

**MINUTES of January 21, 2025 Meeting of the Commission
(via Zoom)**

Adopted February 18, 2025

Members Present: The meeting began at approximately 7:35 p.m. Bob Booher, Bill Earl, Wendy Harris, David Stopak, Mimi Styles, and Barbara Raimondo (TC liaison) were present. Sam Suzich (alternate) was unable to attend.

Approval of Agenda

Minor changes to the proposed agenda were made and it was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

Minor corrections were made to the draft minutes of the December meeting, and they were unanimously approved.

Review Session

Marty Mitchell, who recently purchased 330 Ridge Road with the intention of subdividing the property and building two homes, participated in the discussion. He presented an initial subdivision plan at HPC's October 2024 meeting; the plan has been updated to show a forestry conservation easement at the back of the property and relocation of the driveway leading to the rear lot. Marty presented two proposed home models, The Kensington and the Oakland, along with the various choices for the front elevation, optional/enlarged porches, and bump-out extensions to each basic model. Marty has built the new homes on Central Avenue near the intersection with Oakmont.

HPC's review will be preliminary, because many details have yet to be specified; only the front elevation for each model was presented; the other three elevations were not shown. Whether (and where) garages--attached or free-standing--will be included on each lot is yet to be determined. HPC had productive discussions with Mr. Mitchell; elements of the Town of Washington Grove Design Guidelines were reviewed, and it was recommended that he continue to refer to the guidelines as he goes forward. Mimi will write up the commission's preliminary review.

Commemorative Signage

Mimi reported that she had spoken with Pannier, the sign vendor out of Pennsylvania recommended by Jamie Ferguson, Montgomery County Parks Historian. Pannier is an approved vendor for the National Parks Service and the Audubon Society. Pannier's website provides many options for signage (dimensions, materials, bases). Pannier provided ballpark estimates, depending on dimensions and materials chosen for the signs, bases, and the number of signs to be included in an order. Two examples of signs produced by Pannier were shown during the meeting. Mounting for the smaller 18x24 size could be as basic as a wooden post. Metal pedestal bases are appropriate for larger signs and could be powder-coat painted to our specifications. Core-ten steel, which weatherizes to a rusted patina, is another interesting option for the base.

The amount of text we wish to accompany the photograph on each sign may dictate our choice of the 18x24 or 24x36 format. A budget of \$5,000 should cover a quantity of the larger signs (including layout, should Samantha's pending motherhood preclude her from producing the graphics, as she had offered). Pannier's signs are guaranteed for 10 years. We may decide to start with a couple signs to see how they are received before proceeding with additional signs.

Multi-Use Path

Bob reported that the DOT had made their submission to the Planning Board of the 35% design review that the Town Shared Use Pathway Liaison Committee had looked at in the fall and commented upon. There is a tree conservation zone that involves Parks & Planning; but unfortunately, the project manager overlooked including a tree report to MNGPPC in the submission. This will delay the review until April. However, she feels that the feedback received is positive and the design can proceed, even though it has not yet gone through the mandatory referral process. She will confirm this before the end of January. The public hearing may take place before the mandatory referral, as she is confident few comments will come back from the Planning Board. The public hearing will likely take place in our Town Hall in early March. Wendy commented that she had received a postcard about a public hearing, and she will forward an image of it to commissioners. After more discussion with her neighbors, Wendy recommended postponing (to closer to construction time) the meeting she had suggested for residents of Lower Brown Street, as their concerns are focused on safety and whether amenities, such as the basketball hoop at the Brown Street cul-de-sac would be maintained.

Review Priorities for Archive Work

Bob reported that he has not yet committed priorities to paper, but he did have a conversation with Marilynn about PastPerfect entry. Bob will schedule a meeting with Pat, to include Kathy and Marilynn, with a focus on the status of PastPerfect work. If Pat is unable to devote the time required to scan entries, additional staff may be needed.

Commercial Corner

Peter had called a meeting, also attended by Bob, Georgette, Barbara and John, to discuss the next steps. Peter is currently drafting zoning text amendments which will allow mixed usage (commercial and residential). Peter plans to formally propose the amendments at the next Planning Commission meeting. A public hearing will be required. After the PC acts on it, they would pass it along to the Town Council, and that step would be followed by another public hearing. HPC will have the opportunity to give comments to TC as part of the process. The owner of the Commercial Corner appears eager to redevelop the property. In previous meetings that included the owner's architects, guidance was given about design elements most important to the Town.

MHT Grant Application

The Town is approaching the final agreement with Pepco about purchasing the existing streetlights. Considering the age of the lights/poles, they may be fully depreciated. The inclusion of shut-off switches on each pole is a Pepco requirement for transfer of ownership, and this would be an added expense. Bob reported that the lighting committee has a meeting with MHT on January 22 to discuss the eligibility of this project for a grant. If it is considered eligible, Anne Vincent has offered to write up the MHT grant request.

Budget

Last year's budget was reviewed. Most existing line items for FY2026 will see little change, except for the removal of the allocation of \$2,500 for MAHDC training for commissioners. \$5,000 for the commemorative sign project will be added to HPC's proposed budget.

Playground Equipment

About a year ago, HPC provided a statement about the historic status of Town playground equipment. No specific pieces of equipment are called out in the National Register update, but the playground itself is cited in the document. The historic value of the playground is less in its equipment and more in its continuity of existence; a mix of old and new equipment is reflective of that continuity. Wendy noted that operational equipment that is not considered safe by today's standards can be modified; for example, the existing merry-go-round could be disabled to become a bench. A playground equipment working group has met, and they are working on a comprehensive plan; a \$50,000 budget request is expected.

Bulletin Material

For the February bulletin, Mimi plans a piece of the Spencerville Camp Meeting. She reported that she had attempted a site visit, but ice and snow conditions precluded venturing off the main road. Some of the cabins are visible from the main road, and the website indicates that one has been renovated for use as a tiny museum.

Planning Commission Meeting

Sam attended the January PC meeting and sent a report to Bob. The PC wants to change its deadline for building permit applications to the second Wednesday of the month, to allow additional time for review before their standing meeting the first Wednesday of the month. There was also a report from the gateway committee; they are shifting their focus from Washington Grove Lane to Railroad Street.

Town Council Meeting Report

Barbara reported that the Stormwater Management Infrastructure contract was executed on December 31. Myers & Laws will be contracted to remove the agreed-upon trees from the meadow; the work should be completed before nesting season. TC has received training on Roberts Rules of Order and have adopted them for conducting their meetings. The decision was made to start using salt on Town roads on a limited basis, when warranted. Discussion about delivering the Town Bulletin to P. O. Boxes continues. This year, a hybrid Annual Town Meeting is planned; the TC is planning two hybrid meetings (the budget meeting and the April TC meeting) beforehand to sort out any issues. The Meadows Committee, formerly ad hoc, has been recognized by the TC as a standing committee. Mary Warfield is reworking the Vacant Property Resolution as an Ordinance, and the TC will likely vote on it at their February meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 18, at 7:30 pm via Zoom.