



February 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Wildwood Historic Preservation Commission Members

From: Department of Planning and Parks

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor
The Honorable City Council of Wildwood
Steve Cross, Co-Interim City Administrator
John A. Young, City Attorney
Jill Von Gruben, Wildwood Historical Society

Re: **Modification to Content Discussed on January 24, 2019 Relative to Next Chapter in Wildwood's Written History Covering 1920 – 1990 (Wards – All)**

At the Commission's last meeting, discussion was held with Jill Von Gruben, of the Wildwood Historical Society, regarding an outline and key events to be covered in the next chapter of the City's written history project, which is 1920 to 1990. Ms. Von Gruben, as the chapter's author, wanted to discuss with the Commissioners their ideas relative to important content and format within the next chapter. One of the topics discussed was relative to a fundraiser held in 1933 within Pond. Ms. Von Gruben posed the question to the Commissioners on their thoughts of including the information, which is historically accurate, or omitting the story due to potential opposition of it, if viewed through today's lens.

The Commission discussed the matter and chose to take some time to consider an answer, before making a final decision on its inclusion. Since that meeting, a number of news stories have sparked greater public debate over this type of incident and Ms. Von Gruben has chosen to not include the story regarding the fundraiser within the next chapter. She informed the Department, via the attached email, regarding her concerns and to let the Commissioners know her position on the matter.

If you should have any questions or comments in this regard, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning at (636) 458-0440. Thank you for your review of this information and input on the same.

Kathy Arnett

From: Jill VG <jfvvgjfvvg@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2019 3:51 PM
To: Joe Vujnich; Kathy Arnett
Subject: Please forward to HPC

Joe & Kathy –
FYI and please forward to HPC

To: City of Wildwood, Historic Preservation Commission
From: Jill VonGruben
RE: Subject under consideration for inclusion in 2019 chapter-
1933 Minstrel show in Gaehle's Grover

During the 1/24/2019 meeting, I submitted for consideration the inclusion of possible sidebar concerning of the 1933 Minstrel Show. I asked for HPC decision because I was uneasy about the possibility of backlash to both the City and to the Wildwood Historical Society.

This submission was just prior to the breaking news of the "Blackface" controversy that has hit the State of Virginia. Given the nation-wide hysteria and fanned by the media concerning this subject, and that very little has been said/written about the historical perspective, I am now very concerned about the probability of significant backlash. It has the possibility/probability of further dividing the City rather than bringing citizens and officials together. More directly the Historical Society does not have the resources to battle any possible legal issues that may come from this debate. And even more specific, I am very concerned about property damage or physical assaults on personnel who are on WHS-property. We also have to consider that there are Wildwood residents still alive who may have attended this type of entertainment and we don't want to put them in any risk, however defined.

Given the above reasons, I am officially withdrawing inclusion of this event sidebar. It is not integral to telling the story of the 1930s in Meramec Township. I will still have a general sidebar about entertainment in the groves and that often used for fundraising purposes, I just won't specify a grove or the type of entertainment.

Thank you for your time, consideration and understanding of this decision as primary writer on this project.

Sincerely,
Jill F. VonGruben
2/10/19