

HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
PUBLIC HEARING
Saturday, September 30, 1995
9:00AM

The advertised Public Hearing for Community Development Block Grant applications was called to order by Vice-Chairman Kenneth B. Bennington at 9:00AM and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also present were: Jack C. Fox, Supervisor
Bruce G. Horrocks, Township Manager

Supervisor Bennington announced that Chairman Bennett was out of town, however he would vote on the Community Development Block Grant via speaker phone.

A. Elysian Fields Decision: Mr. Horrocks explained the Board had previously asked the Township Solicitor to review and comment on whether or not Heritage Building Group was authorized to make their extension request for the Elysian Fields Subdivision. Mr. Horrocks noted correspondence was received from Solicitor Grabowski advising that Heritage Building Group is in fact the equitable owner of the site and they do have permission of the owner to request authorization for a two year extension on the Elysian Fields plan. In that process, a Resolution has been prepared for the applicant.

Motion was made by Supervisor Fox, seconded by Supervisor Bennington and carried unanimously to **adopt Resolution #95-43 to extend completion of the Elysian Fields preliminary plan for two years.**

B. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT: Chairman Bennett was contacted via speaker phone to participate in the Public Hearing.

1. Mrs. Betty Pfeil - Hilltown Historical Society - Mrs. Pfeil, as a member of the Hilltown Historical Society, would like to request Community Development Funds for repair and restoration of the Hartzell-Strassburger House. There is approximately \$90,000.00 of Community Development Funds available. Mrs. Pfeil advised the Hartzell-Strassburger House was constructed in 1770 by Michael Hartzell. It is the first house of Georgian architecture in the Bux-Mont area, including a tenant house on a total of six acres. The house was acquired seventeen years ago by the Historical Society. The Hilltown Historical Society is 20 years old and is a breakaway from the Civic Association back in 1976. The Historical Society has used Community Development Funds for the log building at the Civic Field and for the brick work which has begun on the house. If the outside of the building is not repaired and secured, Mrs. Pfeil believes it will deteriorate even faster. The building has had no major repairs since 1930. There is no heat in the building and water pipes are clogged. It is the intent of the

Historical Society to eventually donate the Hartzell-Strassburger property to the Township for park and recreation use.

When the Civic Association needed help and there was a promise of the Civic Field being donated to the Township, Mrs. Pfeil advised the Township agreed to mow the property for two or three years. Mrs. Pfeil stated the Historical Society now needs help and hopes that the Board of Supervisors will offer assistance.

2. Mr. Ron Walter - Hilltown Historical Society - Mr. Walter has been a Township resident since 1968 and has been an active member of the Hilltown Historical Society. Mr. Walter understands that money has been allocated to correct and repair the brick work at the Hartzell-Strassburger Home, however the contractor who was awarded the bid has done quite a bit of damage to the house. Mr. Walter feels that should be corrected and believes this additional funding is to correct the damage which was done to the brick work. Supervisor Bennington noted that statement is not correct. Mr. Walter stated the Hartzell-Strassburger house does need the roof repaired and the Historical Society needs help to get that work done. Mr. Walter supports the use of Community Development Block Grant Funding to further the assets of the Township.

Additionally, Mrs. Pfeil read the following list of needed repairs for the Hartzell-Strassburger property:

- Roof on main house replaced.
- Supports and siding (2 sides) of summer kitchen.
- Some window sills require repair or replacing.
- Front porch supports replaced and flooring replaced.
- Side porch and steps on Old Bethlehem Pike replaced.
- Cellar door repaired and steps replaced.
- Plaster replaced in kitchen and other rooms.
- Replace water pipes.
- Repair and paint fence.
- Where the need is present to the complete the brick work, if bond and insurance money is not sufficient to cover the cost.

3. Mrs. Shirley Gregory - Mrs. Gregory questioned the status of the lawsuit concerning the repair of the brick work at the Hartzell-Strassburger property. Mr. Horrocks commented there is no lawsuit. The Township received from the individual who reviewed the contractor's work, a punchlist of errors and mistakes, to finish the project that was initially started. The Township contacted the bonding company of the contractor who originally began work on the project. The bond company requested an on-site visit which will take place in the near future. The Township Solicitor has been drafting a new bid packet for the brick

repointing and the correction of the existing problems. Obviously, the correction of the problems will exceed the cost of the originally awarded bid. Mr. Horrocks advised the next step will be to determine how much the bonding company is willing to release for the contractor's work. If funds are insufficient, the Township would have to bring suit against the original contractor in an effort to obtain funds to cover the difference.

Supervisor Fox noted the Township Solicitor is not working on the bid itself, but rather he is working on the contract. In any event, it seems to Chairman Bennett that the contractor must correct a great deal of the damage done originally, as well as restoration of the building to original specifications. Chairman Bennett does not believe that can possibly be done for \$23,000.00. Supervisor Fox agreed.

