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## M I N U T E S

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**BOARD:** HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** TODD CHAMBERS, CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), ROGER HUDAK, GARY LADER (CHAIR), MICHAEL SIMONSON, DESIREE STRASSER

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** (NONE)

**STAFF PRESENT:** JEFFREY LONG

**PRESS PRESENT:** ED COURRIER (BETHLEHEM PRESS)

**VISITORS PRESENT:** ALI NASTAH

**MEETING DATE:** MAY 20, 2024

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The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on May 20, 2024, at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall Rotunda, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Chair Gary Lader called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #1**

**Property Location:** 312 East Third Street  
**Property Owner:** Polk Street Development Associates  
**Applicant:** FX Company, LLC

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** This structure is a 3-story commercial building with an acrylic, hard-coat stucco finish in taupe color applied to all facades, with a flat roof and stylized upper cornices defining flat parapets. An arched recessed entrance and accompanying arch supported by corbeled brackets at the upper cornice delineate the central building section, which also has narrow arched windows. The entry level has a series of aluminum storefronts, with several entrances to various commercial tenants. Windows at upper floor levels are also aluminum storefront type frames but applied horizontal trim (as false meeting rails) gives the appearance of 1-over-1 double-hung windows. The center section and both end sections set back from East Third Street. Built in ca. 2005, the structure is a contemporary building and therefore non-contributing to the Historic Conservation District; however, it references late Victorian detailing found throughout South Bethlehem.

**Proposed Alterations:** The Applicant proposes to install a channel letter sign with the business logo and name.

### **Guideline Citations:**

- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- It is the purpose and intent of the City of Bethlehem to promote, protect, enhance and preserve historic resources and traditional community character for the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation, protection and regulation of buildings and areas of historic interest or importance within the City.
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Guidelines for Signage'**

**Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations:** COA Application indicates intent to install one 54-inch tall x 246-inch wide, internally illuminated sign, centered horizontally and vertically within sign band above entrance for new commercial tenant. Proposed sign is fabricated by attaching 5-inch-thick aluminum channel lettering onto 6mm Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) backer; 3/8-inch stud screws will fasten backer into existing façade, with spacer resulting in 1-inch gap between back of sign and façade. Interior illumination is accomplished with LED lights.

At left of sign is rooster head corporate logo outlined in black color surrounded by flames outlined in bright red color, with background in bright white color and 3-inch-thick black outline. Logo is followed by words "SIZZLING BITES" in large, bold, sans serif, all upper-case lettering; all letters are bright white in color with 3-inch-thick black outline. Centered beneath are words "HALAL GRILL" in small, bold, sans serif, all upper-case lettering; all letters are bright white in color with bright red background with 2.5-inch-thick black outline.

Relevant design guidelines for signage do not define thickness of appropriate signs but visual inventory of appropriate signs within Historic Conservation District (HCD) indicates typical thickness is maximum 2-inches. Guidelines continue that internally illuminated signs are inappropriate within HCD as are visible conduits, raceways, or junction boxes for needed illumination. Though not defined with relevant design guidelines, HCC traditionally discourages use of bright white color within HCD as well as lettering outlined in other colors. Relevant design guidelines describe appropriate signage as flat logos and lettering applied to rigid backers and installed flush with building façade as well as individual letters and logos pin-mounted into building façades. HCC traditionally encourages appropriate signage to include thin offset pinstripe detail around perimeter of rigid backer in complementary color as appropriate alternative to letters outlined in differing colors.

Based upon relevant design guidelines, proposed signage is inappropriate. Appropriate sign should not be internally illuminated, noting three existing gooseneck lights provide ample illumination for new signage. Appropriate sign should include rigid backer installed flush with existing building façade or individual letters pin-mounted into existing façade; appropriate lettering and logo should be limited to 2-inches in thickness, with preference for flush installation. Proposed thick black outlines should be replaced with offset pinstripe detail around sign perimeter in complementary color while bright white color should be replaced with warm white or ivory.

**Discussion:** Ali Nastah represented proposal to install channel letter sign with business logo and name for new commercial tenant. Applicant explained how proposed signage will be fabricated and installed, clarifying that black outline detail around letters and logo is part of rigid ACM backer and does not extend forward around three-dimensional letters. Mr. Lader inquired why lettering must be 5-inches thick; Applicant responded that letters and logo are not stamped from solid aluminum but rather formed from aluminum coil, which is 5-inches wide ... with acrylic fronts installed after letters and logo are formed. Applicant provided supplemental photos depicting signage with similar details (internal illumination, thick channel letters, etc.) at nearby commercial tenant locations. Longer-term HCC members recalled previous approval of one sign (California Tan) but could not recall assessment and approval of second sign (C23ink).

Applicant inquired if HCC would consider backlit signage resulting in halo effect as acceptable alternative to internal illumination. Mr. Lader noted that HCC previously determined backlit signs as appropriate; Mr. Evans added that appropriate LED lights are limited to maximum 3000K color temperature in satisfaction of design guidelines that describe appropriate illumination as "warm". Mr. Chambers inquired if Applicant would take advantage of existing gooseneck lamps for illumination of signage. Applicant responded that combining existing lamps with backlighting is acceptable alternative to internal illumination; also clarified that proposed LED lights are red in color. Mr. Evans noted even if acrylic fronts are not illuminated, proposed bright white color should be revised to warm white or ivory ... noting bright white quickly looks dirty or miscolors; Applicant agreed to amend color of acrylic fronts accordingly.

