

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Board of Commissioners Meeting

Issue Briefing

Topic: Historical Commission Review, 625 W. Montgomery Avenue, Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

Prepared By: Greg Prichard, Historic Preservation Planner, Building & Planning Department

Date: April 2, 2020

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Approval of a Historical Commission application for 625 W. Montgomery Avenue, Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. The plan shows the removal of a porte-cochere and the construction of an enclosed link between the Sanctuary and the Ministry Center. A driveway currently separating the two buildings would be re-routed to connect with the driveway on the east side of the sanctuary.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

The Board of Commissioners must review and render decisions on all Historical Commission recommendations.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

N/A

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

According to the applicant: “The new Link will improve internal circulation and ease access from the parking lot to Ministry Center and Sanctuary and between the Ministry Center and Sanctuary by reducing the number of level changes required between the two buildings and by adding a new elevator and stair. The Link will serve as a clear and welcoming “go-to” location from both Montgomery Avenue and the Sanctuary Parking Lot. It will also function as an accessible community gathering space adjacent to the Sanctuary.”

Members of the Historical Commission reviewed the application and had concerns with three aspects of the concept:

Massing & Volume

- Flat wall planes increase physical and perceived size.
- A window and corner of the Ministry Center will be obscured, as will part of the Sanctuary.
- Roof/eave line has been raised and does not relate to or give deference to the Sanctuary.

Skylight

- Distracts from the clean lines of the addition.
- Has no relationship to the existing architecture.

Metal Panel Cladding, North Facade

- Breaks up the clean lines of the simple glass volume.
- Use of the panels is incongruous.
- Consider obscuring this element by changing placement, color, etc.



The Converse House and Ministry Center at left, Sanctuary at right, connected by the porte-cochere to be removed.



The proposed new Link between the two buildings to replace the porte-cochere.

V. Impact On Township Finances:

N/A

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board approve the application subject to continued discussions between the applicant and a Historical Commission subcommittee to resolve concerns regarding:

- a) Massing and volume;
- b) The design of the skylight;
- c) Metal cladding on the north facade.

The applicant has agreed to work with a subcommittee to further refine the concept.



North (rear) elevation of the proposed Link between the Sanctuary (left) and Ministry Center (right).