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See Page 33.**



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Palmer House saved but Monk Road house to fall

By Cheryl Allison

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Lower Merion Township is winning one and losing one on the historic-preservation front.

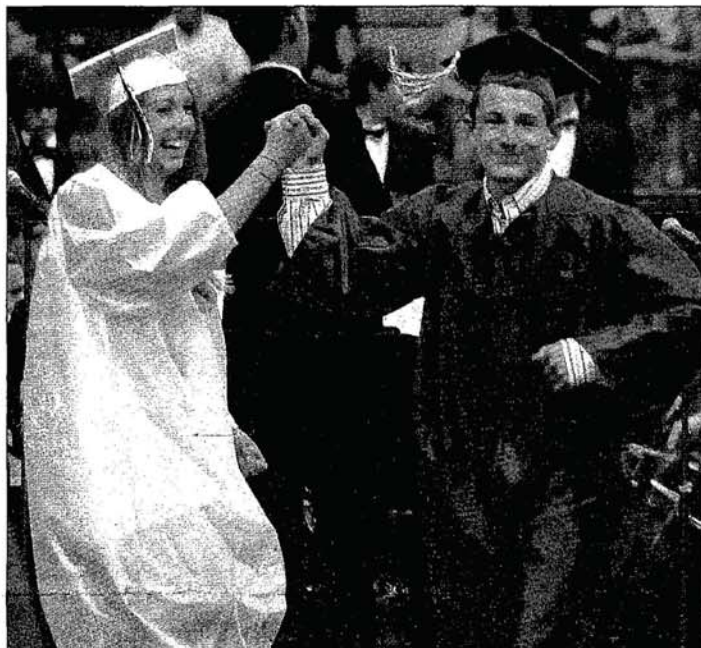
At the same time, township commissioners gave the go-ahead for expansion of the successful Clover Market art and antiques market in Ardmore.

In a special meeting June 8, the board of commissioners voted 10-0 to approve rezoning of the eight-acre Palmer Theological Seminary property at Lancaster and City avenues in Wynnewood. A developer proposes to convert the Horace Trumbauer-designed main hall into apartments.

The same evening, the Building and Planning Committee, in another unanimous vote, recommended approval of a demolition permit for an 1890 stone colonial home on Monk Road in Gladwyne. New owners there plan to build a new single-family home.

See PALMER, Page 25

Congrats, LMSD grads



PETE BANNAN/Main Line Times

Harrington High School seniors Marissa Giamporcaro and Zach Geanotes give a fist bump as they enter graduation ceremonies Monday at Saint Joseph's University's gym. Lower Merion High School's graduation was Tuesday at St. Joe's. For video and photos, visit www.mainlinemedianews.com. More photos are on Page 25.

LMSD responds to last week's webcam suit

By Richard Ilgenfritz

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Lower Merion school officials are fighting back against the latest webcam suit, which was filed last week by a former Harrington student.

June 6, Joshua Levin, a 2009 graduate of Harrington High School, filed a new lawsuit in connection with Lower Merion's use of a technology that allowed certain school officials to activate the webcams on the laptop computers the schools issued to high-school students. Levin listed his address as Spruce Street in Philadelphia in court documents.

In a response to the suit, school officials say Levin is motivated by cash.

"The district views this lawsuit by a 2009 graduate as solely motivated by monetary interests and a complete waste of tax dollars," district spokesman Doug Young wrote in an e-mail to Main Line Media News. "The former student's computer was one of six that were stolen from school property in 2008 and eventually recovered by the Lower Merion police

Palmer rezoning, Monk Rd. house demolition, Clover Market expansion OK'd

From Page One

Earlier this year, a development partnership, CI 6E Lancaster Avenue Associates, filed a petition for rezoning of Eastern University's Palmer Seminary parcel from R-3 residential to R-7, which permits multi-family housing.

Some other parcels in the immediate area had earlier been given the R-7 designation. The advantage, from the historic-preservation standpoint, is that the 1919 main building, originally the Green Hill Farms Hotel, will be retained, along with the newer chapel building.

The developers have obtained a determination that the building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and they have notified Lower Merion's historical commission that they will seek Class 1 historic status for the property. The commission is expected to act on

the application possibly in August.

Class 1 designation means that the building cannot be demolished without the board of commissioners' permission.

Eastern University plans to move most seminary operations to its campus in St. Davids.

While preservation advocates have cheered the seminary plans, they are concerned about the loss of another older home in the case of the Monk Road residence. The property is a Class 2 resource, which is subject to no more than a 90-day delay of demolition.

In the case of the Monk Road house, new owners Jim and Michelle Tometta, who now live in Haverford, told the historical commission last month that they bought the home intending to renovate it, but after consultation with their architect determined it

would cost too much.

Acknowledging the owners' firm decision to demolish the structure, the commission recommended imposing only enough delay of a permit for some more photos and documentation of the building to be provided to the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The couple's attorney, Denise Yarnoff, told commissioners last week that all of that documentation has been provided.

The house is known in its Gladwyne neighborhood as the former home of the late David Marshall Gwinn, the founder of Penn Brook Dairy, which became a part of Abbott Dairies.

A lifelong horseman, Gwinn, who died in 1998, was a founder of the Bridlewild Trails Association. Known as "The Squire," he was famous for his collection of carriages and sleighs.

There was little point in ordering a longer delay of demolition, Commissioner George Manos remarked in the meeting last week. "We might as well recognize that the owner wants to improve the property" with a home that they said would be more suited to the needs of a modern family, Manos said. "There's not much we can do."

All the same, board president Liz Rogan was regretful. "We are losing pieces of our township history piece by piece," she said. "I wish there was some other way than demolishing," she added, "but that's the way things go in Lower Merion Township."

On a more positive note, the committee recommended

approval of Ardmore Initiative's request to amend its agreement with the township to sponsor the Clover Market. Ardmore resident Janet Long, who operates the open-air antiques market, wants to relocate at Schaufele Plaza on Lancaster Avenue for the upcoming fall season to a section of Cricket Terrace that connects to Rittenhouse Place.

The new agreement will make that possible for three events on Sundays in September, October and November.

Ardmore Commissioner Cheryl Gelber said the township should support the request, remarking that "Clover Market has helped

economic development in Ardmore as much as anything we have initiated from this board," Gelber noted that Long has a waiting list of vendors who want to participate; meanwhile, other businesses in Ardmore are starting to stay open on market days, and are "very, very pleased with the flow of people coming in who did not know Ardmore."

"I see this as a win-win for the township. I can't imagine why we wouldn't approve this," Gelber said.

The only question was a request for a waiver of a street-closing fee of \$90 per day. Township staff recommended imposing a one-time fee of \$90 instead, which commissioners approved.

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