

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 13, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe McCormick, Joshua Anderson, John Kabli, Jonathan Martin, Lee Ann Embrey

TOWNSHIP STAFF: John Weller, Planning Director

Phil Yocum, Historic Consultant, Commonwealth Heritage Group
Theresa Santalucia, Board of Supervisors Liaison

I. Call to Order – Joe McCormick called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. Review of Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes for January 9, 2023.

ACTION: Passed 5-0 (Anderson/Martin)

III. Public Comment

None.

IV. PLANS

- 1. Columbia Cottage at Boot Road
Address: 930 & 936 E. Boot Rd.
Designated HR: 046 William Everhart House
Request: Lot consolidation of 2 lots into 1 and construction of a 64,908 sq. ft. assisted living and memory care facility.**

Steve Schmid for the Applicant attended virtually; the Applicant's attorney, Aristidis Christakis, attended in person. John Weller provided a brief introduction. Historical Commission review is required for this project due to its proximity to the William Everhart House and associated structures.

Phil Yocum noted that the Everhart House and associated garage are across Boot Rd. from the project site; a related Tenant Farm was once on the east side of Ship Rd., but none of those buildings are standing today. Since the project features single-story, low-rise buildings, Mr. Yocum said there would be no real negative impact to the Everhart House, but he suggested a dense landscaped buffer and that an informational marker be placed along the sidewalk noting that this area saw active fighting during the American Revolution in the Battle of the Clouds.

Mr. Schmid asked for specific locations of existing informational markers so he could get an idea of what the Commission wanted, as well as contact information for someone willing to provide guidance. Joshua Anderson volunteered to assist. Mr. Yocum said informational markers

generally contain a map, a collage, and explanatory text. Existing markers for Thomas Mill and Indian Run Farm were noted. Mr. Schmid asked if the Township would assist in obtaining a permit from PennDOT for work done in their right-of-way. Mr. Weller said the Township will work with Mr. Schmid on the exact location of the marker and suggested it be placed outside of the right-of-way, but still readily viewable, to avoid the need for PennDOT approval. Mr. Weller will provide Mr. Schmid with Mr. Anderson's contact information.

Mr. Christakis noted that the Applicant did include a landscape plan (Sheet 10 of 17) in its submission to the Township. He requested comments before the plan goes to the Planning Commission. Mr. Yocum did acknowledge that Sheet 10 shows trees and shrubs marked along the frontage of the site and recommended a mix of deciduous and evergreens to provide year-round screening.

John Kabli asked if an archeological study will be required. Mr. Yocum said the contractor will be made aware at the pre-construction meeting of the possibility of artifacts in the area, and that should any be found, they should be turned over to the Township. Mr. Yocum said a formal study is not necessary and may even be problematic given the State's desire to keep private the locations of known archaeological resources.

**MOTION: To recommend approval of the request of lot consolidation and construction of an assisted living and memory care facility with the condition that adequate landscaped screening be provided, and an historical information marker pursued.
(Martin/Anderson)**

VOTE: Passed, 5-0

V. Old Business:

1. Historic Preservation Award Event Planning

Mr. McCormick advised that he spoke with the owners of VK Brewing, and they indicated that they would be happy to host the awards event provided it was not scheduled on a weekend. After brief discussion on the logistics of holding the awards event off site and then returning to the Township building for the regular meeting, the members decided to schedule the awards event on a different night than the monthly meeting. The members agreed to Wednesday, March 29, at a time to be determined; Mr. McCormick will confirm with VK Brewing. This date will provide enough time for the awards to be fabricated.

2. Historic Ordinance Amendment Discussion

Mr. Weller said he is working on an amendment to the Historic Preservation article of the Zoning Ordinance to make the regulations compatible with the recent update to the historic resource inventory. Members discussed other provisions that they would like to include, provided that the Township has the legal authority to require and enforce them:

- change the 30-60-90 day waiting period for a demolition permit in an effort to slow down the process of demolition and provide more time for possible reuse of historic resources;

- provide some type of encouragement to prospective demolition applicants to dismantle rather than demolish and provide architectural salvage; and
- require more extensive documentation before demolition is allowed.
- Citing the recent Bush Automotive project, members would like a requirement to provide a clear plan of what is proposed before granting a demolition permit.

Mr. Weller said he will look into the Township's legal authority regarding such matters. He will have a draft amendment ready for review at the April meeting.

VI. Historical Commission Concerns

There was discussion of the Bush Automotive project and concerns that demolition has already begun at the site. Mr. Weller read from an e-mail received from the Applicant's attorney denying any demolition to date, but acknowledging that electrical and septic systems were or have been removed. Members maintained that such actions leave the property compromised from the standpoint of adaptive reuse or rehabilitation. Mr. Weller said the Applicant has submitted a complete application as of February 1, and the project is scheduled for review at the Commission's March meeting. Mr. McCormick pointed out that the Applicant has responsibilities under the terms of a Façade Agreement for the Thomas Mill, and that this provides an opportunity to receive an update and possible enforcement.

Jon Martin asked for clarification on the status of the December and January meeting minutes. Mr. Weller confirmed that the December 2022 minutes were tabled and remain so at this time. The Commission previously agreed to table approval of the December 2022 minutes until such time as Staff could listen to the recording of the meeting. Ms. O'Connor has since done this but was out sick this evening and could not report on her findings. The January 2023 minutes have been approved.

Mr. McCormick reported on the Zoning Hearing from January 26 for the signage proposed for the new Wawa at the intersection of Ship Rd. and Lincoln Hwy. He confirmed that gas pricing must be displayed at least once per State requirements but is not required at all the locations proposed by the Applicant. He also confirmed that the Applicant will remove the pricing and text from the north-facing side of the sign on Ship Rd. (as a one-way northbound road, no one would see this side of the sign). The Applicant also agreed to reduce the height of the sign along the new southbound segment of Ship Rd. from 20 ft. to 7 ft. and to remove the digital pricing from the south side of the sign, as it will not be visible to motorists, since this is will be one-way southbound).

VII. Township Announcements:

Mr. Weller reported that Westrum has withdrawn their application to build an assisted living facility at 50-70 Boot Rd., next to Boot Road Park, citing rising financing costs. He added that another party has expressed interest in a similar project at this location.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

**Motion: To adjourn the meeting.
(Kabli/Anderson)**

Vote: Passed, 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.



Recording Secretary,

John R. Weller, AICP
Planning Director