



Spruce Hill Community Association
257 South 45th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 9, 2023, 7:30pm

Meeting Site:

- SHCA Center, 257 S 45th St; or
- Virtual at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89786390765?pwd=VHpMUy9pb2VyK1VxbGpXODRmczNuQT09>

Attendees: in person Alexa Bosse, Karen Redrobe, Julie Bush, Libby Rosof, Sugirtha Stathis, Monica Calkins, Evan Johnstone, Sylvia Hamerman-Brown, Rebecca Geller-Puchalsky, Tony West, Richard Moore with others attending virtually (names not recorded due to technical error).

Welcome and Introductions (Sylvia Hamerman-Brown)

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes (April 2023) – motion to approve, seconded. Minutes pass.

Guest Speakers:

Constant Springs Consultant - update on proposed Spruce Hill Historic District

- Consultants for the technical piece of the nomination
- Team
 - Sharon Fleming – preservation architect, worked there for over 30 years; Retired from historic commission a few years ago
 - Susan X –
 - Working with students from various institutions.
 - Greg Fisher – UCHS brought them on board – experience with Powelton District
- Scope of Work – goal is to list Spruce Hill as a historic district
 - No more than 500 properties can be listed on one application at a time
 - So separated properties into 4 quadrants
 - First quadrant: Woodland – 43rd (east side) – see map for other boundaries
 - Largest of the 4 quadrants
 - Nomination process
 - There is a form - it includes the bulk of the property inventory
 - Deborah Fisher working on it for them
 - Photographs, building description, including any modifications, if they look and there aren't - year of construction if known, architect if known, materials and current use – intended to help inform the historic commission staff if a change is suggested. Will use the photos to assess any permitting.

- Statement of significance for all of the quadrants – includes plug-ins which are a couple of paragraphs – pointing out the distinguishing characteristics.
- Written physical description – discussion of what the nominated area looks like today
- Boundary description
- Bibliography
- First meeting back in February, then assembled team.
- Able to capture good photos of all the properties in the district, taking into account there were some good cloudy days. Photos were several for each property. Including a full frontal view, and side elevation. Minimum two photos per property. Moved through the quadrant and noted as each photo was uploaded. Used a tool.
- Proprietary software – there is a map view and a list view where each property is individually documented. Photo and other info that is relevant. Property and building name. Also incorporate any info that OPA has – taken directly from OPA website.
- Nomination:
 - Working on the statement of significance – lots of info about SH, project out of Philadelphia, and there was almost nothing
 - UCHS and Penn website both have a lot of info
 - Received drafts of the statement to be edited, but she is still going back and looking at the development of Spruce Hill
 - Map from 1681 until today, street car, to present day
 - Pulling together the narrative of SH – to speak to significance
 - Period of significance is 1850-1930 – need to confirm that is what the PPC staff have. Important because it provides a place to begin. Also, if people want to make any changes to their properties. People will look at it differently. Also tells us those properties that are not contributing, but included in the inventory (if built after 1930) therefore historic commission will not oversee any changes to those properties.
 - Boundaries that we have – starting there
 - Included in nomination is a physical description – of bldgs that exist and their character – as it stands at the time the nomination is completed.
- They will be working during the summer to do the nomination and complete the inventory. Progress report to Board in mid-july, draft for review by UCHS, SHCA first, so we can look at it first and give any feedback. Anticipate submitting draft to Philadelphia Historic Commission (HC) later in September, they will provide comments, we will address. Then when HC satisfied, they will schedule a public hearing, will send out notices, then the consultants will do the presentation.
- Q Karen – glad to hear about the historic preservation effort– suggests to connect with Scribe video center – works with community groups to create videos. Identify properties that get overlooked often, they may have films that involve properties. Could be documentation and a good community hub. Jenine – wonderful suggestion, putting together a strategy for a robust community engagement. She will reach out to Karen to discuss how to connect.
- Jenine – table at the May Fair – start engaging the community, provide awareness and education.
- Mike Lyons WPL – claims PHL is the most segregated city in the country – perception of a lot of people is that historical designation locks people in – how does this impact gentrification?

