

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
Borough of West Chester, Pennsylvania

Minutes

May 28, 2026

7:00 pm – Room 232 - Borough Hall

PRESENT: Carol Quigley-Chair, Joseph Martino-Vice Chair, Thomas Clark, Matthew Hazley, Daniel Ritchie, Philip Yocum

ABSENT: Thomas Dougherty, Marissa McCarthy, Michael Wallacavage

A. Applications:

1. 2026-09: 20 W. Chestnut Street / Emily Bagelman
Proposed work: Garage Demolition

Findings; Emily Bagelman, the applicant, and her husband Adam Bagelman were present to represent the application. Mr. and Mrs. Bagelman manage the 20 W. Chestnut Street property for the owner, Mr. Jay Shur. The property includes a twin home on the south side of W. Chestnut Street and a two-car garage that faces onto Prescott Alley. Giovanni Angelini, representing Diplomat Demolition, was also present. The proposed project to demolish the existing two-car garage was described as follows:

- The existing two-car garage is an old structure with masonry side and rear walls, a wood roof structure with asphalt shingles, 2 sliding wood access doors, a wood side door, and a concrete floor. The walls appear to be multi-wythe brick coated with a stucco finish.
- The exact age of the garage is not known. (Note: Based on its style and construction materials, the HARB believes the building is likely early 20th-century). It is not highlighted as a carriage house on the Borough's Historic Carriage House Inventory, but it does appear on the carriage house resource map.
- The applicant stated the garage was in poor condition and needed to be demolished because required repairs would be too expensive.
- Deficiencies were listed as rotting structural roof members, a leaking roof, inoperable sliding doors. The side door and sliding doors do not have functioning locks so vagrants sometimes come into the building.
- The applicant submitted an Inspection Report (Inspection Failed) dated March 11, 2026, from the WC Department of Building, Housing and Code Enforcement. The report cited; "Multiple rafters in extreme disrepair in the detached garage constituting an extreme safety hazard, the whole structure must be inspected by a certified structural engineer to determine what repairs or replacements need to be made to ensure safety hazards are eliminated." The report also noted multiple deficiencies for the main house that require repairs or require structural inspection and repairs.
- The applicant submitted an email from Melanie Ann Cook, PE of Daniels Consulting Engineers, LLC documenting that she had visited the garage and noted the deteriorated roof rafters and a wall that may be leaning. She noted potential structural complications associated with demolishing the east-side party wall with an adjacent garage. She offered to prepare a structural report but has not yet been engaged to do so. Ms. Cook indicates she may recommend demolition.

- The applicant indicated they would like to create a gravel parking lot in place of the garage.
- The applicant submitted Diplomat Demolition's proposal for demolition in the amount of \$9,300.00. It was noted the proposal does not include any costs for new work or repairs to the adjacent garage.

The HARB reviewed the application in detail and provided the following comments:

- The HARB noted that outbuildings and garages are important resources that contribute to the historic character of the borough's distinctive alleys, particularly in the HARB district. Demolition of these contributing structures is not considered lightly. It is critical that the borough's existing historic structures and features be maintained in a good state of repair; not allowed to deteriorate to the point where demolition is proposed as a solution to poor maintenance. The HARB commented that "Demolition is Forever." Once destroyed, historic resources cannot be recreated.
- The higher cost of repairs vs. the cost of demolition is not sufficient justification for allowing neglected structures to be torn down.
- Directly adjacent to the subject garage, at 18 W. Chestnut Street, is a nearly identical garage, which has been maintained in good condition. It features similar twin wood sliding doors, masonry walls, and low gabled roof. The adjacent garage has obviously been well maintained. It has a metal roof and exhibits sound painted wood finishes. There are other examples of similar garages in the borough that have been maintained in good condition.
- By comparison, the subject garage has obviously been neglected. The HARB concluded this is a case of "demolition by neglect" – which is never supported by the HARB or other bodies that review historic alterations.
- Mr. Yocum visited the subject garage prior to the meeting and noted there are a number of deteriorated rafters with rotted ends near the south side of the building. But they did not appear to be more than 25% of the structure. The deteriorated wood occurs mainly below the valley at the east party wall. Clearly the subject garage roof is leaking and needs repairs. However, It was noted that even after a week of heavy rain, the interior of the garage was surprisingly dry. The deterioration observed appears to be repairable.
- The HARB raised a concern about the damaging effects that demolition of the subject garage will have on the neighboring garage. They have adjoining walls so that demolishing the subject garage's east wall may affect the integrity of the neighboring garage on the east side. It was also noted that demolishing the subject garage will remove part of the neighboring garage's metal roof and require repairs to extend the eaves of that roof. The applicant has not consulted with the adjacent owner regarding the potential impacts on their garage. The HARB stated the neighbor would need to be consulted on any proposed demolition and a repair plan created.
- Demolishing a building with no plan for enhancing the property other than a gravel lot is disappointing. Repairing the garage or replacement-in-kind would be more appropriate.
- The HARB members are not convinced that the case for demolition has been made.

Motion; Brought by Ms. Quigley to recommend Denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-09 to demolish the garage at 20 W. Chestnut Street. The project documents submitted, and an on-site review, illustrate a case of “demolition by neglect.” The Owner’s long term deferral of routine maintenance has caused the deterioration exhibited in the subject building. That neglect is not justification for the demolition of a historic structure in the borough. The building deterioration should be repaired.

Seconded; Mr. Martino

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

2. 2026-10: 21 W. Washington Street / Marco Cavello

Proposed work: Door, Window, Trim-Replace, and Paint Change

Findings; The applicant, Marco Cavello, was present to represent the application to paint the doors and windows at the Washington Street School Residential Building. Mr. Cavello described the project’s scope as follows:

- Mr. Cavello confirmed the project is limited to painting the building’s existing historic wood windows, doors, frames, and wood trim.
- The proposed new paint color is black.
- Mr. Cavello clarified this a brick building with stone banding and trim. There is very little wood trim on the building beyond the window and door frames.
- Some deteriorated wood material at windows, doors, and wood frames will be repaired and replaced in-kind.
- Painting the modern wood framed fabric entrance canopy is not included in this project.

The HARB reviewed the application in detail and provided the following comments:

- The HARB members were pleased that the wood windows, doors, frames, and wood trim will be painted. The building has been well maintained since its residential adaptive reuse.
- The HARB members expressed concern that black paint for the windows and doors is inappropriate for this building.
- While black paint can be an appropriate and attractive color when used on historic industrial buildings, it is not appropriate for the Washington Street School Building.
- Mr. Martino quoted the HARB Design Guidelines; “Exterior colors or color schemes should be appropriate to the architectural style and period of the building.”
- The HARB concluded that the appropriate paint colors for the distinguished traditionally detailed Washington Street School Building would be similar to the existing woodwork color currently on the building. A light beige, sandstone, or similar color is appropriate.

Motion; Brought by Mr. Martino to recommend Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-10 as submitted with the following clarifications:

1. The wood windows, doors, frames, and trim may be painted.
2. The new color shall not be black as proposed.
3. The new color should be an appropriate lighter neutral color tone similar to the existing paint color; such as light beige or sandstone, as selected by the owner.

Seconded; Ms. Quigley

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

3. 2026-11: 104 E. Gay Street / Cole Bauer-Cutter & Cannon Spirits
Proposed work: Sign

Findings; The applicants, Cole Bauer and Matt Mowatt, were present and described the proposed sign project as follows:

- New hanging sign, 24-inch H x 36-inch W, rectangular sign, colors to be light brown field with deep brown text and trim. The message on the sign is “**Cutter & Cannon Spirits.**”
- The sign will hang from an existing black metal bracket which will be turned upside-down to raise the sign, to comply with the 8-foot clearance from the sidewalk.
- No new illumination will be installed.

The HARB reviewed the application as follows:

- The HARB members concluded the proposed sign is appropriate to the character of the HARB district.

Motion; Brought by Mr. Martino to recommend Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-11 as submitted.

