
MINUTES OF SYMMES TOWNSHIP SPECIAL MEETING

September 28, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Elected officials present were: Mr. Ken Bryant, Mr. Phil Beck, Ms. Jodie Leis and Mr. Joe Grossi.

Also present: Kim Lapensee – Administrator and Chief Ott Huber – Fire Chief.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Meade House – Potential uses for the house and property. Mr. Bryant welcomed everyone and asked everyone to go around the room and introduce themselves.

- Cindy and Ed Ball – neighbor to the north of the Meade property.
- Eugene Unger – Elevar (Structural Engineer)
- Charissa Durst – Hardline Designs (Architect)
- Robert Becker – neighbor to the south of the Meade property.
- Dave Zieverink – former owner of the Meade House.

Ms. Leis stated that the reason the board wanted the neighbors involved in the committee because they abut to the property.

Mrs. Lapensee stated that reason we are all here tonight is to help guide the architect and engineers with what improvements need to be made to the house to accommodate the use of the building. She stated that our architect has asked us to give her ideas on what we think would be the use(s) of that building. Mrs. Durst handed out site plans.

Mrs. Durst asked about the second floor and stated that the improvements to the first floor are straight forward and the need to know the intentions of the second floor is far more important, so they know what improvements to make to the basement to accommodate the load for the house. Mr. Bryant stated that we should start at the bottom to determine that load. Mr. Unger stated that it is very important to us that to determine the load capacity, they need to know the use of the building whether it is residential, office, commercial or assembly. He stated that it is very important to know just how many people may be in the building at one time and that will determine the loads. He stated that we will also evaluate the existing conditions and what it has done or is doing to the building now. He stated that there is settlement, termite damage, erosion, and dry rot (joints where the beams are at an intersection) going on now that needs to be addressed first.

Mr. Bryant asked Chief Huber the occupancy of the building right now. Chief Huber stated that the occupancy for that building right now is 49 persons (commercial rating on the first floor) which does not account for what the architect or engineer find as it relates to the structural stability of the building. He stated that if the building was in great shape, then it would be 49 people. He stated that if you wanted to put them upstairs, that is a whole different thing. He stated that if we allow people upstairs, then you would have to put in an elevator and add a sprinkler system to protect those people. Chief Huber stated that you would also need 2 means of egress to get people downstairs in case of an emergency (fire escape, stairs, and elevator). He also stated that based on the amount of the investment in the property to meet the requirements for assembly uses would also prompt the owner to bring the whole building up to code.

Ms. Leis asked if that rule is the same even if we only had 10 people upstairs getting ready for a wedding. Chief Huber stated that it does not matter. He stated that if you open the upstairs to the public (any amount), you must meet the requirements of the assembly use. He stated that there is no way to control the amount of people allowed upstairs. Ms. Leis asked the members of the committee if they have any ideas on how they see that building being used.

Mr. Ball and Mrs. Ball suggested that it should be used for office purposes to keep down the number of persons. Mr. Ball asked if the house be used for revenue generating purposes. Mrs. Leis stated that we were thinking it could be rented for small parties or gatherings.

Mr. Becker stated that he was sure it could be used for rehearsal dinners or wedding showers. He stated that there are other places that he has been to that are used for those purposes.

Mr. Ball asked if the rooms were large enough to handle a large event.

Mr. Bryant asked if there were any limitations on use with it being an historic structure. Mrs. Durst stated that there are benefits to it being a historic structure if the Fire Chief agrees, you don't always have to meet the exact regulations. She stated that you can substitute some things for others. She stated that the rooms upstairs are very small. Mr. Bryant asked if the walls could be opened to make more space and he understands that there are load bearing walls that might not be able to be moved.

Mr. Becker suggested that they use small tables and place them strategically throughout the house to fit in the rooms.

Chief Huber suggested that maybe we should be looking at this from the angle that the house is the top of the wedding cake and really the venue (party, dance, gathering, etc.) is an addition or other structure in the back of the existing house. Mrs. Durst stated that other governments have used the historic building in the same manner and just put up a temporary tent for the main event on the property. Dave Zieverink suggested that we view the place in Louisville, Kentucky called Whitehall. Chief Huber stated that there is a similar place in Hamilton Township called the Lily Pad.