Chairman Bennett has spent a great deal of time reviewing the various options for spending this \$89,000.00 of Community Development Block Grant funds. Previous expenditures, such as the one he just spoke of in the amount of \$23,000.00, has resulted in a rather messy situation, which may yet become a lawsuit. Chairman Bennett recalls that H.U.D. funds were spent approximately 10 years ago to move the Musselman Cabin to the Civic Field. To his knowledge, a lot of money was spent on that project, yet it has never been open to the public. Chairman Bennett has also learned that there is some question as to whether any of these historic buildings are sufficiently covered by fire insurance. Chairman Bennett is not aware of any ongoing efforts on the part of the Historical Society to raise funds for restoration of these buildings. Chairman Bennett feels that any additional funds expended for this purpose would be soaked up like a sponge. He has heard estimates that complete restoration could cost up to \$150,000.00. Chairman Bennett advised there are twelve different parameters by which the Township can allocate Community Development Funds. These monies are to be spent for the benefit of the majority of Hilltown Township residents. Chairman Bennett has no other choice but to suggest that these funds be spent to improve Township roads, which would benefit every resident of this municipality. Chairman Bennett recommended that the Historical Society either sell the Hartzell-Strassburger Home or turn it over to the Bucks County Historical Society.

Mr. Horrocks noted there are \$89,900.00 in funds available in the Community Development Block Grant Fund. There are four major eligibility criteria that C.D.B.G. use in their determination, including benefit to lower income persons. While people may not know that there are lower income areas within Hilltown Township, Mr. Horrocks noted there is a section located in the northwest corner of the Township. The second requirement for eligibility is

preventing or eliminating blight, and Mr. Horrocks does not feel there are any blighted areas in Hilltown Township. The third eligibility criteria deals with projects having particular urgency, such as a bridge wash-out, etc.. The last eligibility criteria is planning, including the preparation of Comprehensive Plans, component elements, and related Codes and Ordinances. Following that, there are twelve eligible activities, noted below:

- Acquisition of real property
- Disposition of real property
- Public facilities or improvements, acquisition, construction, re-construction, rehabilitation
- Clearance, demolition, or removal of buildings and improvements
- Public services - either new or increased
- Relocation
- Removal of architectural barriers to the handicapped
- Rehabilitation of public or privately owned buildings
- Historic preservation
- Financial assistance to provide private businesses for economic development
- Preparation of Comprehensive Plans, component elements, codes and ordinances
- Administrative costs

Supervisor Fox stated the Hartzell-Strassburger Homestead, up until five or six years ago, was open to the public at least once a year. Tours of the log building have been given to those who wished to view it.

With regard to blight, Supervisor Fox commented the Federal Government has considered that a historic building on the verge of decay and collapse, is a blighted building. When the government chooses a low to moderate income area, the only repairs to that area must be inside the boundaries they establish, with the exception of historic preservation, which can be anywhere in the Township. Even if there are not enough funds, over and above whatever the municipality receives for the year, a small municipality Historical Preservation Fund exists, and is available only if all funds are expended for that project. Community Development looks at historical preservation as their number one priority. Since it is in such poor repair, Supervisor Fox feels a sense of urgency with repairing the Hartzell-Strassburger Homestead. Next year, Supervisor Fox explained, there will be less Community Development Funds available, however, there will always be Liquid Fuel funds. The Township has Liquid Fuel funds if those roads need repair, so that funds would not come from the taxpayer. Supervisor Fox believes there are a great deal of people in this community concerned about the Hartzell-Strassburger building. The

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Department of Interior, where these funds originate, feels that a historic building, even though it may not be located in a low to moderate income area, benefits everyone in the community and as well as those across community lines. That was the reason funds were made available for the Thomas Musselman log barn. Supervisor Fox explained the Hilltown Historical Society contacted the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and public hearings were held, where it was determined that it would benefit all residents to save our heritage.

Supervisor Bennington has a Bachelors degree in history from LaSalle University and a Masters degree in history from Villanova, and he strongly believes in historical preservation. Since the last meeting, Supervisor Bennington spoke to several municipalities regarding their historical societies, who indicated that to raise funds for historic preservation, they conduct house tours, sell quilts, and sponsor other fund raisers. Supervisor Bennington asked if the Hilltown Historical Society holds fund raisers for historic preservation. Mrs. Pfeil replied quilt raffles, glass recycling, hoagie sales, and tours of buildings were held previously in order to raise funds. Supervisor Bennington believes that most residents of this Township are more concerned with keeping taxes down, and the intense traffic on the roadways. Further, Supervisor Bennington feels the Community Development Block Grant funds should be put towards repairing the roads in Hilltown Township.

Chairman Bennett cited what Perkasio Borough has done to raise \$300,000.00 for the restoration of the carousel, which has been accomplished in less than a year. Supervisor Fox commented that Perkasio Borough donated an extraordinary amount of money to get the carousel project off the ground.

Motion was made by Supervisor Fox that the \$89,900.00 of Community Development Block Grant funding be applied to complete the necessary outside restoration work at the Hartzell-Strassburger Homestead; with the specification that if funds are left over, as a secondary project, Reliance Road and Cherry Road be reconstructed. There was no second to this motion.

Motion was made by Chairman Bennett, and seconded by Supervisor Bennington, to authorize that the \$89,900.00 of Community Development Block Grant funding be expended for the improvement of Township roads in the areas so designated. Supervisor Fox voted no. Motion passed.

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C. ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion by Supervisor Fox, seconded by Supervisor Bennington, and carried unanimously, the advertised Public Hearing for Community Development Block Grant Funding was adjourned at 9:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynda Seimes
Township Secretary
(*These minutes were transcribed from notes and tape recordings taken by Mr. Bruce Horrocks, Township Manager).