**LAYTONSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes**

**October 17, 2016**

**Roll Call:** Chair Sheree Wenger called to order a meeting of the Laytonsville Historic District Commission (HDC) at 7:33 p.m. Commission Members Charles Hendricks, Jill Ruspi, and Michele Shortley were present. Member Lisa Simonetti was absent.

**Attendance:** Also present were Kevin Curran, president, and Jacob Cecere (of 21739 Mobley Farm Drive) and Jim Flood, members, Laytonsville Lions Club; and John Pawulak, senior warden, Bill Fitts, junior warden, Rev. Linda Calkins, rector, and Joyce Hawkins and Deborah Howard, vestry members, St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, Laytonsville.

**Minutes:** Member Hendricks had prepared draft minutes of the meetings of June 20, 2016, and September 19, 2016. Member Ruspi moved to approve the minutes of both meetings. Member Hendricks seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Minutes of the meeting of 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 the reconstruction of the larger accessory building behind the Town Hall. Kevin Curran, Jake Cecere, and Jim Flood came forward. Cecere gave each commission member a copy of a five-paragraph report from Mike Seebold, a historic restoration professional from Laytonsville, which Chair Wenger read aloud. Seebold wrote that “the wood frame double seat outhouse/storage shed behind the Laytonsville Town Hall was built between 1880 and 1920. The building is currently unsound and would need to be stabilized in order to increase usage.” He concluded that “the simplest fix is to jack-up the structure and place solid concrete masonry blocks at select points.” He added that “the structural framing and roof joists are in need of repair and the decayed sections need to be removed and replaced. The siding and flooring are also decaying and I would suggest replacing the damaged areas with rough cut lumber to match. The doors and windows should be replaced with period materials in good shape, to avoid restoration costs. The roof would require selective replacement.” He concluded that “the building is certainly worth saving and provides a good physical example of outbuildings from that time period, which are disappearing from the landscape.”

Cecere reported that he also talked to Bill Fitts about the building. Fitts, who now lives in Olney, came forward. He said that the shed at St. Bartholomew’s Church that he had restored was much more structurally sound than the one behind the Town Hall. The roof supports of the town’s shed are sagging, he observed. Its floor covers the supports below, making them impossible for him to evaluate. He did think that restoring the building would be possible.

Member Hendricks asked what the Lions Club proposed. Cecere said that the Lions Club would try to do whatever the Historic District Commission wished, but the club’s funds were limited. Curran observed that some of the shed’s posts are sitting on concrete but some are not sitting on anything. He was particularly skeptical of Seebold’s proposal to do selective replacement of the roof materials. Fitts agreed that a whole new roof would be necessary and observed that the floor was not original. Wenger stated that the building was originally a chicken coop with a dirt floor. Curran doubted that selective replacement of the building’s supports would work efficiently. Cecere said that the main aspects of the interior he was concerned with were the two-hole privy and the grain bin. He thought that the crucial matter to determine was how much of the exterior could be saved. Fitts commented that even when the shed was new, it was not built well, and he feared that jacking the building up might damage the structure. Wenger added that the building has not been well maintained.

Hendricks said that having heard the information presented about the building, he was inclined to approve the original application to replace the shed with a new shed almost exactly like it. He observed that the siding on the outside was decayed almost all around and the structure on the inside was not strong enough to support the building properly. In view of the deterioration of the exterior and the Lions Club’s promise to retain the interesting aspects of the interior, he asked, what is the Town losing by letting the Lions Club put up a reconstructed shed? That would be the most cost effective solution.

Wenger said that she regretted the lack of maintenance of the shed over the years and stated that cost should not be part of the calculus. Due to the level of deterioration of the building, however, she concluded that she basically agreed with Hendricks, provided that as much use be made of in-kind material as possible.

