



West Vincent Township Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes for April 9, 2025

Commission Members in Attendance: Kate Farnham, Chair; Bob Wise, Vice Chair; Suzanne Bender; Stephen Foley, Peter Benton.

Township Supervisors in Attendance: Dana Alan

Call to Order: Meeting called to order 7:00 pm

Birchrun Road Bridge – PennDOT Virtual Presentation: The meeting logged onto a virtual PowerPoint presentation on the proposed new bridge on Birchrun Road. The presentation lasted about 45 minutes and was followed with a question-and-answer session where questions were typed in and discussed by the presenters. This topic is addressed further below under Old Business.

Board Appointment: Stephen Foley was welcomed as the new Historical Commission Member appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

Approval of Minutes: March 9, 2025, Minutes prepared by Peter Benton: Motion for Approval by Suzanne Bender; Kate Farnham seconds. Motion carries unanimously.

Applications:

1. 1475 Hollow Road: Design drawings for the historic property at 1475 Hollow Road were presented to the Historical Commission in advance of submission for a building permit. This property had been reviewed by the Commission last summer at the conceptual design level and had been approved pending additional detail. Historical Commission members found the more detailed drawings to be consistent with the previous review. A Motion for Approval was made by Peter Benton and Seconded by Suzanne Bender. Motion carries unanimously. Kate Farnham will write an approval letter to the Zoning Officer as required by the Zoning Ordinance.

Old Business:

1. Birchrun Road Bridge: Following the virtual presentation by PennDOT noted above, the Historical Commission discussed next steps in the review process. Bob Wise has prepared a draft letter to PennDOT noting the Township's concerns about the proposed bridge design and its impact on the rural setting of the Birchrunville National Register Historic District. Peter Benton will make suggested edits to the letter and distribute to HC members for further review and comment.

The letter will then be forwarded to the Township Manager and Board of Supervisors with a recommendation that it be sent to PennDOT's District 6-0 Cultural Resources Manager. The intent is to encourage PennDOT to determine that the new bridge be determined to have an adverse effect on the National Register District leading to further discussion during the Section 106 review process on ways to mitigate the adverse effect, including addition design changes.

3. Griffith Farm: Bob is working on a letter with recommendations to the Supervisors for review by Commission members. Dana Alan reported that a stone wall of the Spring House has collapsed and that the Township welcomes the Historical Commission's input on what should be done.

4. Inventory: Bob and Cindy are meeting again to finalize the revised inventory, and final changes are being made.



5. 1245 Schoolhouse Lane: Steve and Sarita Silen, neighbors to the property, were present to inquire about the status of the site and were briefed by Commission members. No demolition permit has yet been submitted for the historic house. The Historical Commission must be permitted to take record photos before demolition is allowed.

6. Township Barn: Kate Farnham and Peter Benton met with Tommy Ryan, the new Township Manager, the Township Barn was among the topics discussed. Repair of the deteriorated floorboards beneath the former holes in the roof was noted. It was suggested that Ortega Consulting be contacted to review the floor condition and prepare recommendations for repair. Peter will send Tommy a copy of Ortega's report on the barn. Tommy will be discussing the barn with the Board of Supervisors. The Historical Commission looks forward to further discussions on the use, repair, and potential rehabilitation of the barn.

7. 3070 Horseshoe Trail: Peter Benton reported that he undertook a field review of the property and found that, though maintenance is needed, building conditions are not bad enough that the building are threatened and that Demolition by Neglect actions may be applied per the Zoning Ordinance. Peter noted that site conditions do appear to meet the definition of Junk Yard in the Zoning Ordinance which may be the basis for action by the Supervisors, since Junk Yards are not permitted in the zoning district. Dana Alan noted that the Township Manager and Supervisors are working on the issue.

New Business:

1. 250th Commemoration: Kate Farnham reported that she attended a meeting convened by the Chester County Planning Commission in March on the coordination of municipalities planning commemorative activities for the nation's 250th anniversary. Ideas were presented. Some townships are planning activities, but the County is not providing a county-wide program or funding support. The Historical Commission is not suggesting that West Vincent Township undertake activities at this point.

Reports:

1. Current assignments as Committee Liaisons are: RW – BoS; KF – PC; PB – OSRB.

2. Planning Commission: The status of projects under review by the Planning Commission were reviewed:

- **1414 Birchrun Road:** Dana Alan reported that the minor subdivision of the c.60-acre property into two lots will be reviewed by the Supervisors at their April 21st meeting. Concern for the Historical Commission is that the owners may seek demolition of the historic barn on the main property. The barn has been adapted to a residence, and the owners are looking to construct a new primary residence adjacent to it. Planning Commission members are not aware of any intent to demolish the barn, but it has been rumored. The barn could serve as an accessory dwelling unit.
- **Butterscotch Pastry Shop:** Conditional use changes have been under review since May 2024 involving interior expansion and exterior seating that has been in place since COVID but never formally approved. The owners are preparing a plan to accommodate parking with will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. The proposed request for outdoor seating must be reviewed by the Zoning Board. The Historical Commission should maintain awareness of proposals and provide input as the reviews proceed.



3. Open Space Review Board: Peter Benton reported that he attended the March meeting of the Open Space Review Board at which the Conservation Director of the French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust summarized ongoing land conservation activities of the Trust and adjacent townships. North Coventry Township is the most proactive municipality with conservation easements at present. The Open Space Review Board is undertaking a strategic planning process intending to spearhead a more proactive program of land conservation. To date, conservation has been based primarily on opportunities as they arise and has focused more on transfer of development rights than on conservation easements and other tools. Peter noted that he will maintain contact and participate in the planning process as it develops.

4. HRC Report:

Sheeder Hall Covered Bridge: Cindy reported that planning for the commemoration of the Sheeder Hall Covered Bridge's 175th anniversary is underway. The event will be held on Sunday, May 18th at 2pm.

Business from Floor: None

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 9 pm upon motion by Bob Wise and second by Suzanne Bender. All HC members approved.

Respectfully submitted by Peter Benton, May 9, 2025

