

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 30, 2010
TO: Mary Flagg, Township Manager
FROM: PAUL SCHMIDT, CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
RE: Haunted House event at Pennhurst Center

- The current understanding is that this is a one-time event.
- At the invitation of the owner, Mr. Chakejian, I reviewed and examined the site with the event organizer, Randy Bates, who is a licensed state inspector of "special amusement buildings." Mr. Bates owns and operates a similar enterprise called "The Bates Motel" in Delaware County.

Among the points discussed with Mr. Bates during the initial walk-thrus were the established structural safety of the building (engineer's letter), needed electrical upgrades (Robinson Electric), interior and exterior lighting, emergency lighting, interior partitions to guide tour participants, emergency escape routes, double door partitions in the main hall crossovers,, first floor to second floor banister heights, the staff staging area, quantity of actors and guides, parking and access to the building.

- These types of events have general oversight by the **PA Department of Agriculture under Act 139** throughout the state. Event organizers must register with the Dept of Ag, and comply with regulations to submit detailed plans, proof of proper insurance, and pass final inspections by independent inspectors within 15 days of the event. Documentation must include: Event itinerary, inspection affidavits, insurance certifications delivered to Harrisburg before opening, daily inspection records, incident reports, maintenance logs
- No **Building Permits** were issued, because there were no structural alterations to the interior or exterior of the administration building. A number of non-structural partitions have been constructed to guide to patrons room to room through the building.
- An **electrical permit** was issued to upgrade the existing wiring to meet current electrical codes for the purpose of handling emergency, safety lighting and fire alarm and security systems for the event.
- A **structural engineer's certification letter** was provided to meet the 2009 International Building Code (section 3409) for an existing "historical" building to

ensure the building does not "constitute a distinct life safety hazard" for the proposed event.

- The building was also examined for "**limited accessibility**" under 2009 IBC section 3411.9 – which it does. There exists an access ramp on the south end of the building which will allow wheelchair bound person to be included in the activity on the first floor.
- A full time **EMT team** will be on site throughout the event.
- **Forty (40) plus actors and guides** will be on duty each weekend.
- Fire extinguishers (16 throughout) at every exit and hallway.
- All wood constructed items and props will be **sprayed with fire retardant** (MDIA information sheets filed with the Dept of Ag)
- **Fire alarm system** will be inspected and certified by an independent agency.
- **Dr. James Conroy**, a professor at Temple University has provided guidance in assisting with the "theme" so as to avoid any disingenuous, malicious statements and public accusations against the event organizers of disrespecting the history of the former residents and workers of the facility. Dr. Conroy is with "Preserve Pennhurst Alliance" and is interested in, ultimately, a memorial of some sort for the disabled and in the preservation of the building(s).
- Funds generated will be used to pay event expenses and the restoration/rehabilitation of the building.

Zoning Officer's Final Assessment of the EVENT

The zoning ordinance to some degree acknowledges the use of existing historical structures for "secondary" uses, albeit via conditional use (section . But to single out this event from others -- Olszanowski's corn maze, the Farmer's Daughter's hay rides, St. Joe's Church carnival, flower and produce sales at the golf course and Styer's corner, Christmas tree sales, Assembly of God community day and other special events and church dinners, multi family yard sales, etc. -- which take place year after year without specific zoning approval might easily be construed as being hypocritical of a generally recognized practice and acceptance by the community.

If this event truly grates against the popular opinion of a majority of residents, then the decision of the zoning officer should be challenged before the Zoning Hearing Board. It is my belief the ZHB would fail to support the appeal.