

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION
MARCH 18, 2009
MINUTES

A meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission was held on March 18, 2009 in the 5th Floor Board Room of the State Museum, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The following Commissioners were present: Wayne Spilove, Rhonda Cohen via conference call, Senator Jim Ferlo, Laura Fisher, Janet Klein, Cheryl McClenney-Brooker via conference call, Dave Myers represented Dr. Brian Mitchell, Kathleen Pavelko, Representative Scott Petri, Representative Rick Taylor and Clare Zales. The following staff were present: Barbara Franco, Jean Cutler, Jason Gerard, Beth Hager, Jack Leighow, David Haury, Howard Pollman, Steve Miller and Kirk Wilson. Andrea Bowman, from the Office of General Counsel was present as PHMC Counsel.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Spilove called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. At the request of the Chairman, people attending the meeting who were not Commissioners or employees of the Commission introduced themselves. They include: Representative Steven Santarsiero from Bucks County; Craig Caba, Citizen; Jerry Lerring, Bucks County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Jan Murphy, *Patriot-News*; and Christian Menno, *Bucks County Courier Times*.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 19, 2008

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the minutes from November 19, 2008. On motion by Ms. Pavelko, seconded by Ms. Fisher the minutes were recommended for approval.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Spilove introduced himself as chair of the Commission and asked Commissioners to identify themselves for everyone attending the meeting.

Chairman Spilove gave a summary of programs/meetings he attended this past quarter:

- Attended the Joseph and Amy Cassey marker dedication in Philadelphia. African American Abolitionists who associated with prominent abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and James Forten. Joseph Cassey was distributor for Garrison's newspaper The Liberator. They also supported education and women's rights and were members of several benevolent organizations.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Franco reported on the 2009 theme of "Energy: Innovation and Impact" being launched this month which include a special issue of the magazine. Columbia Gas has agreed to participate as a sponsor of the theme.

Planning for the Civil War 150th continues to involve partners across the state with monthly meetings.

Ms. Franco participated in the American Association of Museums' Advocacy Day in Washington, DC. She also attended a reception in Philadelphia to welcome Bruce Coles as the new CEO of the American Revolution Center.

V. ACTION ITEMS

a) PHMC 2009-10 Budget

Ms. Franco reported that next year's budget presents very serious challenges. She is looking to the commissioners for their assistance and counsel to help the Commission through difficult times in making difficult decisions. The governor's 2009-10 budget calls for a \$1.8 million reduction in our annual operating budget with a reduction in staff complement of up to 48 positions. This represents a 7% decrease in operating funds and a 16% reduction in staff.

We are looking at a plan to reduce our programming by 10% – 20% in order to meet the 2009-2010 budget. We anticipate a reduction in staff will first come from vacancies, retirements and possibly furloughs. The impact of the budget will be in almost every area of our operations. Within the Bureau for Historic Preservation the Museum Assistance Grants will be eliminated including GOS Support for Museums and County Historical Societies.

If the museum assistance grants are eliminated there will be no funding to support the annual black history conference. We are looking at various ways of highlighting black history in Pennsylvania. African American History in Pennsylvania is the Commission's Annual Theme for 2010. The Commission is partnering with the Museum of African American History. Positions lost within the Bureau of Archives and History will be mostly through retirements.

Vacancies at the State Records Center will not be filled and we will not be able to meet the current schedule of acquisitions and disposal of records. Staff suggested the idea of alternating one month of taking in records and one month of disposing of records. The impact on agencies will be that they will have to retain their records longer and possibly find alternative storage options that will be more expensive.

A request was sent to Mary Soderberg to charge agencies for storage of records as a way for a small agency like ours not to have to absorb additional costs. We have heard that a chargeback system will not occur this year. The State Records Center is the most cost effective solution for state agencies to store their records.

Representative Petri asked the Commission to send a letter to the Budget Office in support of charging a storage fee to other state agencies. We provide a service to agencies that use the State Records Center. Ms. Bowman suggested we attach the original proposal sent to Naomi Wyatt.

