

Executive Summaries
Public Meeting Minutes

Joseph Priestly House:

Date: Thursday, April 9, 2009—7-9 p.m.

Where: Unitarian Universalist Congregation; 265 Pt Twp Dr; Northumberland

Moderator: Tom Bresnehan

Legislators: Representative Merle Phillips; Representative Rick Taylor; Chief of Staff for Senator John Gordner.

After comments from Representative Merle Phillips, Chairman Wayne Spilove, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke.

Approximately 32 speakers signed up to speak. All were in support of keeping the site open. The majority of the speakers addressed the significance of Joseph Priestly to American intellectual history, especially science. There were several ideas proposed to assist with funding. The American Chemical Society spoke of their strong support for the site over the years and would assist further if needed. One County Commissioner offered to help find funding. One citizen proposed an idea called “Exploratorium.” Attendance—160

Staff Recommendations
Change of Operations

Recommend staff continue the dialogue with Friends Board leadership. The Friends are working on a phased plan that will shift the site’s interpretation toward a science education center in collaboration with new and expanded partnerships that would include the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. In the short term, PHMC would secure collections, continue maintenance and security contracts, while working with the Friends to negotiate a new management agreement. Staff has encouraged the FJPH to engage with the American Chemical Society, the Northumberland County Historical Society, the Northumberland County Commissioners and local universities to explore alternate uses and new operational models.

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Fort Pitt Museum:

Date: Thursday, May 14, 2009—9:30-11:30 a.m.

Where: City Council Chambers; Pittsburgh

Moderator: Senator James Ferlo

Legislators: Senator Wayne Fontana; James Scahill, Armstrong Co. Comm.

After comments from the senators Chairman Wayne Spilove, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke. Approximately 30 speakers came out in strong support for keeping the site open. Approximately _ were in support of the John Heinz History Center operating the facility and _ in support of The Friends of Fort Pitt assuming operations. Attendance—100.

Staff Recommendations
Change of Operations

PHMC received proposals from the Friends of Fort Pitt Museum and the John Heinz History Center. Both parties put a great deal of thought and work into plans for operating the site with much reduced state funding. Recommend entering into a management agreement with the John Heinz History Center for a term up to ten years for operation of the Fort Pitt Museum. The John Heinz History Center presented a credible plan for the sustained operation of the facility. They plan to operate and market a full schedule of public programs. PHMC will continue to provide funding for building maintenance.

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Flagship Niagara

Date: Thursday, May 14, 6-8 p.m.

Where: The auditorium at the site.

Moderator: Senator Jane Earll

Other legislators present: Rep. Flo Fabrizio, Rep. Pat Harkins and Rep. John Hornaman

After comments from the legislators, Chairman Wayne Spilove, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke.

Approximately 25 speakers spoke in favor of keeping the ship sailing. Many spoke about the value of the ship's program for building a work ethic and teamwork among a diverse set of staff and volunteers. The League is in full cooperation with PHMC, attempting to find a way to keep the ship sailing. There was community support and optimism that they can raise funds to support this program Attendance—120

Staff Recommendations
Change of Operations

Recommend entering into a management agreement with the Flagship Niagara League to operate the sailing program of the Flagship Niagara for up to two years. During extensive conversations with the League's leadership and community leaders in Erie, it is clear that the community is ready to support this symbol of their city and the state. PHMC will continue to provide basic maintenance and insurance costs.

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Brandywine Battlefield Historic Site

Date: May 18, 2009 6-8 p.m.

Where: Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, PA

Moderator: Tore Fiore, Executive Director, Brandywine Conference and Visitors Bureau

Legislators: Senator Dominic Pileggi, Representative Steven Barrar, Twp Supervisor Debra Love

After comments from the legislators, Chairman Wayne Spilove, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke.

37 speakers made presentations. The meeting began with the Chadds Ford Township's offer to work with the current friends group to keep the site operational through local management. Many people spoke about the significance of the site to the area's tourism industry. Still more spoke of the value to young people and the impact of the battle on the overall revolutionary campaign. Several spoke of PHMC's failure to consider the value of the site on a cost basis.

Attendance—160

Staff Recommendations
Change of Operations

Recommend entering into a management agreement with Chadds Ford Township and the Brandywine Battlefield Associates to operate the site for a term up to ten years. The Chadds Ford Township Supervisors and Brandywine Associates have been working cooperatively with PHMC for over three months to detail the terms of the management agreement. A full time PHMC maintenance position will remain in place to assure full facility operations and site security during and after the transition.

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Bushy Run Battlefield Historic Site

Date: Wednesday, May 27, 2009, 7-9 p.m.

Where: Held in the exhibit room at the site.

Moderator: Senator Kim Ward

Legislators: Congressman Tim Murphy, Rep. William Kortz; staff for Rep. James Casorio

After comments from the legislators, Commissioner Laura Fisher, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke.

Approximately 27 speakers addressed a standing room only crowd. Members of the Board of the Battlefield Heritage Society spoke of how they were working in partnership with the PHMC to keep the site open. Many subsequent speakers told stories of how they experienced the site from youth until now. There were questions and concerns about why state government could not support the site. One speaker offered to bring his mower to the site to assist with lawns. Most expressed that they were ready to roll up their sleeves and get it done (site operations). Attendance—375; & 27 dogs

Staff Recommendations
Change of Operations

Recommend entering into a management agreement with the Bushy Run Battlefield Heritage Society to operate the site for a period up to ten years. The Bushy Run Battlefield Heritage Society is cooperatively negotiating with PHMC to establish terms and agreement that will help them realize their goal of operating the site and its many events. A full time PHMC maintenance position will remain to assure site operations and site security.

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Conrad Weiser

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2009, 6-8 p.m.

Where: The social hall of St Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robesonia, Pa.

Moderator: Marie Hibshman, Local High School Chemistry Teacher

Legislators: Senator Mike Folmer, Representative Jim Cox and Bill Evans, staff Member for Senator Michael O'Pake

After comments from the legislators, Executive Director Barbara Franco and Bureau Director Steve Miller spoke.

Approximately 26 people registered and spoke. Opening remarks had to be delayed to allow for registration of attendees. Many speakers were critical of the decision to choose Conrad Weiser for a change in operations. There were several students who had interned at the site and spoke well of their experience. Some speakers were critical of the report itself while others focused on the man Conrad Weiser and his influence in early America with political leaders like Washington and Franklin along with native Americans. After the meeting closed discussion ensued with Friends Board leaders on next steps.

Staff Recommendations

Change of Operations

Recommend continuing dialogue with the Friends Board. A meeting was held June 10th with the Board to discuss terms of a new management agreement. It was agreed to continue the effort to keep the site open under the Friends of Conrad Weiser Board's management, additional fundraising efforts and using the CW Memorial Park Trust fund to help support the transition