Ms. Leis stated that whatever we decide we are going to do, we need to make sure we respect the neighbors around it by not having loud noises, adjusting the parking, etc. She stated that she could see a small wedding venue being in this house. Mr. Becker suggested other meetings could be held there too. Mr. Bryant stated that his feeling so far is that 1) we need to fix the structural issues and 2) we need to restrict activities to the first floor so that we don't have to get into the elevator, sprinkler system and egress issues. Mr. Beck wanted to know what we are going to do with the second floor. Mr. Bryant suggested a care takers office?

Chief Huber stated that there are things we can do in the building because we own it, but once you open the upstairs up to anyone, you must fix all the building code issues.

Ms. Leis asked what Phase 1 would be. Mrs. Durst stated that the structure issues should be first. She asked what other places are using their historic homes for. Mrs. Durst stated that she is working on two other projects right now where they have smaller historic homes and they all want to open them up for small event rentals and if the property has a barn on it, then they want to fix up the barn to hold larger events. She stated that it seems to be universal. Phil suggested that maybe we need to build a big barn in the rear yard for larger events. Mr. Bryant asked if anyone had been to the Linderman Farm in Warren County – same concept. Chief Ott stated that there is a huge need for venue space all over the Cincinnati area. He stated that there is a place in Downtown Loveland, “the Landing”, that is an event center and all you rent is the building and must supply everything else. Ms. Leis stated that whatever we do we should do it first class. Mr. Bryant stated that if we are going to fix it, we should fix everything, so we don't have to come back and fix it again.

Mr. Bryant asked Chief Huber what we would have to fix to increase the capacity above 49 persons for the house. Chief Huber stated means of egress and the sprinkler system. He stated that it determines the capacity. He stated that we may not even be able to get 49 people onto the

first floor and it could be reduced once you put tables and chairs in there. Ms. Leis asked if we could knock down doorways to open the space. Mrs. Durst stated that we can look at that, but we would have to work around some load bearing walls. Mr. Unger stated that those entry ways are all load bearing walls and we would have to create other frames to hold up the second floor to make them wider, but it can be done.

Ms. Leis stated that she hears from Mr. Bryant that he does not want to underestimate the entire project so we should fix the house in the structural sense to support any use of the building (residential, commercial or assembly). Mr. Bryant stated that he could still see the upstairs just being used for office space and control who goes upstairs. Mrs. Lapensee asked Chief Huber if we can do that. She stated that she believed that if we let anyone upstairs from the public, we would have to meet the assembly requirements. Chief Huber stated that as a government we do not want to put anyone anywhere that is not safe. He stated that there are exceptions with the historic building that you can get by with, but, when it comes to the life safety pieces, we do not want to get by. Mr. Bryant stated that it includes the elevator and sprinkler system. Chief Huber stated that the sprinkler system would be dictated by the use. Mr. Bryant asked about the elevator and if it would be required. Mrs. Durst stated that it would not be required if you provide the same uses on the first floor so no one would be excluded. Ms. Leis stated that we would also want the sprinkler system. Chief Huber stated that the sprinkler system is not that expensive. He stated that the big cost of the sprinkler system is the pit and the tapping into the water system. Mrs. Lapensee stated that we get our water from Union Cemetery Road where the trail comes out onto Union Cemetery. She stated that we might not have enough pressure. Chief Huber stated that there is a fire hydrant across the street now and we have more than enough pressure since the new tower was built. He stated that since this is on the Loveland Water System, city council won't require us to have the \$50k pit and the \$25K master valve. He stated that after the fire in downtown Loveland, city council voted to remove those requirements to make it easier and cost effective to have sprinkler systems. Mrs. Durst stated that in some instances, due to the size of the house, they were able to get buy with other types of sprinkler systems instead of a full-blown system. There was a discussion over the structure and how the walls are not stacked on top of each other.