- Eric – says the impact is that important structures come down – maintaining buildings not connected to gentrification – when you take down houses and allow demolition – market rate boxy structures. Not protecting properties – and allowing unfettered demolition only accelerates displacement and gentrification.
- Mike Lyons – says the impact of historical preservation on gentrification well documented
- Historic preservation – Andrew Cohen – evidence against what you are saying.
- Karen – cares about both – and they don't necessarily have to be put head to head. But do have a responsibility to diversify the community here. And to think about affordable housing.
- Barry – the reality is that spruce hill is a very diverse neighborhood – about 18% of SH is made up of homeowners – we try to maintain. 35 to 40 houses near Penn campus that are empty – Penn sophomores now required to live on campus. Houses are going to be emptying out – landlords are not going to keep them empty. Can tear them down – get rid of them. Huge lot – sits there. Poverty – 46th street. Section 8 housing, very diverse neighborhood. Trying to protect the historical significance of the neighborhood. No community has been at this longer than Spruce Hill. Trying to neutralize powerful forces.
- Mary Goldman – agrees with Barry.
- Andrew Cook – appreciates the architecture – but how can we ensure that the neighborhood doesn't become less diverse. Jenine – very preliminary discussions on what it means to have a fund or grant so that folks would be able to maintain funds in the neighborhood. Not a direct correlation? There are economic pressures and market forces over time. How do we keep and maintain that diversity in the neighborhood.
- Barry – re: vacancies and changes in demographics – some are stuck on notion that affordable housing is new construction – requires money and planning – thinking of creating affordable housing units – housing stock going empty. Rethink this whole issue of what we mean by affordable housing – adaptive reuse.
- Mike Lyons – broad way to think about this – theres a way to make lots of houses affordable. Barry - big investment property ownership in our neighborhood– much owned by developers.
- Monica – we should conduct a comprehensive review of the literature, Spruce Hill needs to have a strongly researched statement regarding the relationship between gentrification and historical preservation
- Julie – the impetus is to prevent demolition – mid row. Also, when house is in a historic district, it means you can't demolish it, but it is really just approval for anything that you see from the street. Prevent developers. Developers will raise that gentrification red flag and get people on board with it .
- Are seeking a demolition moratorium while the historic district is being.
- Eric – trying to be as transparent and open to everyone – not a secret, trying to engage as many people as possible. The more people who know the better.
- Karen – discussion with Penn? – or process for – Faculty Senate committee – Karen is on it, mandate is to come up with a strategic plan for how Penn can be better. Can they run services for people in the neighborhood. Tulia Falletti-Moore will be the chair – reach out to her. Also the civic house – historic preservation. Bring it up at third Thursday! Glenn Bryan.
- Julie – this is a long process – there is a lot of work right now – draft goes to historic commission in fall. That is just the first quadrant.
- Monica - Synthesize the literature – best practices.
- Overbrook Farms – came and talked to them – followed up with them. Powelton – pretty new.

- Thanks for the opportunity.

Board Agenda

- **May Fair - May 13, 2023**
 - Committee has spent countless hours preparing
 - Reviewed May Fair planning documents and map, day of Fair schedule (see google docs)
 - Fingers crossed for good weather
- **All Other Business**
 - **Retail Survey**
 - **Bird Sanctuary** – walk through with an arborist – advised to do more pruning. Estimate. Applied for a Penn grant. Haven't used \$600 every year.
 - **SHCA signing authority.**
 - Motion made by Sylvia Hamerman-Brown (Executive Vice President presiding over the meeting in the absence of the President) that the duly elected President (Eric Santoro), and Treasurer (Richard Moore) of the SHCA Board of Directors are granted signing authority for the organization. Rebecca Geller-Puchalsky seconded. All in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 9:30pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 13, 2023, 7:30PM