

## Minutes October 20, 2020

### Upper Merion Township Historical Commission

Date: **Tuesday, 10/20/20 at 6:30 PM** (Virtual Meeting)

Present: Greg Philips, Dave Montalvo, Tina Smith, Pat Jordan, Sara Seipel, Bill Del Collo, Kenn Brown (Planning Commission Liaison)

Regrets: Matt McCaffery, Eileen Council

Meeting began 6:45 PM

Note: Meeting beginning time will change from 6:30 to 7 PM starting with November 17, 2020 virtual meeting

From agenda items submitted for 10/20/2020 meeting:

- 1) List of Historic Sites in Upper Merion Township
  - a) After two lists (1950's and 1960-70) are digitized, the King of Prussia Historical Society President will provide these copies to the UMT HC members
  - b) New item from 10/20/20 HC meeting: Research about application process for PA Historical markers for neighborhoods/homes in Rebel Hill. Tina Smith from UMT Historical Commission and resident of Rebel Hill, Laura Maggio will work on this, report progress to UMT HC
  
- 2) Update on Moore-Irwin house, status on use of grant money awarded for structural review
  - a) BOS Liaison to UMT HC Greg Philips stated that the UMT Supervisors did a walk-through the house recently. They recommended the house be torn down but that the arboretum should remain. The BOS stated the focus would be on a park like setting with the arboretum, and they also recommended a marker to commemorate the spot.
  - b) Several members of the HC cited the very low number of historical sites preserved and protected within UMT. Our area is rich in historical importance with a number of buildings, locations, events, people over hundreds of years. The task of historical preservation when possible and reasonable is critical especially at the present time as we consider preserving the Moore-Irwin House and the neighborhood stability of Rebel Hill, West End area.
  - c) Dave Montalvo introduced a motion that the HC write a letter with their concerns to send to the BOS. Pat Jordan seconded the motion. The five members in attendance voted yes, none opposed. Motion passed.  
Update:  
Dave is drafting a letter that the HC members will sign digitally.
  
- 3) Rebel Hill, zoning, construction--background, community vision
  - a) The HC welcomed some of the residents from the Rebel Hill area to the meeting. Following up on the recommendation from Matt McCaffery, questions about zoning, planning, and the neighborhood impact of proposed housing construction were discussed.
  - b) Zoning as R2: the smaller lots, seen on 1951 zoning maps, were 10,000 square feet. Proposed and seemingly already approved construction would have 15' by 100' houses.

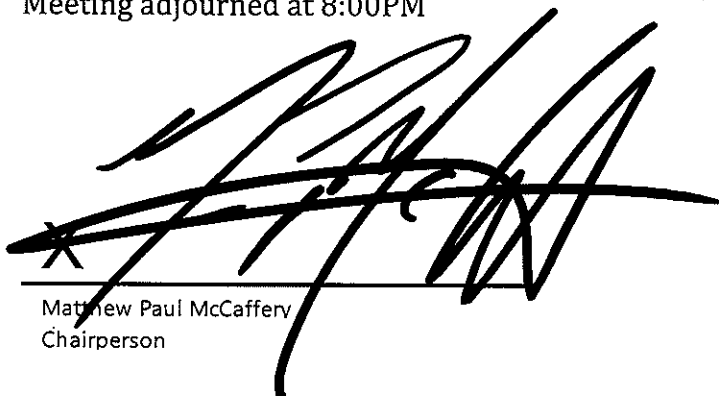
Expected sale prices of around \$500K. The location is a premium as it is close to interstates, highways, industrial parks, and easily commutable travel by car to Philadelphia. The concerns stated by residents to the HC were that the aesthetic of the neighborhood would change in a negative way due to crowding house structures; the probable increase in traffic congestion in a small area; the sales of the parcels of land to development corporations occurred even though residents living adjacent to the lots had tried to purchase these lots for years; and, lastly, this neighborhood has been not only an historically African American neighborhood for over 200 years but this area was the site of an encampment during the Revolutionary War.

- c) Sources documenting a five night stay of Washington's troops on Rebel Hill are few, but they are solid references, e.g., the Continental Congress Thanksgiving proclamation, the famous painting (The circa 1883 painting "Washington Reviewing His Troops at Valley Forge" by William T. Trego is alternately titled "The March to Valley Forge, December 16, 1777"), records from Olde Swedes Church brought to life each December with historical re-enactors as General Washington and his officers, snowstorm raging, seeking shelter in the church during the Sankta Lucia service (<http://www.kophistory.org/wpfolder/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/KOPHS-Gazette-6-4-2017-Winter.pdf>, records of Aaron Burr's headquarters, diaries. The question, Why isn't Rebel Hill recognized on maps and in mainstream history accounts of the Revolutionary War? Why did Rebel Hill become a "forgotten chapter" of our nation's history?
- d) The HC, as an advisory commission to the UMT BOS, is willing to help research what might be done to establish the vision that the WECA has for this historically significant neighborhood. (refer to # 1b in this Meeting Minutes document)
- 4) Dave Montalvo introduced the motion that the HC would place artifacts commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the display cases in the atrium of the UMT building. Pat Jordan seconded the motion. The five members in attendance voted yes, none opposed. Motion passed.
- Update:
- The exhibit was done on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 and will be on display through the month of November, 2020.
  - The exhibit will include a copy of the Upper Merion Township Resolution for the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment that was adopted at the August 20, 2020 meeting. On the township website, video archive of BOS meetings, for the 8/20/20 meeting, business item C (19 minute 55 second mark.) The introduction for this resolution includes local history and anecdotal historical comments.
- 5) Pat Jordan introduced the motion for the HC to co-sponsor with the UMT Library a video "postcard" from PA Votes. Sara Seipel seconded the motion. The five members in attendance voted yes, none opposed. Motion passed.
- The video features a panel discussion with suffragist from 1920, Carrie Chapman Catt and PA First Lady, PA government level secretaries to encourage voters to Vote on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>!
- Update:

As soon as the date for the Library link is determined, Tina Smith will send an email with the link to the HC. Supervisor Tina Garzillo has requested the UMT PIO place a link to the Library "postcard" on the UMT website. As soon as the date for that link is determined, Tina Smith will send that link to the HC members.

- 6) Updates on joint project with MLK Jr. Committee on oral histories, Rebel Hill African American community.
- a) Test interview was completed Monday, Oct 11. The interview team is continuing to work on this, and they noted that the test interview gave many valuable points for focusing questions.
  - b) Dave Montalvo reported that he has not yet heard a reply from the students in the Black Student Union about participating in the oral history project.
  - c) Potential interviewers and "narrators" (the persons who are interviewed) have not been identified as yet.
  - d) The HC will continue to work with and support the MLK Jr. Committee on this project

Meeting adjourned at 8:00PM

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is highly cursive and difficult to decipher, but it appears to be the name of the chairperson mentioned in the text below.

Matthew Paul McCaffery  
Chairperson