**LAYTONSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes**

**September 19, 2016**

**Roll Call:** Chair Sheree Wenger called to order a meeting of the Laytonsville Historic District Commission (HDC) at 7:39 p.m. Commission Members Charles Hendricks, Jill Ruspi, and Lisa Simonetti were present. Member Michele Shortley was absent.

**Attendance:** Kevin Curran, president, and Jacob Cecere, member, Laytonsville Lions Club, were also present.

**Minutes:** Member Hendricks presented draft minutes from the meeting of July 18, 2016. Chair Wenger corrected the spelling of the name of one of the attendees. Member Ruspi moved to approve the minutes of this meeting as corrected. Member Simonetti seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 3–0, with Chair Wenger abstaining. Minutes from the meetings of June 20, 2016, and August 15, 2016, were not available.

**Old Business:**

21607 Laytonsville Road (Town Hall): Chair Wenger reopened the hearing on application WP-02-16 submitted jointly by then-Mayor Dan Prats on behalf of the town and by the Laytonsville Lions Club for reconstruction of the larger accessory building behind the Town Hall. Responding to a request for a brief update on the August meeting from Member Hendricks, who had not attended that meeting, Wenger said that there will be some cost-sharing between the Lions Club and the town on the restoration. The profits of the 2016 picnic will go to this project. The Laytonsville Lions Club hopes to lease the building for 25 years with a possibility of renewal, during which term the club will pay for upkeep. The draft lease has been sent to Stanley Abrams, the town’s lawyer, for review, but he has not yet responded.

Resuming the discussion, Chair Wenger commented that the town’s outbuildings are historically important, and she said she was leaning toward a renovation rather than a rebuild. As the town owns the building, the decision is important as a precedent, she commented. She observed that Bill Fitts, a former Laytonsville town councilman who now lives in Olney, would be helpful to consult, because he renovated the garage of St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church and the garage behind the house at 21408 Laytonsville Road when he owned it. That house is now owned by the Bradshers.

Hendricks observed that some siding boards on the accessory building or shed, particularly in back, were rotten and asked if the Lions Club could operate its medical equipment service from a restored shed. Jacob Cecere responded that the Lions want a door in back, a new floor, and maybe a rebuilt loft inside. Kevin Curran explained that the building is built around wooden plates at the top and bottom, and the bottom plate is rotted out in places. Some of the posts go to the floor and some to stones underneath. Restoring the building would likely take longer than simply replacing it, he said. Wenger said that the town has neglected the building to a certain extent and should be prepared to fix it up now.

Curran stated that the shed now has a 5-D prep roof. Hendricks and Wenger both reacted positively to the roof replacement proposed in the application, using materials similar to the roof at the back of the town hall building. Member Ruspi asked about the bottom of the structure and its supports. Curran, reiterating that the plates at the bottom had failed, stated that the building would need to be jacked up and those plates replaced, some 6–8 inches above the ground. Curran and Cecere said that tearing out the siding boards will be necessary to do this work, and the contractor could decide whether some of them could be reinstalled. There may be problems getting new oak siding boards that will match the old ones closely enough, although a coat of paint may ease that problem.

Wenger said that Mike Seebold, a historic restoration specialist who lives in Laytonsville, had looked at the building and said that replacement materials were definitely available. Ruspi expressed concern about delaying the project. Curran responded that the Lions currently have the medical materials in a storage shed in Olney, so having the shed ready before winter is no longer essential, although the club would like to see progress on the project. He said he would like to bring in a contractor to look at the project. Wenger said she would like Fitts and Seebold to look at the building and make suggestions. Hendricks suggested that the town present a restoration plan. Cecere observed that Councilman Dave Preusch has been named the council’s point of contact on this work and proposed to talk to him about the HDCs thoughts. Cecere also thought the Lions would talk with Fitts and Seebold, and Wenger reported that Seebold is now working on renovating the State House in Richmond.

Curran said that he still has not really looked over the building thoroughly and would like to do so. Wenger said that Seebold had looked at the structure, and she would like to consult with him. Hendricks said he would like to have the back of the building get board and batten siding with a wooden door. During a discussion of the two windows on the side, Cecere expressed concern about vandalism.

