

...Marietta Council (cont.)

[continued from front page] other fire truck dealers. Geesey replied that the others were much more expensive; the well-known makes, such as LaFrance, start at more than \$100 thousand dollars, and are no better, he said.

Zuch still favored re-bidding, and so moved. But his was the only vote in favor of the motion.

It was decided that a special meeting will be held to accept or reject the two bids after the specs are checked out. The firemen will be represented.

Bids on heavy equipment rentals were opened. It was decided that, as was done last year, the lowest bidder in each category of heavy equipment will be hired. Councilman Roberts made this motion, and he will draw up the reference chart.

After this the Public Hour was held.

A woman complained about a street light on Hazel Avenue behind the Reformed Church. She said that kids gather under it on Sunday nights, the only time it is lit up.

"A very religious light," commented Mr. Kulman.

The problem was referred to the Police.

Ken Ross, president of the Restoration Associates, spoke about the new flood law, and borough solicitor Rick Umbenhauer gave Council the legal side of the situation. (See accompanying article.)

Council adopted a resolution to urge the State Legislature to adopt the "80-20" idea for sharing the gasoline tax with local governments.

A revised personnel policy for non-uniformed and permanent part-time employees was voted in. It is now identical to the one for uniformed workers.

Marietta Authority terms were set as follows: James Baker, chairman, 12/31/80; Ben Thompson, vice chairman, 12/31/79; and Ralph Miller, 12/31/81.

On the Zoning Hearing Board, these terms were set: James Sargen, 1980; Ronald Perry, 1979; and Roy Kibler (reappointed), 1981.

Harold McElroy was reappointed to the Planning Commission, as was Arthur Haines. Both of their terms expire in 1982. Ken Geesey, another member, holds office until 1980.

Tom Lavin, the zoning officer, reported that almost a half million dollars was spent on new and continuing construction in the borough in 1978—twice the amount spent the year before. He also reported that a use and occupancy permit was issued to a shop on Wasp Street, and a builder's request to build three new townhouses on West Walnut Street was denied because there was not enough space for a side yard on the property.

A building at 232 West Walnut Street has been demolished by the owner at the request of the housing committee.

...Umbenhauer reports (continued)

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After that, Marietta has 90 days to appeal. Six months after the appeal deadline, the law will take effect.

Right now, the only basis of appeal is the map drawn up by the federal agents. (This map, showing the 100 year flood line, was reproduced in the *Susquehanna Times* a few weeks ago; the official map is in the borough office.) Council discussed hiring an engineer to find errors in the map. Apparently errors are not that rare.

Once the law is in effect, citizens can appeal to the mayor, and the Zoning Hearing Board can grant variances, but only in the Historic District (to those properties listed as "intrusions"). Umbenhauer speculated that HUD agents would be sent if too many variances were issued, however; each must be reported.

If a variance is granted, the homeowner can expect his flood insurance to skyrocket. Present rates are partially subsidized by the U.S.; post-variance rates could run as high as \$25 per \$100 coverage.

Houses in the flood plain would be ineligible for coverage over \$35,000.

If a house is damaged to more than 50% of market value, the federal government will probably buy the ruined property, he said. However, he didn't know how much they would pay. Such a property would almost be worthless on the open market, because it would be illegal to build anything else there after the old structure was torn down, as the law demands.

Umbenhauer was unable to answer many questions because the law is so new. Although passed in 1971, it has only started to be implemented in the last two years, and hard answers to many questions are not there. No precedents and few procedures are established.

Asked what constitutes floodproofing, he said, "I can neither interpret nor remember all those crazy regulations."

These other questions have no answer as yet: Are all properties within the Historic District immune from HUD's regulations, or only those not listed as "intrusions"? How much control will HUD exercise directly in the borough, and under what circumstances? Will those washed out by a flood be compensated, and for how much?

The Ultimate Solution

When the Historic District in Marietta was declared, some residents felt a threat of government control, and this paper reassured them that the District is nothing to fret over. An historic preservation officer in Harrisburg was quoted as saying, "This will protect Marietta from state and federal bureaucracies."

Now that HUD is breathing down the borough's neck with its flood insurance regulations, the District is indeed a blessing—but only for the section of town it covers. All of East Front Street is still in the shadow of widespread bulldozing.

There are two possible courses of action for Marietta. One approach is to dispute the hydrologic study that puts all of Front Street and the back yards of some Market Street properties into HUD's jurisdiction: the other is to enlarge or augment the Historic District.

The first possibility is expensive, uncertain, and very unlikely to substantially change the official floodplain borders, but the second shows much more promise.

Several weeks ago, the

Susquehanna Times placed a call to Charles Herrington, the chief of registration at the National Register in Washington. Mr. Herrington is a frequent visitor to Marietta and a man who appreciates the town's historic aspects.

After being informed of the situation, Mr. Herrington called the State Office of Historic Preservation in Harrisburg, and expressed his view that the entire town of Marietta should probably be placed on the National Register.

Whether or not the state historic people will move quickly on Mr. Herrington's advice remains to be seen. They have an entire state to catalogue. It is possible that some lobbying might speed things up.

An official of the state office, Vance Packard, told the *Times* that, if the process of putting Marietta into the Historic District had been started yesterday, the entire town would probably be included. (The state office selects, researches, and maps historic places within each state; the office in Washington approves the sites). The reason, he said, is that the idea of what is "historic"

has expanded in recent years. With today's broader basis, East Front Street as well as West Front would have been included.

A listing with the National Register is not needed to escape the jaws of HUD's flood law, however. Inclusion in a state listing is as good as being in the National Register.

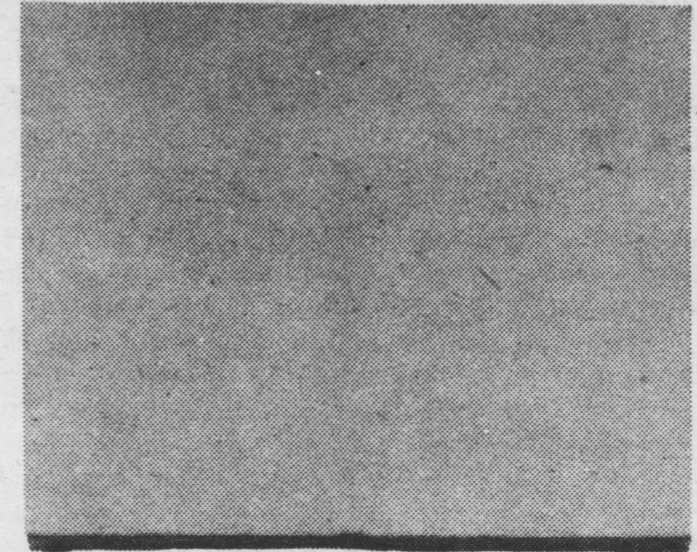
Mr. Packard said that it is "not difficult" to get onto the Pennsylvania Inventory of historic places. Either a district or an individual property owner can apply. For one house, he estimated the work at a couple of days' research. It would be helpful to have the aid of someone who has experience or knowledge in such things, he said.

The research would involve, most likely, some title searching in the courthouse, written description of the property's historic aspects, and some photographs.

The cut-off date for "historic" status with the National Register is 1929.

Anyone who wants to get the needed forms to apply should write to the Office of Historic Preservation, Box 1026, Harrisburg PA 17120.

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