Member Shortley said that she disagreed a little. She commented that if you can save a piece of history you should do so. She observed that her family had jacked up a shed behind her house, replaced its floor, and saved it at a cost of about $6,000 about ten years earlier. She could not imagine that a reconstructed shed would look the same as the current one. Wenger responded that a restoration of the town’s shed would require replacing so much material that the look would change anyway. Curran and Cecere said that the Lions Club originally proposed to replace the siding with the same board and batten construction and that the back would also be restored with board and batten siding. Hendricks pointed out that the replacement roof would be standing seam, like the roof on the back portion of the Town Hall, which Cecere called an improvement. Fitts observed that a mill in Poolesville sells rough-cut poplar, and that he used that wood on the church shed. It is also used on most barns, he said. Shortley said she would be satisfied if original materials were used and agreed that the shed’s condition had deteriorated.

Wenger said she thought the features of the building—the two doors and the windows—should be replicated. Cecere said that the Lions had agreed at the August meeting that the windows could be retained. He said that the application called for a barn door to be installed at the rear of the shed to provide access, with a small ramp. He added that the steps to the front door were probably not up to code, which Wenger and Fitts agreed was certainly true. Cecere observed that there were no handrails. Ruspi asked if the Lions needed to use the front doors. Cecere and Wenger replied that the town would need to have access to those doors. Cecere said that steps with period-style hand-rails would be nice. Curran said that the Lions Club has a contractor ready to work on a reconstructed shed. He said that a determination still needs to be made as to the elevation of the floor, which would dictate the height of the steps. Wenger replied that the Lions Club planned to restore the exterior of the building at its current elevation, so the same number of steps would still be needed to reach the doors of the reconstructed building. Curran and Cecere agreed. Ruspi said that larger steps should be built, and Wenger said that the building code would require that.

Hendricks observed that the application called for a reconstructed building that would be a little longer than the current building’s 28-foot length. Curran said he wanted the new building to be about six feet longer, as the Lions only expected to get to use half of the new building. Ruspi said that she believed that a reconstructed building should be the same size as the original. Shortley and Wenger agreed. Wenger suggested that work inside, such as building a loft, could ease space restraints. Cecere said that the Lions Club had accepted a building of the current size.

Ruspi summarized that the building would have original materials, retain its current size, and have up-to-code access. Hendricks added that the new shed should have six-over-six wooden windows, and Wenger and Ruspi suggested that the current windows might be reinstalled. Ruspi asked if the roof would be red. Shortley suggested that the color should match that of the Town Hall, which, she said, was painted last year.

Member Hendricks moved that the HDC approve WP-02-16 to demolish the larger outbuilding at 21607 Laytonsville Road and rebuild a new outbuilding of the same dimensions, style, and materials, with the exception that the roof will be a standing-seam roof with its color to match as closely as possible the color of the roof of the Town Hall, that windows be included at the same location as in the existing shed, that steps that will meet the relevant code provisions be placed at the two front doors of the shed, and that a ramp may be placed at a new rear door, which will have a cross buck, with board-and-batten siding around it. The two-seater pit toilet and the grain bins are to be retained and reinstalled, if possible, or replaced using period materials. The original windows will be reinstalled if possible. The number 23 must be placed on the door where it is now. Member Shortley seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The Lions Club representatives then departed.

**New Business:**

21611 Laytonsville Road (St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church): Chair Wenger next opened the public hearing on application WP-03-16, submitted by St. Bartholomew’s Church, involving repaving and expanding the church’s parking lot and altering interior traffic patterns. The following representatives of the church came forward: John Pawulak, senior warden; Bill Fitts, junior warden; Rev. Linda Calkins, rector; Deborah Howard, vestry member; and Joyce Hawkins, vestry member.

Fitts explained that the church wanted to increase parking for elderly members near the church and the lift, to make the swing set accessible to children from the church without crossing traffic, to expand parking overall for well-attended services and events (including those sponsored by the town), and to increase lighting around the parking lot.

Speaking from what she described as a pastoral perspective, Rev. Calkins said that the congregation was getting older, raising a need for parking close to the lift and the front of the church. One parishioner, she said, now parks behind the church and uses a walker to come all the way to the lift at the front of the church. The current parking spaces right alongside of the church are not well suited for drivers who use walkers.

Member Ruspi asked whether the church would need to do any grading. Pawulak said that water flows from the church toward the street, and that will not change.