The State Museum of Pennsylvania struggles to remain open with unfilled vacancies and retirements of front line staff. We are looking at two possible options for the State Museum of Pennsylvania. One option is closing the museum one additional day a week with a Wednesday through Sunday schedule and assume furloughing, approximately 4 ½ positions. The second option is to implement the \$3.00 admission fee to the State Museum to cover the cost of staff with no furloughs and remaining open 6 days a week.

A vote was taken in June of 2005 to implement the admission fee at the State Museum. In September of 2005 it was tabled due to a request from the Governor who found alternative funding for the museum to remain open without charging a fee.

The Commission agreed to implement an admission fee to the State Museum of Pennsylvania starting July 1, 2009. "Free days" would be provided on the first Saturday of the month for families/tourists who cannot afford admission costs. Anticipated revenue from the admission fee is about \$200,000.

The Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums face the problem not having enough staff to operate. Using the Planning Our Future study as a guide we are proposing that the interpretive programs at six sites be discontinued or plans be made to transfer the operational responsibility to other entities. In any event, PHMC would continue to provide basic maintenance with minimal access. Sites identified are: Joseph Priestley House, Conrad Weiser Homestead, Brandywine Battlefield, Brig Niagara Sailing Program, Fort Pitt Museum and Bushy Run Battlefield. At several of the sites identified we have minimal staffing and Conrad Weiser and Brandywine Battlefield are without site administrators. We are proposing suspension of the Brig Niagara Sailing Program but the ship would continue to serve as a tourist destination to visitors in Erie. Joseph Priestley House has very low visitation and would like to work with the

friends group to possibility take on greater program responsibilities. There is potential for the Friends Group to take over operation of Brandywine Battlefield which is used primarily as a park. At Conrad Weiser Homestead we are considering special weekend events and continuing its use as a park. Each site will be reviewed individually and a decision will be made on the best way for these sites to operate.

At the June meeting we will have a firm plan to present to the Commission. Ms. Franco has already met with the local legislators near the sites to make them aware of the situation.

The Planning Our Future sustainability study began over a year ago to find ways to operate sites more cost-effectively while continuing to fulfill PHMC's mission and envision where we want to be in 5 – 15 years. We are in a situation now where we have to make decisions much more quickly than anticipated because of the budget.

Chairman Spilove called for a motion directing PHMC management to pursue staff and cost reductions and new site management arrangements to meet the budget requirements. New site management arrangements should be pursued with full public community participation with hearings to be held before the June Commission Meeting. Motion approved.

Chairman Spilove called for a motion authorizing staff implementation by July 1, 2009 of a fee structure for State Museum Admission of up to \$3.00 per adult. Motion approved.

b) PHMC Social Media Use Policy

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the PHMC Social Media Use Policy. On motion by Senator Ferlo, seconded by Ms. Fisher the Social Media Use Policy was approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT A)

c) Approval of Certified Local Government Grants

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the Certified Local Government Grants. On motion by Senator Ferlo, seconded by Ms. Klein the Certified Local Government Grants were approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT B)

d) Historic Marker Recommendations

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the Historic Marker Recommendations. On motion by Representative Petri, seconded by Ms. Klein the Historic Marker Recommendations were approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT C)

e) Historic Preservation Board Member Recommendations

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the Historic Preservation Board Member Recommendations. On motion by Dr. Haaland, seconded by Ms. Fisher the Historic Preservation Board Member Recommendations were approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT D)

f) State Museum of Pennsylvania Image Reproduction Fee Schedule Revision

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the State Museum of Pennsylvania Image Reproduction Fee Schedule Revision. On motion by Ms. Fisher, seconded by Ms. Klein the State Museum of Pennsylvania Image Reproduction Fee Schedule Revision was approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT E)

VI. OTHER REPORTS

a) Washington Crossing Visitor's Center

Representative Santarsiero spoke to the Commission regarding the proposed closure of the Washington Crossing Visitor's Center. Representative's Santarsiero and Petri concern is that the visitor's center not close and be kept open. They met with staff from Congressman Murphy's office, Bucks County Commissioners and local officials from Upper Makefield Township. Two ideas have been raised: 1) is to turn the site over to the federal government and

2) is to look at the possibility of a local group being responsible for the park. Inspectors do not see any immediate health risks at the center that would temporarily close the site.

