to the Historical Commission at its December 2011 meeting by Mr. Carmen Reitano of Cheltenham Township Building Department. We were advised that Matrix/Ashbourne Assoc., LP, has submitted five separate Demolition Permit Applications for five distinct buildings or structures on the site. They are as follows:

1. **Building One – Halfway House – (Permit No. 11-6862-1-D)**
2. **Building Two – Pro Shop – (Permit No. 11-6862-2-D)**
3. **Building Three – Cart Barn – (Permit No. 11-6862-3-D)**
4. **Building Four – Ranch House – (Permit No. 11-6862-4-D)**
5. **Building Five – Cottage House – (Permit No. 11-6862-5-D)**

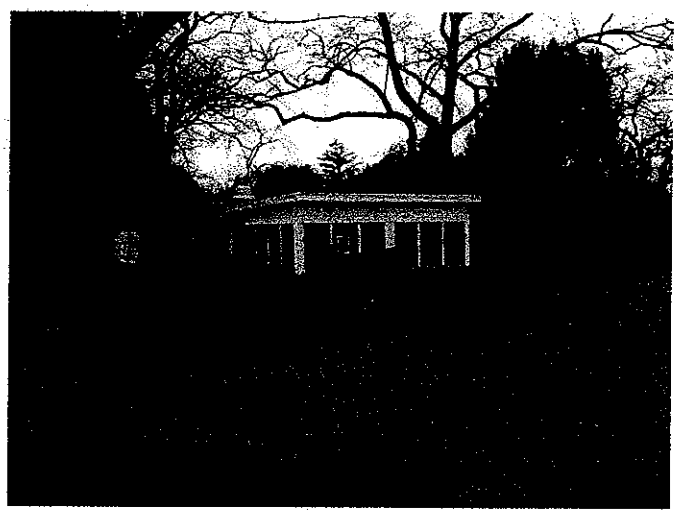
When presented at the December meeting, there were no photographs to accompany the Applications, making them difficult to assess. Further, one of the structures, the 'Cottage House,' was believed by one of the Historical Commission members to be from the 19th century. Therefore, it was requested that the Historical Commission have an opportunity to conduct documentary research on the property, and to send a delegation to the site to see the structures in person.

The site visit was coordinated with Matrix / Ashbourne Assoc. by Mr. Carmen Reitano, and occurred on Monday, January 9th, 2012. Attendees were Mr. Carmen Reitano, Ms. Mary Washington, Mr. Jim McCann, III, Ms. Heidi Morein, and Mr. Dave Harrower.

It was observed that all structures on the site exhibit signs of vandalism, notably with broken windows; all window openings in the various structures have therefore been closed up with plywood. All doors have been locked or barricaded. No buildings were entered during the visit. Exterior photographs were taken of the buildings, with additional photographs taken of the general setting.

At the January 12, 2012, meeting of the Historical Commission, the findings of the site visit and historical research were presented and discussed. (A copy of the written-up historical research accompanies this letter.) It was then the consensus of the Historical Commission to respond to our review of the pending Demolition Permit Applications with the following recommendations:

Regarding **Building One – Halfway House – (Permit No. 11-6862-1-D)**, it was agreed that there is ***no objection*** to the issuance of a demolition permit.



Regarding **Building Two – Pro Shop – (Permit No. 11-6862-2-D)**, it was agreed that there is ***no objection*** to the issuance of a demolition permit.

Regarding **Building Three – Cart Barn – (Permit No. 11-6862-3-D)**, it was agreed that there is ***no objection*** to the issuance of a demolition permit.

Regarding **Building Four – Ranch House – (Permit No. 11-6862-4-D)**, it was agreed that there is ***no objection*** to the issuance of a demolition permit.

