

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
September 11, 2023**

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

TOWNSHIP STAFF: John Weller, Director of Planning
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager

Theresa Santalucia, Supervisor

I. Call to Order – Joe McCormick called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Review of Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes for August 14, 2023.

ACTION: Passed 3-0-1 (Anderson/Martin, Ms. Embrey abstaining)

III. Public Comment

Resident Glenn deCray expressed concern for the condition of the Trimble Mill on Shoen Rd. Ms. Gural-Bear advised that the property owner is in the process of restoring the site.

Mr. deCray also presented the Commission with a framed antique map of the Township and original deeds that belonged to his recently deceased mother and long-time Township resident, Hélène deCray. The Commission thanked Mr. deCray for the donation.

IV. PLANS

1. SS Philip and James Roman Catholic Church

Address: 701 E. Lincoln Hwy.

Designated HR: 343 SS Philip and James Rectory

Request: To approve the building permit application to complete a roof replacement with materials in kind.

Michael McCafferty, Business Manager for SS Philip and James, was in attendance and advised that the roof will be replaced with the same materials used on St. Mary's Chapel. Mr. Yocum's review letter found no adverse impact. Members had no questions.

MOTION: To approve the building permit application to complete a roof replacement with materials in kind for the designated historic resource 343, SS Philip and James Rectory.

ACTION: Passed 4-0 (McCormick/Anderson)

- 2. Valley Creek Homes, LLC**
Address: 301-305 Church Farm La.
Designated HR: 327 Pickwick House
Request: To support approval of the conditional use application to construct an age-restricted community with 330 dwelling units.

In attendance on behalf of the Applicant were Jack Robinson, PE, of JMR Engineering and Kevin McLaughlin of McKee Builders.

Mr. Weller gave a summary of the proposal for an age-restricted, active adult community on a 100-acre tract bound by Church Farm La., Exton Park, and the border with East Whiteland Township. The site includes the historic Pickwick House, which will be preserved, along with the Pickwick Stable and nine vacant homes previously used by Church Farm School for faculty housing, which will be demolished. The historic Kate's Mansion Gate House and Garage are within 300 feet of the project site.

Mr. Weller explained that the project site was part of the land approved for development as the Valley Creek Corporate Center. The Board of Supervisors approved the conditional use application for that project in August 2000, which called for 1.75 million square feet of office space in seventeen buildings; only three of those buildings were built. While conditional use approvals do not normally expire, this one was an exception, and it expired in August 2022. For this reason, the conditions imposed by the Board's action are no longer in effect, and the only restrictions on development of this site are those imposed by the current Zoning.

Mr. Robinson gave further details about the project, which will provide 330 dwelling units as single-family homes, carriage homes, and townhouses. The Pickwick House will be sold separately from the rest of the community; it will therefore not be subject to any age limits, nor will it be included in the homeowners' association. The existing row of large trees will be retained to provide a buffer. Mr. Robinson said the Applicant will comply with all of the recommendations in Phil Yocum's letter dated August 28, 2003, including taking pictures of the Stable after the leaves have fallen and documenting the faculty housing structures. The Applicant will secure the services of Robert Wise to document and photograph the structures and will provide that documentation to the Township during the conditional use process.

The Applicant is currently revising the plan to address concerns raised by the Township Planning Commission for further discussion with them.

Mr. McCormick emphasized the importance of pedestrian connections to the Chester Valley Trail, Exton Park, and other points of interest that active adults will be looking for.

MOTION: To recommend approval of the conditional use application of Valley Creek Homes, LLC to construct an age-restricted, active adult community with 330 dwelling units of various types at 301-305 Church Farm La., subject to the four (4) conditions in the review by Phil Yocum dated August 28, 2023.

ACTION: Passed 4-0 (Martin/Anderson)

Mr. McCormick suggested the Applicant may be interested in using the Witch's Cap as a feature in the development. Mr. Weller will send pictures of the Cap for the Applicant's consideration.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. McCormick noted it was time to begin thinking about the Historic Preservation Awards. Mr. Martin will send last year's list of potential properties for members to review and add to at the October meeting.

Ms. Gural-Bear reported that the Board of Supervisors has reviewed the application of the individual interested in a position on the Commission and has requested that she attend the next few Commission meetings.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Weller advised that the Township is in the process of hiring a replacement for Ms. O'Connor, who resigned to take a position at Willistown Township. With a short staff, Mr. Weller said work on the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment has been slow, but he hopes to soon have an answer for the Commission on the legality of their desire to be able to delay demolition permits for historic structures for up to 180 days.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Passed, 4-0 (Anderson/Embrey)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.



Recording Secretary,

John R. Weller, AICP
Director of Planning