

## Minutes

### **Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board**

Monday, July 16, 2018, Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building

**Attendance: Present:** Jim Martin, chair; Joe Bevins, Jonathan Hill, Brendan Kelly, Yvette Yescas. Special guests: Ian McMeans, Mt. Lebanon Assistant Manager/Municipal Planner; Suzanne Siebert, chair of Mt. Lebanon Planning Board. **Absent:** Laura Pace Lilley, staff liaison; John Bendel, commission liaison; John Evans, vice chair; Anna Siefken.

**Call to order:** Chair Jim Martin called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. Yvette Yescas noted that invited guest Bill Callahan would not be at the meeting on time because he was counting on a 7 p.m. start and was traveling from Erie. After discussion, the board decided to reschedule Mr. Callahan for the August 20 meeting rather than waiting for him to arrive. [Note: after the meeting it was learned Mr. Callahan would be unavailable. His visit is rescheduled for September 17 at 5 p.m.]

Invited guests Ian McMeans, Mt. Lebanon's assistant manager/municipal planner and Suzanne Sieber, chair of the Mt. Lebanon planning board, introduced themselves.

#### **Consideration of minutes:**

The May minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **Citizen comments:**

None

#### **Chair report:**

None

#### **Commission report:**

None

#### **Staff report:**

None

Jim Martin briefly mentioned the board is looking to learn about zoning as a historic preservation tool, the topic historic preservationist Bill Callahan will be speaking about at the next meeting. He briefly mentioned the original plan several years ago to create a local historic district in Virginia Manor. Ian McMeans complimented the board on the Design Guide as a good tool to keep Mt. Lebanon's historic nature. Yvette Yescas clarified that the community did not support the concept of a historic architecture review board for Virginia Manor because it would put residents in the position of having to sit on HARB making decisions, so the thought was it was better to include some of the design issues directly into the zoning code. Jim Martin said the Design Guide is a good way for residents to identify historic preservation issues and he noted the board members also are available to consult with residents looking for advice.

Jonathan Hill said he met with a retired couple on Magnolia to talk about their renovation plans at their request. Hill said zoning can be useful but that he wasn't sure if it should be used to dictate building materials.

Jim Martin noted that the board cannot give a list of contractors but that it can educate the public. He said historic preservation can enhance tourism and keeps property values strong.

#### **Liaison reports:**

**Mt. Lebanon Partnership:** none

**Historical Society of Mount Lebanon:** Jonathan Hill — While he did not attend any meetings since last HPB meeting, Hill said he had visited the progress of the Historical Society building. He said work has uncovered some original tile and murals and that they are being careful with the work. Ian McMeans said the work is being staged and that the first floor of the building will be open, and will host an exhibit this fall, while money is being raised to work on upper floors.

#### **Continuing business:**

**Historic District Design Guide: Yvette Yescas** – Yvette Yescas reported that Public Information Office Susan Morgans is nearly finished with editing the Design Guide and that it would be available shortly. Jonathan Hill asked if it would be posted on the website in PDF format and Yescas said it would be in an interactive Flipbook format but readers could download PDF versions if they wanted.

Jim Martin brought up a draft of the file on his computer and showed what it will look like. He called the project very detailed and very user friendly. He said the original guide, which was created for Virginia Manor, was cumbersome to read. Yvette Yescas said consultant Nicole Kubas did a great job on the project, allowing it now to be useful to all residents.

Jonathan Hill suggested the guide be copyrighted. Ian McMeans said since it was created under municipal contract it is the municipality's property. He also asked McMeans if any business owners on Washington Road took advantage of the tax credit. McMeans said it would only go in front of the planning board if it was a new project; it would go through the inspection department. Jim Martin said a Mt. Lebanon Magazine story featured owners of a duplex who did take advantage of the credit.

**Historic signage: Jim Martin** — Jim Martin said he attended a land use group meeting to discuss plans for signs identifying the historic district to increase awareness of the district. He showed a map of the district on the projector. Ian McMeans said the land use group consists of the assistant manager/planner, manager, building inspector, sometimes the commercial districts manager and the municipal engineer, and it meets every Wednesday morning at 9 a.m. Anyone building a project can come as an initial meeting. They then run through any code issues before any applications are submitted so the applications are in better shape by the time they are turned in. It can serve as a predevelopment conference.

Jim Martin said the sign project would have two phases: medallions on top of street signs in the historic district. Ian McMeans said that would only require approval from public works (no planning board or zoning hearing board). Jim Martin said he is working on getting specs before getting bids and developing a budget. The second phase is entry signs to be placed as drivers are coming into Mt. Lebanon major thoroughfares. Ian McMeans said those signs may require zoning changes if its considered a neighborhood designation sign. Depending on the location, the HPB may need approval from the planning board and commission if it's within the municipal street right of way. If it's on Washington Road, it may require approvals from PennDOT.

