
**PITTSFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP
BYRD CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE
REGULAR VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES**

October 5, 2021

Pittsfield Township Administration Building
6201 W. Michigan Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bonenberger, Hanel-Gerdenich, Hunter, Paas, Scribner,
E. Wall, M. Wall

MEMBERS EXCUSED: LeClair & Richards

OTHERS PRESENT: Kimberley Johnson

1.0 Call Meeting to Order/Determination of a Quorum

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. A quorum was present.

2.0 Roll Call and Announcement of Location

Members Present: Bonenberger (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)
Hanel-Gerdenich (Meeting Remotely at City of Ann Arbor)
Hunter (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)
Paas (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)
Scribner (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)
E. Wall (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)
M. Wall (Meeting Remotely at Pittsfield Township)

Members Absent: LeClair & Richards

3.0 Moment of Silence to replace Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich led the Committee in a moment of silence for those who have lost their lives to COVID-19.

4.0 Open Meetings Act/Public Comment

Under the Open Meetings Act, any person may come forward at this time to address the Committee. Anyone who wishes to speak is requested but not required to state his/her name and address for the record.

No one Spoke

5.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion by Vice Chair Paas, supported by Member Scribner to approve the agenda as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

6.0 Approval of Minutes for June 29, 2021

Motion by Member E. Wall, supported by Member Scribner to approve the minutes as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

7.0 Scheduled Guests

None

8.0 Expenditures

None

9.0 Officer Report

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich presented a report of her visit, along with Vice Chair Paas, to the Byrd house and thanked Member Hunter for enabling their access to the house. They looked at every detail of the house to help determine its evolution and historical significance. Chair Hanel-Gerdenich sent a report to the Committee of the Chronology of the Wilsey-Sperry-Byrd house.

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich also reported of her visit to the Bentley Historical Library to review the David R. Byrd and Raleigh Nelson files. She noted that Dr. Byrd was very involved in African American history and preservation and had a passion for architecture and early settlement history. He was very involved in political venues, education, and was a role model in the community. She also reported that Dr. Nelson served on the fundraising committee for many years for the Dunbar Community Center, which was a focal point for providing social, educational, and recreational activities for the children and students in the African American community in the Ann Arbor area. In addition to architecture and early settlement history of the house, Chair Hanel-Gerdenich would like to include this history in the Report.

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich also presented the Rural Property Inventory (RPI) of the Byrd house from the State Archives, dated 1938, showing the footprint of the house as being the same footprint presently.

10.0 Old Business

Member Bonenberger shared screen shots of aerial photographs of the property from 1940 that he obtained from Washtenaw.org. He shared a power point presentation of the description of the house from the exterior and cultural landscape point of view. He commended Chair Hanel-Gerdenich and Vice Chair Paas on their exceptional analysis of the interior structure and the chronological data conveying the historical significance and evolution of the house. Member Bonenberger proposed possibly seeking the expertise of an arborist to further research the vegetation of the property during the period of significance if it is relevant to add to the Report. He also suggested including the Chapel in the historic district as it is significant in representing the principles and architectural work of Dr. Byrd.

The Committee discussed the possibility of extending the boundary of the Historic District to include the Chapel. After much discussion, the Committee decided to include the descriptions of the Chapel and the justification for considering the church property as part of the Historic District designation and make a recommendation to the Township Board in the Report. The boundary for the Historic District designation for the Byrd property will only include the house and barn/garage, including the gravel driveway and trees around the house.

Member Hunter shared her presentation on the biography of Dr. David Byrd, 1921-1987. The highlights of her report include Dr. Byrd's background and education, architecture projects, community and church involvement, teaching, and building restoration projects. In 1966, Dr. Byrd left his career as an architect and started the Construction Technology program at Washtenaw Community College. Member Hunter also shared various pictures of Dr. Byrd and the interior of the Byrd Center that she obtained through the Ann Arbor News archives. She provided a link to the archives in her report. Member Hunter will continue her research on Dr. Byrd to add to the report.

11.0 New Business

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich requested the Committee Members to begin sending her their completed sections and she will add the history section and begin assembling the Report. Once the Report is assembled with added pictures, maps, and figures, Chair Hanel-Gerdenich will send a draft of the Report to the Committee for review.

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich requested biographies from the Committee Members. Once she receives the biographies, she will send them out to the Committee for review.

Chair Hanel-Gerdenich requested Member Bonenberger summarize the significance portion of the Byrd property separate from the description section.

The committee discussed an additional visit to the property to view the garage, take photographs of the exterior, and visit the Chapel.

Member Scribner will get site maps and descriptions of the Byrd property from Matt Catanzarite, Pittsfield Charter Township GIS Manager.

12.0 Next Meeting

2 November 2021, 1:30 p.m.

13.0 Adjournment

Motion by Vice Chair Paas, supported by Member Hunter to adjourn the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED