

SWARTHMORE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Historic Preservation Task Force Minutes
December 7, 2022
Borough Hall Community Room

Claudia Cueto, Historic Preservation Task Force (TF) Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Committee Members Present (11/12)

Claudia Cueto
Doug Harnsberger
Don Semler
Christopher Kenney
Melanie Rodbart
Hannah Sisk
David Virgil
Susan Wright
Ryan McKenna
Jamie Shindell
Janna Garland

Committee Members Absent (1/12)

Shaun Eyring

Borough Officials

Francine Halderman, Borough Council member

1. Administrative

a. Roll Call and Introductions were made.

b. Minutes

Virgil made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Kenney seconded the motion. All were in favor.

c. Sunshine Act

Borough Manager sent an email to TF members reminding them of the Sunshine Act saying members cannot deliberate outside of a public meeting. Members received and acknowledged the email and received advice from Council member, Francie Halderman (public comment), during the meeting as follows: Discussions and strategizing may occur outside of the meeting as long as it is less than a quorum (in the case of the TF, less than 7). Someone could submit a Right to Know form and anything can be requested, however, there are items that do not have to be disclosed.

d. PA Open Records

Halderman said that public comment must occur before voting or recommending anything to council.

2. Discussion of Old Business

a. Task force objectives outlined in the Resolution

- i. Kenney said that the goals defined in the first meeting are to educate ourselves by researching previous documents, listening to adjacent communities about their experience with historic preservation controls, determine the pros and cons to historic preservation.
- ii. Wright reminded members that the TF reports directly to Borough Council and that we must refer to the Resolution for our approach and goals.
- iii. Since there are over 300 properties and landscapes, and 7 distinct neighborhoods that are defined to have historic value (according to the 2001 Historic Resources Survey), there was discussion and consensus among members to have the TF focus on Town Center (TC) only.
- iv. Shindell said that since our focus is Town Center only, one of our recommendations could be to expand the task force for further study of the remainder of the borough (such as HBS, the college, other tracts).

- v. McKenna said that while he loves the character of this town, he is very concerned with private property rights and does not want to fall victim to not changing. Shindell said that design guidelines help keep character while allowing thoughtful development.
- vi. Cueto said the TF should identify anchor buildings in TC such as the PNC Bank Building, Michael's, etc. that we all agree on. She said we can create categories and identify where development makes sense. We should talk about massing, cohesive character, fitting modern buildings alongside existing.
- vii. Cueto asked members to send questions to Rodbart within the next week relative to the scale, materials, design of Town Center. Specifically, when the task force discusses the identification of historic resources, what questions should we be asking to meet that standard?
- viii. Shindell suggested utilizing a story board to process the questions to picture how TC looks – is it a district, a landscape, or only a few buildings; and determine how to marry key aspects of our findings and provide a deliverable.
- ix. Wright said a map of TC would be useful to have during this process. Garland said parcel map from Town Center, Inc. can be utilized
- x. Virgil suggested a field trip to view the buildings in TC.
- xi. McKenna said we should engage with TC business owners.
- xii. Cueto has boxes of files from 2007 relative to HP Resources committee and gave them to Rodbart for review, scanning, and upload.

Action: TF to send questions to Rodbart relative to the TC per vii above. Rodbart to bring questions to next meeting for discussion. Rodbart to scan relevant files and upload to G-drive as necessary. Garland to provide parcel map. TF to coordinate TC field trip as the work develops.

b. Discussion of educating the task force

- i. Delaware County Planning Commission – no update provided by Cueto.
- ii. Narberth – Rodbart said that a presentation has been scheduled for the next meeting (January 4) to have Kathleen Abplanalp from the Lower Merion Conservancy, David Brawer, and Jim Cornwell from Narberth PC and HARB. They have agreed to attend our next meeting and provide a 30 minute presentation with Q/A. Schedule their arrival for 7:15PM so TF can begin with admin.
 - 1. Defining the character of the borough/town center
 - 2. Imminent and long term threats/perceived threats
 - 3. Building stock in need of preservation
 - 4. Strategies for engaging community and getting support
 - 5. Identifying preservation strategies