Mr. Chambers expressed concern that overall size of proposed signage is larger than allowed, based upon relevant zoning ordinance. Applicant explained that conversation with Bethlehem's Zoning Officer about proposed signage is next step in approvals process. In response, Mr. Chambers requested that resulting motion should include comment that HCC conditionally recommends approval of proposed signage, pending zoning review and potential need to reduce in size. Mr. Evans continued that design proposal for re-sized signage (if needed) should be submitted to HCC chair, Historic Officer, and Chief Building Inspector for final review prior to fabrication and installation. **Note:** on May 23, 2024, City of Bethlehem confirmed that signage as originally proposed satisfies all relevant zoning requirements and is not required to be re-sized and submitted for subsequent review.

**Public Commentary:** none

**Motion:** The Commission upon motion by Mr. Lader and seconded by Mr. Chambers adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as presented, with modifications described herein:

1. The proposal to install a channel letter sign with the business logo and name was presented by Ali Nastah.
2. Appropriate details for new signage include:
  - a. overall sign measures 54-inches tall x 246-inches wide
  - b. installation is centered horizontally and vertically within sign band above entrance of new commercial tenant
  - c. sign is fabricated by attaching 5-inch-thick aluminum channel lettering onto 6mm Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) rigid backer; 3/8-inch stud screws are used to fasten backer into existing façade, with spacer resulting in 1-inch gap between back of sign and building façade
  - d. sign is backlit with red LED lights for halo effect; no electrical conduits, raceways, or junction boxes are visible on building façade
  - e. at left of sign is rooster head corporate logo outlined in black color surrounded by flames outlined in bright red color, with background in warm white or ivory color; logo is followed by words "SIZZLING BITES" in large, bold, sans serif, all upper-case lettering; centered beneath are words "HALAL GRILL" in small, bold, sans serif, all upper-case lettering; all letters are warm white or ivory in color
  - f. rigid backer is black in color and serves as heavy recessed outline for logo and all lettering

**Note:** HCC noted that thicker channel lettering is allowed at this location (appropriate thickness is limited to maximum 2-inches) because this structure is a contemporary building and therefore non-contributing to the Historic Conservation District. Based

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

**Agenda Item #2:**

**Property Location:** 128 Rink Street

**Property Owner:** Luis Rivera

**Applicant:** Larissa Woods

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** The COA Application was not represented so no assessment was conducted.

**Motion:** No motion was made due to lack of Applicant representation.

**Agenda Item #3**

**Property Location:** 130 Rink Street

**Property Owner:** Luis Rivera

**Applicant:** Larissa Woods

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** The COA Application was not represented so no assessment was conducted.

**Motion:** No motion was made due to lack of Applicant representation.

**Agenda Item #4**

**Property Location:** 1318 Prospect Avenue

**Property Owner:** Giuseppe Guglielmello

**Applicant:** Giuseppe Guglielmello

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** The COA Application was not represented so no assessment was conducted.

**Motion:** No motion was made due to lack of Applicant representation.

**General Business:**

Minutes from HCC meeting on April 15, 2024, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

Referencing Agenda Items #2 and #3, Mr. Chambers inquired if HCC might consider “over counter approvals” within City’s Planning Bureau for COA Applications to replace existing roofing with appropriate GAF Slateline asphalt shingles ... noting this specific topic is frequently assessed by HCC. Mr. Evans explained such approvals involve appropriate details beyond roofing materials (i.e., ridge vent detail, open valleys lined with copper flashing, new drip edges, etc.) so blanket approvals of replacement roofing by city staff proves complicated. Mr. Lader recalled previous discussions about staff approvals for roofing, signage, and other topics. Mr. Simonson also noted similar previous discussions but recalled no final consensus by HCC on which items to submit through city’s review and approvals process ... ultimately necessitating amendment(s) to existing City Ordinance. Mr. Evans challenged HCC colleagues to reflect on other similar topics worth considering so that all potential ordinance revisions can be reviewed simultaneously. Mr. Lader added that expiration dates on COAs would be helpful to prevent Applicants from returning to HCC many years later with proposed revisions to previous COAs. Mr. Evans agreed, noting that composition of HCC membership changes over time, so revisiting older proposals can prove challenging. Mr. Simonson agreed to search for notes from similar previous discussions and distribute them to HCC for consideration.

Mr. Lader inquired about status of former Elek building (128 East Third Street), noting previous structure was demolished last year but progress with replacement construction seems stalled. Mr. Simonson explained original developer sold property to new developer, who agreed to develop property as previously reviewed by HCC and subsequently approved by City Council.

Mr. Evans inquired about status of abandoned structures across from Lehigh Pizza (14-18 West Third Street), noting bricks from upper façade continue to fall onto sidewalk below. Mr. Simonson noted this project is currently moving through City’s development review process.

Mr. Lader inquired about status of proposed tall development project, which entails demolishing several existing structures along east side of South New Street between Third Street and Fourth Street. Mr. Simonson reported that developer recently secured one-year extension to city-issued demolition permit and intends to move forward with project before end of 2024.

There was no further business; HCC meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY: \_\_\_\_\_

Jeffrey Long  
Historic Officer  
South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District  
Mt. Airy Historic District