



ABOLITION HALL STEERING COMMITTEE

Monday, September 30, 2024 at 7:00 PM

AGENDA

Meeting will be in-person with a virtual option at the Whitemarsh Township Building
616 Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, PA19444

To join Zoom please click: [Steering Committee 09.30.2024](#) and use Meeting ID# 848 1661 0090
Or by phone [1 646 558 8656](tel:16465588656)

Committee Members:

Laura Boyle-Nester __ Dana Dorsey __ Deborah Lukens __ Edmond Shinn __ Darren Sudman __

BOS Liaison: Jacy Toll __

1. Call to Order
2. Consideration of Meeting Minutes from July 29, 2024
3. Introduction of New President of Whitemarsh Art Center, Michael Young
4. Presentation by Claire Donato, AIA from Mark Thompson Associates, PC on plans prepared for the Whitemarsh Art Center.
5. Karabots Foundation update- Bob Downs
6. Community Engagement- Survey update
7. Public Comment
8. Next meeting: Monday, November 4, 2024 at 7:00 PM
9. Adjournment

2024 Future Meetings: Monday, November 4, 2024 at 7:00 PM

BOS Quarterly Meeting Updates: Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 6:00 PM



ABOLITION HALL STEERING COMMITTEE

Monday, July 29, 2024 at 7:00 PM

MEETING MINUTES

Present: ✓ Laura Boyle-Nester ✓ Dana Dorsey ✓ Deborah Lukens
✓ Edmond Shinn ✓ Darren Sudman

Board of Supervisors Liaison: ✓ Jacy Toll

Staff Liaison: ✓ Craig McAnally, Township Manager ✓ John Walko, Esq.

Unable to Attend:

Chair, Laura Boyle-Nester, called the Abolition Hall Steering Committee Meeting to Order at 7:00 PM.

Introductions of Committee Members

As this is the inaugural meeting of the Abolition Hall Steering Committee, the members of the Committee introduced themselves and gave a brief background.

History and Significance of the Property

Mr. Roy Wilson, who lived at the Corson Homestead for over 40 years, provided a wonderful summary on the history and significance of the property. Mr. Wilson provided the summary to the Manager to include in the minutes of July 29, 2024 (see attached).

The Road to the Acquisition by the Township to “Save the Property”

John Walko, Esq, from Kilkenny Law, LLC provided some background information on the path it took to save this property from development. Property was on the market and many developers had interest with offers ranging to twice as much as the Township received as the appraised value. PA Law under the Open Space Lands Act only allows a municipality to pay fair market value for the land based on an appraisal.

The Township discussed a partnership with the Karabots Family. The Karabots Foundation agreed to donate \$2M for the preservation of the property with the caveat of meeting one of the philanthropic missions of serving under privileged youth. Even with this donation, the Township is not allowed to pay over fair market value, so they needed a non-profit to accept the donation from the Karabots Foundation to provide to sellers. In steps the Whitemarsh Art Center to accept the donation and, along with Township funds, makes settlement on the property in 2022.

Overview of the Grant Agreement

Mr. Walko continued that a Grant Agreement was executed amongst the Karabots Foundation, Whitemarsh Township and Whitemarsh Art Center to ensure the mission is followed through amongst the parties.

In the Grant Agreement, it calls out the uses of the buildings and open space along with the operations and maintenance of the property. As for Abolition Hall, the partnership all agreed to solicit input from the public to determine the future use and operation. The formation of the Abolition Hall Steering Committee is the venue to carry out this mission.

Mr. Ken Parsons commented that, as a member of the HARB, he looks forward in working with the Township to review policy and guidelines.

Ms. Sydelle Zove commented on the plan and vision moving forward. Also, added that the use of the Hovenden House is to be used by the Whitemarsh Art Center.

Role of the Steering Committee

Chair Boyle-Nester stated the Mission of the Steering Committee as:

“The mission of the Steering Committee is to improve the property by guiding the enhancements to ensure a long-term sustainability while preserving the rich history of the parcel.

The goal of this steering committee is to guide the operations of the outdoor spaces and usage of Abolition Hall in accordance with the established agreements associated with the land and building. Identify opportunities to secure funding to improve and enhance the property for stakeholders and public to enjoy the site while staying in the established scope of the overall vision of the Township. Provide space for educational programs for diverse groups of people to enjoy the amenities on site.”

Chair Boyle-Nester stated the Committee is excited to be selected and they know the hard work that lies ahead of them but they are up for the task.

Meetings and Public Engagement Process

Chair Boyle-Nester explained that this Committee will meet every other month, normally the last Monday of the month or first depending on how the calendar falls. This will be a working meeting and updates will be provided at the Board of Supervisors quarterly workshop meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 30, 2024 at 7:00 PM. Mr. Shinn added he wants to implement the plan and see activity at the site.

Public Comments

Roy Wilson commented that the valuation of the property, performed by the Township was based on Open Space not the value of development.

Dana Dorsey stated that we need to learn from the history and honor all that were involved.

Bill Reeve, Plymouth Township, added the property had been maintained magnificently until the Township took it over.

Sydelle Zove suggested the uses of the building should interpret the history of the buildings and property. Paintings, Artwork, Letters, etc. could be shared and on display.

David Miller proposed to have public involvement by having clean-up days in the Spring and Fall. This could educate the public on the history of the property.

Mr. Sudman asked what is being done on the property now. The trails are being cut by a third-party contractor, but we are working on a Covenant Agreement between the Township and Whitemarsh Art Center to spell out the responsibilities for the buildings and land. Mr. Zuena, Whitemarsh Art Center President, suggested they are working with an architect to finalize plans to move into the property. Chair Nester-Boyle asked if they would be ready for the public to show at the next meeting on September 30, 2024. Mr. Zuena agreed to have the architect ready to give a presentation at that meeting.

Adjournment:

There being no other matters of business, the meeting ended at 9:25 PM.

Next meeting: Monday, September 30, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Craig McAnally

Township Manager