

October 10, 2013

West Vincent Township Supervisors
729 St. Matthews Road
Chester Springs, PA 19425

West Vincent Township's historic ordinances exist because the people of the Township value its history. In 1992, the US Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, placed Birchrunville on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District.

The Historic Resources Committee (HRC) of the EAC asks West Vincent Township to observe its ordinance (the yellow book version of which applies to the proposed Birchrun Village development) Section 2410, p. 328, to require a Historic Impact Study of the proposed building plans for the Birchrunville Schoolhouse property. The professional chosen for this study should be acceptable to the developer and the HRC or the Supervisors. The developer, according to the ordinance, incurs the cost of the study.

Every contributing building in the Birchrunville Historic District is Class 1 (see p. 319, yellow book). "Unless waived", an historic impact study is mandated by ordinance.

How historic can a little backwater in northern Chester County be?

Since its first settlement by Europeans around 1700, a community thrived here that mirrored the trends of American history. Marvelous records made available through Chester County's dedicated and enthusiastic archivists are unfolding reams of data on the people and ideas that lived in the little stone houses, mills, and barns of this small place.

The Industrial Revolution, the migration of the iron industry west in Pennsylvania, the development of new roads that missed Birchrunville, and pure chance left the village almost unchanged into the 20th century, thus a vernacular architectural gem.

In the spirit of three of West Vincent's wisest judges from each of the last three centuries, John Ralston, Nimrod Strickland, and Owen J. Roberts, we extend a hand to the owners of the Birchrunville Schoolhouse and understand the need to make it pay commercially.

The Historic Impact Study is overdue. Page 318, Section 2402 (yellow book) indicates that the historic preservation articles shall supersede the otherwise applicable requirements of the underlying Zoning District.

And to do so would allow the spirit of Estelle Cremers who prepared the Birchrunville Nomination to rest in peace.

Sincerely,
Isabelle Travaglini for the Historic Resources Committee