

Plymouth & Whitemarsh Townships
Historical Architectural Review Board
Meeting Minutes – June 9, 2021

The following HARB members participated via ZOOM telecommunication technology: David Conroy, Plymouth Township Zoning Officer, Karen Coyne, John Von Essen, Tom Higgins, Jerry Rafter, Jamina Clay, Robert Sztubinski, Whitemarsh Township Director of Building & Codes, and Ken Parsons (joined at 9:15 AM). Also in attendance were Charlie Guttenplan, Whitemarsh Township Director of Planning & Zoning, Michael Drossner, Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors Liaison, and Kathy Bandish, Plymouth Township Council Liaison.

1. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:32 AM.
2. ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE:
 - Question of moving July meeting to July 7 was taken up at the end of the meeting. Change is proposed to allow any Whitemarsh Township Certificates of Appropriateness to be heard by the Board of Supervisors on July 8. Agreement was to move it; it will be advertised if meeting is needed for new applications.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 21, 2021 – revised minutes approved.
May 12, 2021 – approved.
4. OLD BUSINESS: None.
5. NEW BUSINESS:
 - 7 Catherine Lane, Whitemarsh Township – Matt Ostrum, homeowner, was present. He explained that he and his wife would like to build a patio in the rear of their home to enjoy outdoor space; it would be very similar to other patios previously approved in their development ('Maple Hill'). No issues were noted. Motion to recommend the governing body approve a Certificate of Appropriateness was seconded and approved by a vote of 7-0.
 - 3023 Tara Court, Whitemarsh Township – Parth Bhatt, homeowner, was present. He explained that they are creating a first floor in-law suite for his parents, which includes conversion of the garage into part of the living space. The two garage doors will be removed and that wall will be finished in stucco like the rest of the house; there will be one entry door installed along with one window. HARB noted that it was on the side of the house and would not impact the front façade. There were no issues noted. Motion to recommend the governing body approve a Certificate of Appropriateness was seconded and approved by a vote of 7-0.
 - Cross County Trail Bridge Over Germantown Pike, Plymouth Township – Informational Presentation by Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). Present were Ellen Miramontes, Trails and Open Space Planner (MCPC), Bill Hartman, Trails and Open Space Section Manager (MCPC), Judy Stern Goldstein, Senior Project Manager Gilmore & Associates (MCPC consultant), Chris Green, Senior Landscape Architect Gilmore & Associates, Roman Jastrzebski, Senior Vice President and bridge engineer Gilmore & Associates, and Bob Thomas, Architect, Preservationist, Planner and Principal of Campbell Thomas & Co. (MCPC consultant).
Ms. Miramontes provided background including the origin of the bridge concept from a 2015 feasibility study for this section of the Cross County Trail and showed its location regionally and locally. She mentioned the historic aspects to be considered including the limekilns at Germantown Pike and Chemical Road and the Livezey Store. Ms. Goldstein reviewed the work completed so far including: stakeholder interviews in summer of 2020, the geological study completed in March 2021 (which resulted in the bridge looking

feasible) and a recent in-person stakeholder meeting at the project site. Mr. Green explained the two bridge concepts, the first using simple geometry, and the second with a sloped spiral ramp coming down closer to Germantown Pike than the first; he displayed a video simulating what the bridge could look like. Mr. Thomas explained how the bridge would fit within the historic context with a minimalist unobtrusive design. The timetable was discussed; next step is a general public meeting, meet again with affected property owners, complete the feasibility study (anticipated by end of summer), then undertake detailed engineering study and develop construction documents. The possibility of receiving 80% funding through the Federal Surface Transportation Programs was mentioned. Additional ways the bridge could fit the historic context were discussed including design of railings, lighting, materials used and colors. Possibly something to tie it back to the prior railroad presence. Mr. Thomas mentioned the addition of resting areas, viewpoints and interpretative signs.

Public comment by Sydelle Zove, Harts Ridge Road, Whitmarsh. She detailed historic occurrences at this location, and mentioned archived documents that the Corson family descendants have. She relayed that the artist Thomas Hovenden and a young girl died in 1895 while trying to cross the at-grade railroad tracks at this project location, Subsequently his wife, Helen Corson Hovenden, lobbied to raise the railroad at this location for better safety. She asked about geologic issues due to known sink holes and limestone in this area. Ms. Goldstein and Mr. Jastrzebski responded that the geologic studies so far were encouraging; further study will be done with the engineering studies. Ms. Zove mentioned that since stone is a dominant feature of the historical elements in the vicinity (limekilns and Livezey Store), it may make sense to incorporate stone into the new bridge supports. She also commented that an arch form could be used in place of the V-shaped support shown in the rendering in order to link with the limekiln shapes. Ms. Zove also asked about the possibility of using some existing parking facilities for the trail but both business parks (Brandywine and Victory) need their parking and the parking at the Metroplex is all required for the commercial areas by Plymouth's zoning ordinance. Cost was also discussed; Mr. Hartman said the best estimate right now is approximately \$4.7 million. Specific dates for next steps were discussed: engineering studies in 2022-2023, construction in 2024-2025 if all pieces fall into place.

In concluding, Ms. Goldstein asked if HARB had any initial feedback about which of the two bridge concepts it preferred; several members felt the first concept with the straight alignment was more appropriate; the spiral ramp on the other concept doesn't seem to fit the historic context of the area.

Additional discussions with HARB will be scheduled as this project progresses.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA ITEMS ONLY): None.
7. HARB MEMBER COMMENTS: None.
8. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:57 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning/Zoning Officer
Whitmarsh Township