Seconded; Mr. Ritchie

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

4. 2026-12: 125 N. Church Street / Steve Bahnatka
Proposed work: Sign

Findings; The applicant, Steve Bahnatka, was present and described the proposed sign project as follows:

- A new round blade-mounted, 2-sided, round, aluminum sign, 24-inch diameter. The message on the sign is “**DEBORAH ANN MACK**” – w/ “**DAM**” Logo. Black text on a Yellow background.
- Bracket will be black metal.
- There will be no illumination.

The HARB reviewed the application as follows:

- The new blade sign is similar to the existing blade sign it replaces.
- The HARB members concluded the proposed sign is appropriate to the character of the HARB district.

Motion; Brought by Ms. Quigley to recommend Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-12 as submitted.

Seconded; Mr. Ritchie

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

5. 2026-13: 113 W. Chestnut Street / Steve Yannelli
Proposed work: Exterior Renovation / Mural Removal

Findings; Steve Yannelli, the applicant and owner, was present to represent the application. Mr. Yannelli described the project’s scope as follows:

- New Front Garden Walls: Low (approx. 12-inch high) front concrete walls with pre-cast concrete caps will extend across the front of the building to enclose a new raised garden area on the west side and conceal a new east side ADA ramp to the central entrance door.

- New Front ADA Entrance Ramp: Low concrete ADA entrance ramp concealed within the new front wall. Handrails are not required by code and will not be installed.
- Repaint Building Exterior: The buildings current beige painted stucco front, rear, and west side walls will be repainted a greyish blue color. Building doors, windows, and trim will be painted a yellow color.
- Paint Over the Existing Exterior Mural: The existing mural on the east side wall will be painted over in the new greyish blue color proposed for the other walls of the building. Mr. Yannelli stated the mural did not fit with the building's new occupancy.
- James Breen of the Public Arts Commission appeared regarding the mural. Mr. Breen stated the CPA contracts require murals to remain in place for five years - unless the building ownership changes. Therefore, the mural at 113 W. Chestnut Street may be legally removed.

The HARB reviewed the application in detail and provided the following comments:

- The HARB endorsed the installation of the new low concrete walls, the garden area, and the ADA access ramp.
- The proposed repainting of the building walls and trim was also deemed appropriate.
- The HARB members expressed disappointment that the building's existing mural was being painted over. The mural was only recently installed. HARB acknowledged the owner's right to repaint his building. Some members wondered if the mural could be modified to align with the building's new identity. Mr. Yocum requested that covering the mural be delayed until the end of the project, in hope that it could be incorporated into the building's new paint scheme.

Motion; Brought by Ms. Quigley to recommend Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-13 as submitted with the following clarifications:

1. The new concrete walls enclosing the garden and ramp will be painted in a color as selected by the owner to be compatible with the building's new paint scheme.
2. The HARB agrees the existing mural is permitted to be removed; but laments its loss and requested the applicant reconsider the plan to immediately paint over it.

Seconded; Mr. Ritchie

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

6. 2026-14: 129 E. Gay Street / Lisa Mollison

Proposed work: Exterior Renovation / Sign

Findings; The applicant Lisa Mollison, and project designer Brad Giresi, were and described the project's scope as follows:

- Hanging Sign: A new 14"H x 20"W double-sided hanging aluminum sign is proposed at the front of the building. Color will be a dusty rose with dark grey text and accents. Sign will be to be mounted on an existing black metal bracket.
- Repaint Storefront: The existing first-floor wood storefront will be repainted. Color will be changed from the existing medium grey to Cabbage Rose. Woodwork repairs will be made as needed.
- Enlarged Rear Door Opening: Supplemental materials were presented at the May 28 HARB meeting for an addition to the project as follows: The existing center-rear metal man-door facing the alley will be removed and the opening enlarged to insert a salvaged 7'-9"W x 6'-8"H antique wood carriage house door in a new wall

opening. The door will be fixed in place. The new wood frame will be painted. The existing stucco wall will be repaired to match the adjacent surfaces.

The HARB reviewed the application in detail and provided the following comments:

- The HARB members concluded the proposed sign and storefront painting are appropriate.
- The HARB concluded the proposed new rear carriage door installation is appropriate.