Ms. Franco said the decision to look at closing the site until renovations are completed is due to serious water leaks in the building. She recalled Steve Miller's first visit to the site was raining; employees covered items with plastic for protection from water coming in. There were 18 – 25 buckets collecting water from the ceiling in the center. Mr. Miller reported that the HVAC also needs to be replaced and a geo thermal system will be installed to reduce energy costs at the site during the renovation process. There are multiple complexities in dealing with the renovations at the visitor's center and Mr. Miller doesn't believe there is a way not to close the site during the renovation period. We don't intend to close the park or stop the program of the crossing and the very important events that are related to Memorial Day, July 4th and Veteran's Day. Representative Petri asked that the facility only be closed during construction

Representative Petri said that the Bucks County Delegation submitted a letter to the Governor asking him to use federal stimulus money for the additional money needed. As of today we have not heard back from the Governor. Unless there is additional public money we are going to be short about \$1.2 - \$1.4 million dollars. It is Representative Petri's understanding that this does not include a geo thermal system which will cost another \$600,000.

Ms. Franco reported that the Department of General Services says that if money is available to finish the current design, they could go out to bid by August or September 2009. If the money is not available we are being asked to redesign the project within our budget. The long history of this project is we plan, four or five years go by and by the time the planning is done we can't afford what we planned for.

Representative Santersio suggests the Commission hold a meeting on site or near the site in Upper Makefield Township where all the stakeholders in the township including the county and federal government can discuss getting this project done.

Ms. Franco said there are a number of sites under construction or where the visitor's center has recently opened including Pennsbury Manor. Pennsbury Manor and the community raised a good deal of the money for the project and made up the cost difference. The solution to the shortfall in the project budget could come from the community more than any place else. Ms. Franco said that Washington Crossing is one of the most important sites in the county.

Chairman Spilove called for a motion for the commission to hold a public meeting and not to close the Washington Crossing Visitor's Center except for construction or health and safety issues between now and the June Commission Meeting. Motion approved.

b) New Schedule for Accepting and Processing Keystone Historic Preservation Grants

Ms. Cutler reported that Historic Preservation Grants are funded through Keystone grant money. Currently we do not know what amount of money will be received and we propose postponing the program one year so that we know how much money is available and how it will be allocated to the various programs it supports.

c) Suspension of grant application deadlines for FY 2009-2010

Ms. Cutler reported that the money for History and Museum grant program which funds general operating support for museums for county historical societies has been eliminated in the Governor's proposed budget. Applications have been received for project grants; we will proceed with panels, and make decisions on how the money would be allocated if received. We are not accepting applications for the 2009 – 2010 General Operating Support Grants until we know what the final budget includes.

d) Historic Sites and Museums Sustainability Study

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to accept the Sustainability Study as a draft and the Commission will hold public meetings. Brief summaries from the public meetings will be available for review at the next Commission meeting.

Mrs. Klein on behalf of Representative Petri reported on the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve tower. Miles Arnot from the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve offered to manage the tower at least this summer to alleviate some of PHMC's financial needs. Representative Petri urges the Commission to consider a temporary management agreement that if indeed Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve is willing and interested in managing the tower while it's open during the summer that they are given the opportunity.

VII. COURTESY RESOLUTIONS

Chairman Spilove called for a motion to approve the following Courtesy Resolutions: Kennedy Edwards, Lieselotte (Monica) Hart, William D. Gordon, Dr. Louis Morton Waddell, Luis Chacon and the Volunteer of the Year Award Nominations including Leonard and Gerry Janus, George Thorpe, George Heasley, Alan Hackenberg, Anita Pence, Cherie Berg, Kathy Flaherty, Gerald Allen, Bill Miller, Ardrey Manning, Robert Nipar, Jim Miller, Bob Reese, Emily Dietrich, Larry Hess, Cary Brant and Randy Wilkins, Robert Shields, D. Bruce Cahilly, Philip Sauerlender, Joe Palenchar, Janet Sherbine, John Maher, Charlie Hannon and Ron Blatchley. On motion by Dr. Haaland, seconded by Ms. Fisher, the Courtesy Resolutions were approved. (SEE ATTACHMENT F)

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

At this time there was no new business to discuss.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

At this time there was no old business to discuss.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.