

## The Old Clockworks Building vs. Digital Billboards in Paoli

For many years, the old “Clockworks” building—a small structure designed in the Colonial Revival style by prominent local architect R. Brognard Okie, and familiar to many—has stood close to the increasingly busy intersection of Bear Hill Road (Rt. 252) and Lancaster Avenue (Rt. 30) in Paoli. Between that building and the nearby railroad underpass, there is a small conventional commercial billboard facing southwest, one of a very small number that exist in Tredyffrin Township. The owners of the clock repair business have been the sole tenants of the building and the business remains active.

Although the Clockworks building is included in the Township’s 2003 *Historic Resources Survey*, there is presently no historic preservation ordinance in Tredyffrin Township that might offer needed protection from efforts to demolish it. Approximately 4,000 people have signed a Change.org petition to “Ban the Digital Billboard and Save the Clockworks Building in Paoli,” and despite the sad fact that in December 2018 over 93 lawn signs—funded by a successful GoFundMe campaign—were stolen from private property, some may still be seen at locations throughout in the community, and popular support has been overwhelmingly in favor of preservation.

— John O. Senior



Looking northeast across Lancaster Ave. toward the Clockworks building in Paoli. The historic marker for General Anthony Wayne may be seen on the right.



Catalyst Outdoor Advertising (dba “Tredyffrin Outdoor, LLC”) first appeared at a Tredyffrin Township Board of Supervisors meeting in August 2018 with their proposal to demolish the Clockworks building and install two large 20 ft. digital billboards with a reflecting pool to serve as a “welcome” to our 300-year old township. For many reasons, during the last eleven months, there has been strong and committed public opposition to this proposal. Both former Pa. State Representative Warren Kampf (R) and his successor Melissa Shusterman (D) expressed their opposition to this proposal in October 2018.

The starting point for the digital billboard project was Catalyst’s submission of two applications to the township in December 2018: (1) a demolition permit application for the

Clockworks building; and (2) an application to digitize the existing small stationary billboard. To the credit of our elected officials and township staff, the public’s opposition was heard and both applications were denied.

Undeterred by the denial of their applications, in early 2019, Catalyst appealed the township’s decision on the digital billboard application to the township Zoning Hearing Board. The ZHB heard three hours of testimony on May 30, primarily from the Catalyst attorney. The legal proceeding was continued to July 9 for another lengthy evening of argument from the township attorney in front of the ZHB, and July 25 for final comments from the community. A final decision is expected in October.

— Pattye Benson ([payttybenson.org](http://payttybenson.org))



The existing conventional billboard may be seen to the left of the Clockworks building on Lancaster Ave. in Paoli. All photos courtesy of © John O. Senior