Motion; Brought by Mr. Martino to recommend Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application 2026-14 as submitted with the following clarifications:

1. The hanging sign design is approved as presented; to be mounted on the existing metal bracket.
2. The first floor wood storefront will be repainted as proposed in the “Cabbage Rose” color.
3. The existing center-rear metal man-door facing the alley will be removed and the wall opening enlarged to insert a salvaged 7’-9”W x 6’-8”H antique wood carriage house door in a new wall opening as illustrated in the supplemental materials presented at the May 28 HARB meeting, with the following clarifications:
 - a. The non-operable glazed wood door will be installed in a new painted wood frame with exterior and interior trim.
 - b. The existing adjacent metal six-panel door and frame at the rear elevation will remain in place and be painted.
 - c. The existing stucco wall will be repaired to match adjacent surfaces.
 - d. The supplemental design and construction documents for the new fixed rear door will be submitted by the applicant to the Building and Housing Department for inclusion in Application 2026-14.

Seconded; Mr. Hazley

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

B. Report from Planning Commission; The Planning Commission liaison provided the following project updates:

1. No Report for May

C. America 250 Mural proposed at 240 W. Gay Street: James Breen appeared on behalf of the West Chester Public Arts Commission (PAC) to make a presentation for a new mural proposed for 240 W. Gay Street. The mural is in honor of the America 250 celebration and will depict images of Col. John Hannum, Indian Hanna, and Horace Pippin. There was no formal HARB application submitted for this informal review. Mr. Breen displayed a preliminary rendering of the mural, prepared for a previously considered site in the borough. The project at W. Gay Street has been endorsed by the borough administration and is moving quickly. The mural artist is Al Moretti and prep work at the site started today. The mural should be completed in two weeks. The HARB discussed the proposed project and was very much in favor of it. The members requested that Chair, Carol Quigley write a letter to Borough Council, reflecting the HARB’s sincere support of the mural.

Motion; Brought by Ms. Quigley to recommend that the HARB Chair shall write a letter of support to the Borough Council documenting the HARB’s support for the proposed America 250 mural to be located at 240 W. Gay Street.

Seconded; Mr. Clark

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

D. West Chester Borough computer system discussion: Aaron Flook, director of the WC Department of Building, Housing and Codes Enforcement, was present to update the HARB on a recent hacking attack of the borough's computer system, including HARB documents. As a result, the borough has temporarily shut down on-line access to the system. The attack involved a fraud to submit fake approved permits to financial institutions to falsely release funds. Other municipalities have also been impacted. The borough is working on a final solution, but there may be short term service interruptions. Mr. Flook requested the HARB's patience and understanding in this matter.

E. Code Enforcement Officer attendance at HARB meetings: Mr. Flook confirmed that Paul Edwards will no longer attend the monthly HARB meetings due to department scheduling issues. The HARB members expressed their deep appreciation for Mr. Edward's valuable insights and guidance at last year's review meetings. The members stated it is important for the Code Officers to understand first-hand the specific recommendations of the HARB so that they can ensure the projects are constructed as approved. There have been some projects constructed that do not follow the designs and details approved by Borough Council per HARB's recommendations. The HARB members encouraged the administration to consider having a Code Official/Building Inspector attend the meetings in future as originally required by the West Chester Zoning Code: Historic District, Article XI, Historic District, 112-56, A., (1).

F. Public Attendance: The members noted the consistent attendance of Nathan Marnien at HARB meetings over the past two years. Nathan is a student at Henderson High School with an interest in history and civilian government.

G. Approval of the Revised April 2026 meeting minutes

Due to the recent West Chester Borough computer system issues, the revised April 2026 HARB minutes were not distributed for review and approval by the board. The April minutes will be reviewed for approval at a future HARB meeting.

E. Other Business;

1. No other business.

Motion to adjourn; by Mr. Hazley

Seconded; by Ms. Quigley

Passed; Yes (Unanimously)

HARB minutes submitted by: Philip Yocum, HARB Secretary