Citing the provisions of Section 114 of the Laytonsville Zoning Ordinance, Hendricks said that his main concern was the widths of the driveways and parking spaces. He said that he did not believe there was adequate space to provide parking on both sides of the driveway on the south side of the church unless the driveway was made much skinnier, and Wenger said she did not think that could be done. Pawulak said that the church had relied on Section 59 of the Montgomery County zoning code, which, he said, provides that a driveway has to be ten feet wide for parallel parking. Hendricks read a section of the Laytonsville zoning ordinance, which called for aisles and two-way entrances and exits to have a width of at least twenty feet and one-way entrances and exits to have a width of at least twelve feet. He said that new parking spaces would have to comply with the zoning ordinance, and he did not think there was enough room to do that and to add more parking on the south side of the church. Shortley observed that people, including children, would be getting out of their cars while other cars might be passing by on the driveway, and Wenger agreed.

Fitts said that the church could give up the two parking spaces right next to the south side of the church. Howard said that she sometimes parked in one of those spaces and commented that they are not configured to make exiting the car easy because they require parking so close to the building. Wenger thought placing parking in front of the south side of the church was not going to work because the space was too tight, and Pawulak was willing to make that a no-parking area. He still wanted to pave according to the plan submitted, though, so that a hearse could pull over there. The basement stairs create the biggest obstacle on that side, Pawulak pointed out.

Shortley asked about the trees at the east end of the south driveway. Fitts said that some of the trees were on the town’s property and some on the church’s side of the property line. Ruspi asked whether some trees could be removed, but Wenger commented that to do that the tree committee would have to be consulted. Shortley asked about an area right behind the church where parking was not being developed, and Fitts observed that the septic tank was there. He added that some of that area could probably be paved, once the church determined exactly where the tank was located.

Shortley asked if angled spaces could be provided along the south side of the church beyond the staircase, but Ruspi pointed out that window wells made that problematic and Pawulak said that angled spaces would cut into the driveway more than parallel spaces would. Fitts said that he envisioned that the parallel spaces would be filled from front to back so they would not require city-style parallel parking.

Ruspi then asked about the two driveways to the street on the north side of the church. Hendricks said that the plan was to make one of these driveways into an entrance and the other into an exit. Fitts explained that the driveway that now goes from the back of the church along the north side of the church would be cut to allow children unimpeded access to the swing set. That would isolate the parking lot between the church and the church office building, but that lot would still have an entrance driveway and an exit driveway. Hendricks observed that the more northerly of those driveways was originally built for Gover Armstrong, the first owner of the house that now serves as the church office, who was not associated with the church. After the church bought that parcel, it connected the driveways, Hendricks added. Fitts pointed out that the church had bought the parcels it now owns in a piecemeal fashion over the years.

Wenger said that she felt a need to see the parts of the plan that worried her laid out on the ground to gain a visual understanding, and Fitts agreed to lay out the section along the south side of the church in orange. Hendricks asked whether the HDC had the power to grant a variance to the zoning code. Wenger said that she thought a variance could only be approved by the Board of Appeals. Joyce Hawkins asked if the town’s zoning requirements superseded those of the county. Wenger replied that they did not do so in all cases, but in this situation the town’s requirements applied. Hendricks observed that the town’s requirements seem to be stricter than the county’s.

Wenger asked about lighting for the rear parking lot. Fitts said that the church just planned to run a conduit now and would later propose new poles and perhaps new bulbs, providing an upgrade from the telephone poles and mercury vapor bulbs used currently. Wenger suggested that the church contact Doug Boyland, whose business is in Laytonsville. Hendricks asked how far from the trees north of the current lot the expanded rear parking lot would extend, and Pawulak said that it would stop about six feet short of the trees.

Hendricks observed that the driveway to Sundown Road was only nine feet wide, and the zoning code required a twelve-foot width. He asked if it could be widened. Fitts said that driveway should be OK as preexisting. Hendricks said that it might need to be improved as part of the parking lot expansion project. Ruspi and Wenger observed that the parking area alongside of the church office was already in existence, but Hendricks pointed out that the plan was to widen it by three feet.