Ruspi asked about the steps to the two doors to the building. She observed that new steps might require handrails under the code. Uncertainty prevailed as to whether this code provision would apply to a shed to which public access is provided. Wenger was not certain whether or not a county permit would be needed for a renovation. Curran stated that two contractors had come and recommended a replacement.

Curran and Cecere wanted to amend the application to involve either renovation or replacement. Member Hendricks moved that the HDC recommend to the applicants in WP-02-16 that they study the possibilities of renovating the accessory building that is the subject of the application with an eye to presenting a specific renovation plan that would suit their needs. Member Ruspi seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Chair Wenger called for the hearing to be continued to the October meeting. Member Hendricks moved that the hearing be continued to that meeting, Member Ruspi seconded, and the motion was adopted unanimously.

**New Business:**

21611 Laytonsville Road (St. Bartholomew’s Church): Chair Wenger stated that St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church had submitted an application for work on its parking lot and that a hearing had been scheduled for the October meeting. Wenger said that the proposal would expand church parking into land on which the town’s picnic stage has been placed. She said that the only way the church could extend its parking within four feet of the town’s property line would be to obtain a special exception from this zoning requirement. Hendricks asked about a possible 15-foot setback requirement, and Wenger said this would not apply due to the fact that the properties had been determined to be institutional. Hendricks said that he had informed John Pawaluk, the church’s senior lay leader, about relevant aspects of the zoning ordinance. Ruspi said that the application needed to include a plat. She asked whether the church still sought shared parking with the town, and Wenger said no.

21723 Rolling Ridge Lane (Azeem Residence): The Mayor and Council have given the HDC advisory authority relative to this property, which is not in a historic zone. Reiterating information she had provided commission members in advance of the meeting, Chair Wenger explained that the property owner, Beraq Azeem, wanted to install a clear plastic awning supported by wood posts to cover a roughly ten-foot-wide stairwell at the back of his house leading to his basement, which has been flooding in heavy rains. Azeem wants to add a six-inch board from the bottom of a window over the stairwell and to hook the awning to that, having the awning extend just six inches over the stairs. Chair Wenger had provided photos of the affected section of the house and of the awning to commission members.

Member Hendricks commented that placing the awning below the window was inappropriate, and Member Simonetti agreed. Chair Wenger replied that a higher placement would cover the window. She added, however, that she was not sure that the awning would solve the problem. Member Ruspi suggested consulting a water engineer. Simonetti agreed that someone should reevaluate the drainage. After Ruspi observed that plastic always seems to discolor after a while, Wenger also recommended that someone should reevaluate the drainage and agreed that the proposed placement of the awning would look strange.

Hendricks asked if we would be recommending to the town council that Mr. Azeem have his drainage situation reevaluated, and Wenger replied affirmatively. She questioned whether water from one of Azeem’s downspouts was coming back into his house. When Hendricks then asked whom Azeem might contact, Wenger suggested that a landscape architect, such as Town Councilman Dave Preusch, should look at it. Ruspi observed that Azeem would need a gutter on the awning. Wenger observed that Azeem has clearly suffered water damage in his basement. Ruspi said that basement stairs always seem to produce problems, but a drain at the bottom usually solves the issue. Wenger saw a possible need for a sump pump for an outside drain. Wenger and Ruspi observed that Azeem should apply to the homeowners association before obtaining the approval of the Mayor and Council.

Seeking to summarize the response of the HDC, Hendricks proposed suggesting that Azeem seek assistance from a landscape architect, and Wenger, Ruspi, and Simonetti each favored offering the alternative of seeking assistance from other experts. Member Hendricks began to make a motion that the HDC recommend that Mr. Azeem consult a landscape architect or other professional to determine what would best resolve the water problems in his basement and lead to its remediation. When he then began to add to his motion comments about the awning, Ruspi and Wenger presented differing views. So no motion was introduced. Chair Wenger said that she would draft a letter to the Mayor and Council conveying the views of the HDC, which she would circulate to the commission’s members for comment.

**Adjournment:** Member Ruspi made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Member Hendricks, and upon the unanimous adoption of the motion, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Hendricks