

Houston Barn Study Committee
February 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present: Jason L., Lee W., Don H., Celina H., Louise C.

Absent: Ben W., Justin P., Dave F.

Meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. via Zoom. Minutes of the January 30th meeting at the Houston Barn was approved as written.

Louise contacted Chief Yale and Chief Pecora regarding the use of the training structure that was built in the upper level of the barn. The Fire Dept. still uses the structure for training purposes but due to the Covid-19 pandemic they have not been able to utilize it this past year. It is their intension to use the training structure again as soon as the majority of the Department have received the Covid-19 vaccinations. The Police Department does not use the barn for training purposes. Louise assured Chief Yale that the structure will remain in place for their training. When or if the barn gets to the point of bringing it up to assembly grade, we will contact them and revisit the situation.

There has been no word yet about the acceptance of the Preservation Alliance Barn Assessment grant. It was mailed out January 25th so it is still early in the process. It could take up to 90 days to hear back from them. Louise will update the committee as soon as she hears anything from the Preservation Alliance.

LCHIP has a new requirement this year that requires a draft of the barn study to be submitted with the intent to apply form prior to May 14. The complete grant submission is typically the end of June. It is not likely we will be ready to apply for a LCHIP grant this year due to the timing of getting the barn assessment completed.

Don and Pete have taken on the project of getting estimates for a new Department of Public Works equipment maintenance space in the event the Houston Barn is torn down. They will contact Dan Blanchette, Director of DPW, to discuss the space needs that they will require if they are relocated. They will also contact all the groups that are presently storing items in the barn to see what their needs shall be if they decide to continue storing items in the new facility. This conversation will also get the various groups the opportunity to discuss among themselves if they want to share the cost of building their own storage facility in a more convenient location and the time needed to fundraise to contribute to which ever option, they choose. The goal is to have the rough plans and estimate done by the end of April.

Jason recommended that Frank Lemay of Milestone Engineering and Construction Firm to give us an estimate of dismantling the barn and removing it from the property. Frank's company was involved in the plans to build a new community center and barn restoration in 2005. Milestone Construction was the contractor who built the Slusser Center. Louise will reach out to Frank to see if his firm will give us an estimate.

Celina reached out to Louise after reading the materials handed out at the first meeting and has started thinking of fundraising ideas and how to reach out to the community for their support. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Town purchasing the property so one idea was to invite the residents for a tour of the barn and get their feedback on potential uses of the barn. She has been thinking of ways to approach a Capital Campaign once we have more information on the costs of restoring the barn and a vision of how the barn could potentially be used has been developed. Her goal is to develop strategies to raise \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 to offset the costs of bringing the barn up to assembly grade for large functions. She had recommended that the committee reach out to Recreation Director Paula Simpkins, Library Director Donna Dunlap, Children's & Youth Services Library Director Leigh Maynard and Historical Society Director Heather Mitchell to see if they were interested in joining our meetings. They are all very busy with their various departments so the minutes of the meetings will be sent to them so that they can be informed of the progress and are welcomed to join in whenever time allows.

Lee suggested we do a video similar to the one that St. Andrews has online to view the progress of the work being completed at the church. We will ask Bob LaPree if he could use his drone to fly over the property this summer then enter into the barn to show the inside structure. This could be put online to inform the community of what the plans are for restoring the barn or used later when construction begins to show the work in progress. There was a discussion to develop a letter prior to town meeting that can be shared or read during the public sessions prior to this year's town meeting. There was a concern expressed that going before the town meeting this year before we have more answers and formulated some plan for future use could bring a negative effect to the project especially since this failed once before at a town meeting. The committee will discuss this idea again closer to May to see where we are at with the barn assessment.

It was also recommended that we invite a few neighbors on Pine Street that could be impacted with increased usage of the barn so they are kept informed and to get their feedback throughout the process. Louise will discuss this with Neal then reach out to the neighbors.

The last deed was found that now completes the history of ownership of the property from 1917 to when the Town purchased the property. When the Registry of Deeds opens for public use, we will continue to search for prior deeds that dates back to the 1800's. Don and Louise will continue to research for any history of the property. It was recommended that we reach out to the community asking if anyone has any documents or stories regarding the Houston property prior to the town purchasing of it. A form could be used that will ask specific questions to make it easier to document the information.

There being no other business to conduct the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

The next meeting will be March 19th at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Louise Carr, Chair