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April Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH): License Agreement with the City

Tony Indovina, SHHS Board Member and FONLH President

Mission Statement for the Friends of the Neill Log House (FONLH Inc.)

Adopted February 2022



"We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations."

Individual support for the FONLH restoration effort will always be needed. To make online donations by credit card or PayPal, go to the SHUC website, shuc.org, and click on the "Projects" link in the black menu bar at the top of the page. A pull-down menu will appear. Select "Friends of the Neill Log House." Alternatively, checks can be sent to SHUC (put FONLH in the memo line) at the following address: SHUC, 5604 Solway Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15217.



FONLH President Tony Indovina signing the License and Cooperation Agreement.

"Friends of Neill Log House has entered into a License and Cooperation Agreement (LCA) with the City of Pittsburgh. Commencing on June 1, FONLH will have possession of the Neill Log House to rehabilitate, maintain and operate the NLH for public and educational use of the NLH for at least fifteen Years."

This statement from our FONLH Board Member and Legal Counsel, Ray Baum, very succinctly describes what has very recently occurred, and what it means to FONLH going forward. What cannot be described so briefly is the long and complicated process that occurred over many months, and the many hours put in by our Counsel working with the City's law department to accomplish this.

Several months of hard work by our Legal Counsel and the City Law Department resulted in a document of 23 pages agreed to by both parties, appropriate for the care and use of the Neill Log House. This had to include all the standard legal requirements of the City's law department for everything from nondiscrimination to diversity and equity provisions. Other standard provisions specific to the log house were added, including those for notifying the City of our schedule of operations and educational programming. In addition, there are many other provisions for site considerations, City responsibilities, establishing and reporting an approved capital budget by FONLH, and our insurance responsibilities. And all of our work will also be subject to approval by other entities, such as the Art, Historic Review, and Zoning Commissions.

At the time of drafting this article, the final approved version of this historic agreement between the City of Pittsburgh and FONLH was being circulated for signatures by all parties, include the Mayor of Pittsburgh, the Director of the Department of Public Works, and the President of Friends of Neill Log House. The City will continue to own the Neill Log House, while FONLH will take possession of it and assume formal responsibility "to rehabilitate, maintain and operate" it.

An inquiry was recently directed to the archivists at the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation (PHLF), who have been very helpful in providing FONLH with historic records from their years as custodian of the Neill Log House. This inquiry was to locate any formal legal agreements they had with the City from the '60s to the early '90s. Though PHLF was historically the first organization to work with the City of Pittsburgh to reconstruct and "rehabilitate" the Neill Log House, this was under a far different arrangement than now exists with this legally executed, and now historic, License and Cooperation Agreement. In response to our inquiry to PHLF, it was stated: "There are (only) references to a verbal agreement dating back to the beginning of the project in 1967: PHLF would raise the necessary funds, carry out restoration & landscaping work, and administer the property; in exchange, the city would pay for routine maintenance and utilities. In the spring of 1971, an amended agreement was reached (no paperwork here, likely also verbal) allowing the city to administer the operation of the structure with PHLF's assistance."

With this fully executed LCA, we will now be able to enter into and finalize formal negotiation with our chosen and vetted contractor for work we have budgeted to begin rehabilitation this summer. Watch for details on this phase of our mission over the next few months.