Mr. Beck stated that we talked about having a small event there such as weddings, rehearsal dinners, photo ops, all of which would require us to open rooms, upgrade bathrooms and possibly the kitchen. Mrs. Durst stated that we could also just have a kitchen area that would be just for catering only instead of upgrading to a commercial kitchen. Mr. Beck talked through how it could work with having offices for non-profits, how would that interface with other uses that may be going on downstairs at the same time, etc. Mrs. Durst stated that most parties would take place in the evening or on the weekends and not interfere with office space upstairs. Mr. Beck stated that he likes the idea for maybe phase 3 includes a new 1906 barn for outside events. Mrs. Durst stated that you can always rescue one from somewhere else. She stated that on another project, they are limiting the amount of work upstairs to just dressing rooms and a bathroom and we could do the same thing here – dressing rooms and bathroom on each side of the house (one side for the bride and one side for the groom). She stated that this would allow each party to get ready and if they do not want to see each other, one goes down the back stairs and other down the front. She stated that if it's a small wedding, they get married downstairs and if it is a large wedding, they go out the back door, through the pergola and out to the barn. Mr. Beck asked what that would include in that scenario? Mrs. Durst stated that you would need two new bathrooms and two large dressing rooms. He asked how that would affect the structural aspect of the improvements. Mr. Unger stated that we would have to look at just how many people could be upstairs and calculate that load to determine the improvements. He stated that it comes down to square footage per person. Mrs. Durst stated that if you have a dressing room and bathroom downstairs, then you don't need to have an elevator.

Mr. Beck stated that we have talked about opening the downstairs space, but have we talked about heating and air conditioning? Mr. Beck asked if we are going to need upgrades. Mr. Bryant stated that it should be new because our old one got pirated for parts. Mr. Ball stated that the township will also need to expand the parking. Ms. Leis stated that we could always talk to the church across the street about using their parking. Mr. Beck asked if the occupancy can be opened even with the improvements. Mrs. Durst stated that they will look at it, but it's based on the square footage of the house, number of people and ingress/egress. She also stated that the

stairs do not meet the code either and we would need approval from the Fire Chief to use the existing ones. Chief Huber suggested that we add an outside galvanized staircase to help with egress to meet the code. Mrs. Lapensee asked if we could do that outside and still be okay with historical society in Ohio. Mrs. Durst stated yes, as long as it is not front and center on the building. Mrs. Lapensee stated that maybe we could put it around back and hide it.

There was a discussion about barns, where to get one, how large, dairy barn vs horse barns, etc.

Mr. Beck stated that he thinks we should have phases for the improvements:

1. Fixing structural issues from the termite damage, dry rotting and settlement and getting the building weather tight. This would also include masonry, windows, bricks, and exterior work.
2. Add reinforcement to the first floor to support assembly uses and widen doorways. This would also include any HVAC work, sprinklers and/or electrical work.
3. Fix the second floor and limit the uses for the dressing rooms and bathrooms and redo the floors upstairs. This would also include other cosmetic work such as painting, other carpets, etc.
4. Add a barn/outside area for a larger venue in the rear yard.

Ms. Durst asked what we want to do with the summer kitchen? Ms. Leis asked if we must save it. Mr. Unger stated that the roof is fine, but the walls, blocks, etc. are in bad condition and would be very expensive to fix. Mr. Bryant asked if it could be used for storage. Mrs. Lapensee suggested that we could tear it down and replace it with another structure that is a replica for the summer kitchen, but we could use it for multiple things, and it would probably be cheaper to do. Ms. Leis stated that if we built a new barn out back, the green shed would need to leave too. Mrs. Lapensee stated that we would just need to work with the boy scouts on where their equipment would move to.

Mrs. Durst stated that she would develop a timeline for us to review along with cost estimates. She stated that she should be done with the existing conditions in October, potential sketches and ideas will be done in November and the final report will be done in December. She asked us to send her the paperwork that designated the structure as historical from the state.

Home of the Brave – request from LYBO for batting cages. Mr. Bryant stated that he talked with Mike Wagner and walked the fields at Home of the Brave. He stated that they host 3 tournaments now and if they can host more, they are willing to profit share with the township for the use of the fields. Mr. Bryant stated that the batting cages they want to install are about 15 X 70 and will be caged. He stated that a coach will pitch the ball and have a cut-out to pitch to the kids. He stated that the balls would be contained inside the cage. He stated that LYBO originally wanted to pour concrete and put the cage over it, but they would be agreeable to having crushed gravel with AstroTurf instead. He stated that they want two areas and want to put them next to fields 7 and 8. Mrs. Lapensee asked how tall they would be. Mr. Bryant stated 15 to 20 feet tall. Mr. Bryant stated that LYBO will be paying for these improvements if don't object to the improvement. The Board was not opposed to the improvements.

Mr. Bryant stated that they have some other issues that they would like us to address bathrooms are too far away from the fields and the areas around the field need to be covered with netting to protect the patrons from foul balls. He stated that LYBO is paying to increase the infields for the older kids to play on them.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Approved:

Ken Bryant, Board President

Jodie Leis, Vice-President

Philip J. Beck, Trustee