Garland asked to include discussion of opportunities for development. Harnsberger recommended that the TF take a field trip to Narberth the Saturday after the presentation (January 7) to view their town center resources. Cueto said the take-aways from the Narberth presentation must be documented to contribute to TF final deliverable.
- iii. Media Borough - Rodbart contacted Brittany Forman, Borough Manager and she replied copying Media Borough HARB chair, Dave Urffer, but he did not reply. Rodbart followed up with Dave directly, no response. Wright recommended asking Bob Scott, Solicitor.
- iv. Newtown Square – Sisk connected with NS Historic Society Board of Director, Cathy Cavalier, and is coordinating a presentation for February 1, 2023 with a similar format to the Narberth meeting.
- v. Swarthmore College – Wright provided contact information via email prior to the meeting, with update from Semler. Cueto said TF will not be contacting the college since we are focusing on TC.
- vi. Pittsford, NY – Allison Manaker (public comment) said that the Pittsford community is excited to talk to the TF and will proceed with coordinating a virtual presentation for possibly March 1, 2023 with a similar format to the Narberth meeting.
- vii. Previous HP Ordinances – Wright provided links to Historic Preservation ordinances via email prior to the meeting. Wright provided *Historic District Designation in PA by PHMC by Michel Lefevre*.

Action: Rodbart to finalize Narberth presentation details. Garland to advertise upcoming presentation on TC business district social media. Rodbart to ask Narberth for presentation (if available) and permission to record their presentation. Rodbart to provide info to the Swarthmorean Community Calendar for publication. Rodbart to follow up with Scott for Media contact. Sisk to coordinate Newtown Square presentation for February. Manaker to coordinate with Pittsford for March.

c. Historically Black Neighborhood Swarthmore

Francie Halderman (public comment) spoke on behalf of the Parks and Rec Committee and stated that HBNS requested ARPA funds for walking tour. She said there are 7 generations of black residents that pre-dated the borough. There is a project that council is hoping to fund that includes a walking tour to preserve the oral history. There is also outreach to the Centennial Foundation. The message is, "as we go forward, let's link it to our past."

Rodbart reported that Veronica Aplenc reached out to her to discuss preservation in Swarthmore relative to the HBNS. Aplenc wanted to know process for local nomination. Rodbart provided Aplenc historic nomination resources prepared by Eyring. Aplenc was hired by the Philadelphia Folklore Project (PFP) because they received a grant from the National Trust to compile data, prepare a podcast, and explore the feasibility of a historic district nomination for what has been termed Historically Black Swarthmore. Aplenc is working with Jeannine Osayande on this project as PFP has worked with her extensively in the past. There are 49 properties in HBS, with many properties listed in the Historic Resources Survey, but HBS is not mentioned specifically in the document. Next step for PFP is community outreach. The focus is to convey how a historic district can enhance the neighborhood.

*Post meeting notes: Rodbart informed Aplenc that the immediate charge of the HPTF is Town Center but to stay in touch as their research continues. **Resolved.***

3. Discussion of New Business

a. Protections for historic resources

Cueto said the TF will proceed with presentations and field trips, then narrow the focus of protections for historic resources and historic districts/nominations based on the findings. Table the discussion until that work is done in next few months.

b. Historic districts/nominations

Table the discussion per Item 3a.

Public Comment

1. Alison Manaker (211 College Ave) – see Item 2.b.vi above relative to Pittsford, NY.
2. Francie Halderman (345 Haverford Place) – see Item 2.c above relative to HBS.

Adjournment At 8:46pm, Virgil made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Kenney seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Next Meeting January 4, 2023, Community Room. 7PM. Call in information will be provided from Teams if required.

These minutes were prepared by Melanie Rodbart, Secretary.