
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM
MEMBERS PRESENT: CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), MICHAEL SIMONSON, DESIREE STRASSER
MEMBERS ABSENT: TODD CHAMBERS, GARY LADER (CHAIR)
STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG (HISTORIC OFFICER)
PRESS PRESENT: (NONE)
VISITORS PRESENT: JOHN TRAPANI, NORM WILLIAMSON
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on September 21, 2026, at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall Rotunda, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Vice Chair Craig Evans called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Agenda Item #1

Property Location: 116 West Graham Place
Property Owner: William Seixas
Applicant: Robert Yeager, American Remodeling

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a detached 2 ½-story, 3-bay, brick masonry dwelling covered in aluminum siding, with a full front porch, steeply pitched central gable window and altered windows and doors. Original frame porch elements have been lost over time, replaced with painted brick masonry structural piers at each end and a painted brick balustrade. The main roof and porch roof are sheathed in single tab asphalt shingles. Dating from ca. 1880, this structure is Victorian Gothic Revival in style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to replace existing asphalt roof shingles with Enfinity asphalt shingles and install 5" seamless white gutters.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: The COA Application was not represented, so no assessment was conducted and no resulting motion was made.

Agenda Item #2

Property Location: 306 South New Street
Property Owner: Greenway I, Inc.
Applicant: John Trapani, Zest

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: Construction of this semi-detached, 6-story commercial building located on the corner of South New Street and West Third Street was initiated in 2016 and it is Contemporary in style. The primary façades on both streets include glass and aluminum storefronts at the street level, are clad in brick on the second through fourth floors, while the upper-most floor levels and the corner are clad in glass and metal panels. The façade of the sixth floor is set back and has a thin projecting roof, creating open-air terraces along the north and east facades. HCC is mandated with preserving structures dating from the designated era of the Historic Conservation District (ca. 1895 - 1950); thus, this building is not considered contributing to the District.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to replace existing signage with a new projecting sign.

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** -- relevant Design Guidelines for Signage

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: Applicant proposes to remove existing signage at upper-level roof terrace handrail along west façade and replace with new projecting sign above entry-level façade, near northwest corner along West Third Street. Proposed double-sided blade sign measures 108-inches tall x 30-inches wide x 10-inches thick; body of sign is .090-inch aluminum tube frame, with all surfaces painted black in color. Proposed hanging brackets attached to existing exterior façade include two 3-inch x 3-inch aluminum arms spaced 74-inches on center affixed to 10-inch x 12-inch steel plates using 1/2-inch thru-bolts into existing exterior facade; all metal components also painted black in color. Per zoning code, offset between back of sign and exterior building façade is maximum 12-inches while underside of sign is at least 8-feet and maximum 25-feet above public sidewalk. Proposed lettering is 1/2-inch-thick white acrylic push-through letters made visible after dark with internal LED illumination. Signage includes word “ZEST” corporate logo in very large, bold, sans-serif, stenciled, all upper-case, individual letters oriented vertically. Next text line includes phrase “BAR + GRILLE” followed by final text line “6TH FLOOR” in small, bold, sans-serif, all upper-case letters oriented horizontally.

Relevant design guidelines define appropriate blade signage within Historic Conservation District as two-sided rigid board sign of maximum 2-inch thickness hanging down from decorative metal scroll bracket; however, HCC has considered thicker signage when internal illumination is involved ... but typically limited to maximum 5-inches thick. Similarly, HCC has considered simple arm brackets installed directly into exterior façades as alternative to decorative metal scroll bracket for signage proposed at non-contributing structures, as is the case here. No specifics beyond “white LED illumination” for proposed internal illumination are provided within supporting documents. Applicant should be aware that relevant design guidelines encourage “warm” illumination within Historic Conservation District, so HCC interprets “warm” for LED lighting as maximum 3000-Kelvin color temperature. Applicant should also confirm that no raceways, junction boxes or conduits associated with proposed internal illumination are visible on building façade.