Regarding **Building Five – Cottage House – (Permit No. 11-6862-5-D)**, however, it was agreed that there ***is objection*** to the issuance of a demolition permit. It was observed that this is an historic stone farmhouse which documentary research has revealed dates to the early 19th century, predating the establishment of the Ashbourne Country Club ca. 1922. The building has had modern alterations with the replacement of its windows and the placement of aluminum cladding over wooden trim. Most of these 'improvements' are now damaged from vandalism and perhaps also from exposure to extreme weather conditions; earlier wooden eaves and wooden trim are visible beneath areas of fallen aluminum cladding. A one-story shed-roofed addition projects at the back of the building, clad with aluminum siding; this seems in fair condition. The porch of this farmhouse has collapsed, the windows have been damaged and are boarded-up, and the roof is showing signs of age. But there is no evidence of structural damage: there are no cracks and there are no voids in the stone walls of the building. It is the recommendation and request of the Historical Commission, therefore, that a use be found for this 'Cottage House' building, as either a residence or for some other function related to the operation of the site when developed. Regardless, *use* is the operative word. A building that is used will be maintained, and will not be attractive to teens who are intrigued by a spooky, boarded-up house.

In addition to these comments regarding the structures for which Demolition Permit Applications have been presented, we have further comments regarding the other buildings on the property.

Our research has revealed that the Club House building of the Ashbourne Country Club is of an award-winning design, recognized in the January 1954 issue of Progressive Architecture magazine. Because of this importance, and because the building does not exhibit obvious structural concerns (admittedly our observations are based only on a brief walk around the perimeter of the building), it is the recommendation of the Historical Commission that the Club House building be considered for rehabilitation and re-use in the new development, if at all possible.

Additionally, our site visit revealed that the maintenance complex appears to have been built within and around the remains of the historic 19th Century bank-barn associated with the 'Cottage House' farm. While the roof and wooden framing of the original barn are no longer extant, it appears that the stone walls of the original barn are partially intact, including the main barn-door opening in the west wall. The modification of the barn from its original form likely occurred during the 1920s development of the farm into the golf club; the stone walls are capped with terra cotta tiles common on 1920s industrial buildings, and the steel casement windows in the office are also typical of the 1920s. Lastly, as is shown in the map research, the barn complex included a barnyard with a stone fence along the south and east. The age of this wall predates the 1920s, given the massive carved granite gate post at the east. On account of these findings, and because the barn complex does not have obvious structural damage, it is the recommendation and request of the Historical Commission that the barn complex be retained and repaired. Hopefully it might find viable use continuing as the maintenance hub of the larger property.

In summary, so often the Demolition Permits which come before the Historical Commission are for dilapidated and structurally unsound buildings. If they are not of noteworthy historical significance, or if they are simply too badly damaged, it is typically our recommendation only that photographic documentation being done prior to the demolition permits be granted. Essentially this is the category into which fall the first four Demolition Permit Applications related to the Ashbourne Country Club.

Occasionally, however, as with the fifth Demolition Permit Application, a building with notable historical importance is identified, and, as in this case, because it does not exhibit any obvious structural failures, we feel it appropriate to recommend that the demolition permit application not be issued and that a continued use be sought for the building. Indeed, if we had been more aware of this 'Cottage House' building, we would certainly have included it in our Cultural Resources Surveys, which seek to acknowledge and document the Township's important historical structures.

If you have any questions regarding our observations, recommendations and requests, I invite you to be in contact with me. We are grateful for the opportunity and time given to us to review the Applications, and to conduct research – and for the permission given for us to visit the site. If we may be of any resource in seeking alternatives to demolition for the 'Cottage House,' please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

David I. Harrower, RA, LEED AP
Cheltenham Township Historical Commission, Vice-Chair
509 Fox Road
Glenside, PA 19038
215-804-8703 cell

cc: Cheltenham Township Historical Commission
Mr. Carmen Reitano, Assistant to the Director of Engineering, Zoning & Inspections
Ms. Kathy A. Hampton, Chair, Public Affairs Committee
Mr. Thom Cross, Chair, Planning Commission
Mr. Bryan Havir, Assistant Township Manager