Pawulak asked if the church could widen the driveway between the church and the Town Hall without using it for parking unless and until approval was granted. Hendricks responded by asking if the church was prepared to limit the widening of that driveway so as to provide the four-foot setback provided by Section 114. Pawulak said no. Fitts said that this would require a variance from the Board of Appeals. Wenger observed that the properties were in a residential zone, where a fifteen-foot setback was generally required, so the HDC was being generous in stipulating only four feet. Pawulak then agreed not to pave closer than four feet from the property line, with the possibility of putting in permeable pavers closer to the line, perhaps a foot or eighteen inches closer. Ruspi and Wenger said they were not immediately prepared to accept this proposal. Fitts asked about repaving the current driveway in this area, and Ruspi and Hendricks said this was not a problem.

Fitts said that the driveway has a bump-out due to a well and wondered if the church could extend its driveway elsewhere to be equally close to the property line as that bump-out. Hendricks said he thought that the bump-out by itself would not override the four-foot setback requirement elsewhere. Ruspi said that the Board of Appeals could be an arbiter of this issue. Fitts said that he was thinking of moving the decision from the Historic District Commission to the Board of Appeals. Hendricks thought that the safety issues should be resolved by the Board of Appeals.

Wenger asked if the church had based its parking plan on the county code rather than the town’s code, and Pawulak said it had. Hendricks observed that the town’s code did not specify the length of each parking space, only its size in square feet. Pawulak said that the spaces were 10 feet wide and 23 feet long, and Hendricks said that they thus easily met the town’s 180 square-foot size requirement. Pawulak added that the aisles the church proposed were 18 feet wide. Hendricks said that the aisles could be widened to the 20 feet the town required by shortening each parking space by a foot or two, in which case they would still meet the town’s size requirement.

Fitts said that he was ready to move on to the Board of Appeals, but wanted Historic District Commission approval of the rest of the plan, possibly contingent on Board of Appeals action. Wenger wanted to see the lighting plan, but Fitts said that the church would put that off to another day. Fitts then asked about obtaining approval of the part of the plan that did not require action by the Board of Appeals, and Hendricks said that any part of the plan where the parking spaces or aisles did not comply with the town’s zoning code would require action by the Board of Appeal. Pawulak said that the church’s lines would be in accordance with the town’s zoning requirements.

Member Hendricks moved to approve the project, with the exception of the portion between the church and the Town Hall, contingent on conforming to the requirements of Section 114 of the Zoning Ordinance of Laytonsville for the proper sizes of entrances, aisles, and parking spaces and to the other provisions that section contains or obtaining a variance from those provisions from the Board of Appeals. Member Ruspi seconded the motion. Chair Wenger said that she thought this was perfectly acceptable. The motion passed by a vote of 3–0, with Members Shortley and Simonetti absent.

Hendricks observed that some action still needed to be taken on the proposal to widen the pavement between the church and the Town Hall, either continuing the hearing or rejecting that item. Member Ruspi moved that the HDC continue the hearing for the portion of the application not approved by the commission. Member Hendricks seconded. The motion was approved unanimously as before. The representatives of St. Bartholomew’s Church departed.

6924 Sundown Road (Green residence): Member Hendricks observed that Dustin Green had dug a hole for his new stone wall and urged the HDC to make sure he starts the wall in a reasonable period, as the hole could be dangerous. Chair Wenger said she would try to talk to Green. She added that Green may be abandoning his plan to install solar panels until a later date.

Laytonsville Preserve, Area C: Chair Wenger said that Matt Honacki of NV Homes would be having a work session with the Mayor and Council relative to new proposals for models and elevations and would then come to the HDC at its November meeting. Member Hendricks asked why Elevation C of the Empress II Model had not been approved when other elevations had. Member Ruspi said that that elevation does not look like anything else that was approved, although it is not that big. Hendricks asked if the Town Council was in a hurry for the advice of the HDC on this matter, and Wenger said no. She asked HDC members to look over the newly proposed models. As they are smaller than others approved, she saw no problems but thought the HDC ought to reaffirm the conditions placed on other advisory lot homes. Hendricks said he was not sure the HDC had placed any conditions on the approved models on advisory lots. He also stated that Lot 7 is the only lot on which the HDC has advisory authority that has not been sold or placed under contract. Wenger said she wanted to check into that.

**Adjournment:** Member Hendricks made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Member Ruspi. Upon the motion’s unanimous adoption, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Hendricks