Martin listed some potential locations: Beverly Road by Newburn in a traffic island, Washington Road coming from Dormont.

Jonathan Hill asked Ian McMeans about the stalled Zamagias project near the border with Dormont. McMeans said a resident had filed an adverse possession lawsuit. While the developer won two court decisions, the resident has again appealed and the project is on a court ordered hold while it works its way through court. Hill wondered if a good place for the sign would be at the southern end of that property.

Jim Martin listed other potential locations: Cochran at Osage, Bower Hill and Cochran, Castle Shannon Boulevard near Hitchhiker Brewing, Roycroft at Mt. Lebanon Boulevard, Cedar Boulevard by the recreation fields, Beadling by Markham School, and opposite the Galleria on Washington Road. He said the plan was fluid but the HPB would come to the planning board once they have the locations nailed down and a final design of the sign.

Ian McMeans said it would be up to the commission as to how much money they would get for the project, which is why he recommended doing the medallions first, since they are less expensive.

Suzanne Sieber clarified that the planning board makes recommendation but does not actually give approvals but she said the sign plan sounded great.

Joe Bevins suggested traffic islands as good locations because they make the sign more recognizable. It's easy to carve out space for the sign and vegetation is easy and inexpensive. Planting draught-tolerant perennials make it look nice.

Jonathan Hill also said a third plan for signs is to install a historic district information sign near the history center to explain what the historic district is.

Ian McMeans said the Mt. Lebanon Partnership's Placemaking Plan calls for public art spaces and one is recommended for that spot, which might make it work well with the sign. He noted Eric Milliron is the liaison to the Partnership and Yvette Yescas noted Bill Callahan is the president of that group.

Jim Martin reiterated that the sign project will be phased but that it will not happen this year.

**Brick Streets: Yvette Yescas** — Yvette Yescas said she was able to salvage material about brick streets from her crashed computer and that she continues work on it.

Jim Martin said he received a message from Susan Morgans telling him that Birch and Duquesne were damaged in recent storms. He took photos and videos of the two streets. Duquesne is not in the historic district and is categorized as a D street by PennDOT, meaning it would not be recommended to be reconstructed in brick, perhaps because of its steepness. Martin suggested making the hill portion asphalt but keep the top as brick. However, he noted he hadn't yet talked to residents of the street for their input.

Ian McMeans said it would make sense to first find out how much of the street is due to be replaced.

Jim Martin said there was nothing wrong with Birch, which is in the historic district.

Ian McMeans said the sand base of Hilf got washed away. Yvette Yescas said she would not be sad to see the brick on Hilf go, especially if public works saved the pavers for reuse. As far as Duquesne, she said several other streets in the area are made of brick but it's not part of the street's character. She personally thought it should be preserved but doesn't think it should be a priority.

**Notebook and website review: Joe Bevins** — Joe Bevins said he looked at the work completed by Laura Pace Lilley in the public information office on the website and it conformed with what they had talked about at the subcommittee meeting, so everything appeared to be in order.

**FAQ review: Brendan Kelly** — Brendan Kelly said he worked on the questions for residents to ask contractors and that he would circulate the latest draft for feedback.

**New business:** Suzanne Sieber asked about the plans for the Christian Science Church. Ian McMeans replied that it is under a purchase agreement but that he has not yet received any development plans. Suzanne asked if it is to be torn down, would the HPB fight to preserve it. Jonathan Hill said there is nothing you can really do to stop it. Yvette said they could talk to the commission about it but too often, they find out about demolition after it's already been approved. But, if residents asked them to go to the commission to say why it's important, they could make the plea. Ian McMeans said demolition permits go through the inspections department and that anyone can request it. Inspections' main concern is safety and proper plans for fill. But if someone wanted to build something on it larger than a single-family home, they would need to go through planning board approval. Sieber reiterated that the owner can demolish a property. McMeans said the property is zoned R-1. Jonathan Hill said that means they can't put a CoGo's in there.

Yvette Yescas said it's important for the HPB to know when this stuff is going on. Right now, information does not get out in a timely manner. Jonathan Hill said the most important thing is to make sure zoning rules are applied. Ian McMeans said they definitely hold people to our standards in our zoning code. He gave the example of a developer who wanted a text amendment to the code to make his use work. The planning board did not recommend it and the commission did not approve it. The current commission supports the zoning code.

Suzanne Sieber said there should be a means to inform the HPB. McMeans said he would talk to the building inspector.

**Review of 2018 goals/3-year and 5-year plan**

Jim Martin said he wanted the board to review and refine its list of goals for the next three years at the August meeting, but that he would not be able to attend.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m. The next meeting is Monday, August 20 at 5 p.m. at 710 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon.