

**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 12, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joshua Anderson, Roberta Eckman, John Kabli,
Joe McCormick, Frank King, Julie Bauer

TOWNSHIP STAFF: Justin Smiley, Township Planner
Candace Strawley, Historic Consultant, Commonwealth Heritage Group

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

II. Approval of Minutes for July 8, 2019

Motion: To approve the minutes of July 8, 2019, as presented.
(Eckman/McCormick)

Vote: Passed, 6-0

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. New Business

- A. Applicant:** Ashbridge at Main Street
Historic Site: Site 102, Class I – Richard Ashbridge House & Site 102c, Class I- Richard Ashbridge Tenant House
Site Address: 210 Main Street & 101 Woodcutter Street
Request: Recommendation for approval to receive building permits for the adaptive reuse of both historic structures of the Ashbridge at Main Street residential development

Appearing on behalf of the Applicant were John Fiore with the Wolfson Group, and Neil Liebman with Bernardon Architects. Mr. Fiore presented the project to renovate/restore the Richard Ashbridge House for use as a community space for the Ashbridge apartment complex and the Tenant House for use as a maintenance facility to be used by the management company for the complex. The Tenant House will be not be open to the public, but the Ashbridge House will not only be a gathering space for apartment residents but can also be for used for public community activities on a reservation basis.

The Tenant House will be renovated in kind with new cedar shake shingles and new windows. The chimney and exterior stone will be repointed, and the entrance and garage doors will be replicated. All interior improvements will be removed to allow the space to be used as a maintenance facility.

Four options were presented for the exterior of the Ashbridge House. Option 1 showed repointed stone and a standing seam metal roof. Option 2 showed repointed stone with cedar shake roof. Both Options 3 & 4 showed stucco exterior with standing seam metal roof (3) and cedar shake shingles (4) respectively. All Options will either repair or replace all windows in kind and restore/replace all columns. The two outer chimneys will be restored to be working chimneys. The middle chimney will be removed, restored and put back when the roof is rebuilt, but will not connect to a fireplace in the interior, because there is no way to support it. All dormers will be replaced in kind. The canopy on the west elevation will be replaced, but adjacent structures to the east will be removed. All stone will be kept and reused in Options 1 & 2.

In the interior of the Ashbridge House, the first floor will be replaced and the second and third floors will be removed, leaving a two-story space with mechanicals located above the ceiling. The interior will have a small kitchen, two ADA restrooms, and a mezzanine area looking down on the first floor. A landscaped area to the east of the home will be an inviting green space with a stone patio and stone wall built from boulders unearthed on the site.

Ms. Eckman asked about the amount of parking on the north side. Mr. Fiore said parking is as required by Code on the north side. He added that the south side is overparked per Code but felt this was needed to ensure that residents will have parking during special events and overflow that will come from the retail community and World of Beer restaurant.

Ms. Strawley then provided a brief historical narrative of the site noting that the House was originally built in 1843 with an east wing addition added in 1914. Based on her background research, Ms. Strawley expressed a preference for Option 4 (stucco exterior and cedar shake roof). She said the surrounding outbuildings should be documented before demolition. Also, she said there are original interior finishings from the 1840 period that were left intact during later renovations and said these should be preserved. She advised that the structure will lose its National Register eligibility with the Applicant's proposed interior renovation. Mr. Fiore said that because the space will be open to the public, certain Fair Housing regulations must be followed. He assured the Commission that the Applicant will salvage everything possible.

Mr. Fiore explained that the Applicant prefers Option 2, but if the underlying stone is found to be in bad condition, then Option 3 or 4 (stucco) will be needed to make the structure safe and watertight.

There was discussion on the roofing options. The standing seam metal roof is superior in terms of maintenance costs, but the adjacent Barn (World of Beer) and Maggie Moo's buildings both have had cedar shake shingles for the last 20 years, and they have held up well and are more historical than a metal roof.

The Commission requested that the Applicant display an historical placard inside the House providing some historical details and photographs of the site. The Applicant agreed to do so. The Commission will provide the text and photographs.

Referencing the addition on the east end, Ms. Strawley said it may have been used as a summer kitchen to the 1846 property and would like to have it documented prior to demolition. Mr. Fiore said that portion was not salvageable and was not safe to enter.

Members stated their preferences for the Options as follows:

Ms. Bauer – Option 2

Ms. Eckman – Option 3

Mr. Anderson – Option 2

Mr. McCormick – Option 2

Mr. King – Option 3

Mr. Kabli – Option 2

All of those expressing a preference for Option 2 said they would agree with stucco if the stone was found to be in bad condition or unattractive.

Motion: To recommend approval of the building permits for the Tenant House and Ashbridge House with Option 2 exterior and placement of historical marker inside the Ashbridge House.

Vote: Passed 6-0 (Anderson/King)

V. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

VI. Historical Commission Concerns

Mr. Anderson reported that Grove Church does not want to host the Historical Awards ceremony. He will check with Gail McCahon to see if she would be interested in hosting the event at her home in November.

VII. Township update – Justin Smiley & Ali Cleveland

- A. VPP Grant Status** – Mr. Smiley advised that the Township was awarded \$27,500 in grant funding to update “The History of West Whiteland”. The amount awarded is \$2,500 short of the amount requested. He said the shortfall will be made up from the Township General Fund or the bequest received by the Historical Commission. Mr. Kabli asked about ordinance revisions discussed before Mr. Morley’s resignation from the Commission. Ms. Strawley said her firm could help draft additional criteria for historic structures that does not hinge solely on the National Registry following what other municipalities have done (East Pikeland) as a good example. Mr. Smiley said several ordinance revisions will be coming up shortly and believed it could be done then. The focus at this time is to update the inventory and survey with the criteria that will be used and then update the Ordinance to reference that criteria. He added that Ms. Cleveland is compiling a spreadsheet listing all façade agreements, awards received, etc., for each property. Ms. Strawley said this information can be added to the inventory her firm is working on (GIS data base). In response to Mr. Kabli’s question, she said a column could also be added denoting the condition of the structure.
- B. Display Areas in the Township Building Lobby** - Mr. Smiley reported that the lobby areas of the Township building are being revamped and repurposed. Ms. Cleveland is currently working on a timeline of the Township’s history complete with photographs and new display cases for each department. A smaller display case will highlight a “site of the month” to make the lobby area more active and inform visitors of the many historic resources within the Township. Mr. Anderson suggested the existing display cases could be used at the Boot Road House to store many historic artifacts located there. Ms. Eckman will supply Mr. Smiley with information on the remaining lobby items including the library table and bench table from the Zook House.
- C. Thomas Mill Status** – Mr. Smiley reported that it would cost \$2,500 for an engineering survey of the structural integrity of the Thomas Mill. He asked the Commission members to think about how best to repurpose the structure for either a future use or sale, noting that Exton Nissan dealership is no longer interested in being responsible for the structure. Various ideas were discussed and the possibility of approaching the property from the rear via a trail, or a right-of-way through the Aldi site to make the property more marketable to prospective buyers. Discussion will continue.
- D. Ashbridge Archives** – Mr. Smiley said he received the archive documents from the Historical Society which consisted of checkbooks from the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. They will be kept in the Township’s files.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn the meeting. (Anderson/Eckman)

Vote: Passed, 6-0

Recording Secretary,

Justin Smiley, AICP
Township Planner