Discussion: John Trapani and Norm Williamson represented proposal to replace existing signage with new projecting blade sign. Applicant clarified that existing sign at upper-level roof terrace handrail will soon be blocked by adjacent new hotel, so proposed blade sign closer to street level is intended as replacement; continued that 10-inch thickness of proposed sign is needed to accommodate interior illumination for each face. Mr. Simonson noted that distance between proposed sign and adjacent building façade is maximum 12-inches based upon relevant zoning regulations; Applicant was amendable to this revision from 24-inches. Mr. Simonson requested clarification about distance between proposed sign and public sidewalk; Applicant confirmed that underside of sign is 10-feet above sidewalk. Mr. Simonson inquired if any raceways, junction boxes or conduits associated with internal illumination will be visible; Applicant confirmed that no raceways, junction boxes or conduits will be visible on building façade. Mr. Simonson continued by inquiring how sign will be installed; Applicant explained that two structural arms affixed to steel plates will be installed into existing façade using thru-bolts ... noting brick veneer is not structural, so bolts will extend into steel framing system beyond. Mr. Simonson noted that supplemental drawing depicts secondary signage labeled “Drink”; Applicant clarified that sign was placeholder from original building design and has no relevance to current proposal.

Ms. Strasser inquired about potential public access into building near proposed sign; Applicant noted access point near proposed sign is service entrance and not intended for public use. Ms. Strasser continued by inquiring if proposed signage could be re-located closer to public entrance; Applicant responded that such access points would infringe on other entry-level tenants. Mr. Simonson inquired about maximum 3000K color temperature for internal LED illumination; Applicant was amenable to suggestion. Mr. Simonson continued that supplemental engineering drawing should be amended to reflect various compromises and must also be stamped before submitting for permit.

Mr. Evans requested clarification about need for 10-inch sign thickness; Applicant explained suggested 5-inch thickness is sufficient for single-side sign while double-side sign must be thicker to avoid so-called “hot spots” where individual LED diodes appear brighter but agreed that 10-inch thickness might be more than sufficient. Mr. Evans suggested resulting motion could include language that Applicant agrees to reduce 10-inch thickness as much as possible; Applicant was amendable to that suggestion. Mr. Simonson noted that Applicant should finalize revised thickness before amending engineering drawing and submitting for permit. Mr. Simonson also inquired about intentions with existing signage at upper-level roof terrace handrail; Applicant responded that existing sign will soon be removed.

Public Commentary: (none)

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Simonson and seconded by Ms. Strasser 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 replace existing signage with a new projecting blade sign was presented by John Trapani and Norm Williamson.
2. Appropriate details for new blade signage include:
 - a. projecting sign is located above entry-level façade, near northwest corner along West Third Street; offset between back of sign and exterior building façade is 12-inches while underside of sign is 10-feet above public sidewalk
 - b. double-sided blade sign measures 108-inches tall x 30-inches wide x maximum 10-inches thick; **note:** Applicant agrees to limit thickness as much as possible while avoiding hot spots
 - c. body of sign is .090-inch aluminum tube frame, with all surfaces painted black in color
 - d. hanging brackets include two 3-inch x 3-inch aluminum arms spaced 74-inches on center affixed to 10-inch x 12-inch steel plates using 1/2-inch thru-bolts into existing exterior facade; all metal components painted black in color
 - e. lettering is 1/2-inch-thick white acrylic push-through letters with internal LED illumination; includes word “ZEST” corporate logo in very large, bold, sans-serif, stenciled, all upper-case, individual letters oriented vertically; next text line includes phrase “BAR + GRILLE” followed by final text line “6TH FLOOR” in small, bold, sans-serif, all upper-case letters oriented horizontally
 - f. interior LED illumination is maximum 3000-Kelvin color temperature
 - g. no raceways, junction boxes or conduits associated with proposed internal illumination are visible on building façade

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on August 17, 2026, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

There was no further business; meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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

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