
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

MEMBERS PRESENT: SETH CORNISH, CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), ROGER HUDAK, GARY LADER (CHAIR), CHARLES PATRICK, MICHAEL SIMONSON, DESIREE STRASSER

MEMBERS ABSENT: KENNETH LOUSH

STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG, CRAIG PEIFFER

PRESS PRESENT: NONE

VISITORS PRESENT: JOSE SAN MIGUEL

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 24, 2022

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on January 24, 2022, at the City of Bethlehem Rotunda, Bethlehem City Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Chair Gary Lader called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #1

Election of HCC Officers:

HCC upon motion by Mr. Cornish and seconded by Mr. Hudak unanimously approved Mr. Lader to serve as HCC Chair.

HCC upon motion by Mr. Cornish and seconded by Mr. Hudak unanimously approved Mr. Evans to serve as HCC Vice Chair.

Agenda Item #2

Property Location: 508 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Sue Lee

Applicant: Jose San Miguel

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a two and one-half story, detached, wood frame, residential building with a slate gable roof. Defining architectural features include a single-story front porch with turned wood posts and decorative support brackets, prominent first- and second-floor bay windows as well as two distinct roof dormers. The building dates from ca. 1895 and is Victorian in style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to remove all roofing materials on the main roof and front porch of the house (excluding rubber roof on rear first floor) and install one row of ice shield at the bottom of roof, synthetic paper and slate line shingles (GAF or equivalent).

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 6.** -- Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 9.** -- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

- **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.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to remove existing slates at upper main roof of front façade (also assuming both roof dormers) as well as existing asphalt shingles on lower front porch roof and replace with new Slateline asphalt shingles; Application notes lower rubber roof at rear façade remains but does not mention existing asphalt shingles at upper main roof of rear façade, so clarification is warranted. Applicable SIS note deteriorated historical features should be repaired rather than replaced but if deterioration requires replacement, new features should match original. Application and supplemental photographs provide no evidence that existing slate roof (considered historical feature) cannot be repaired and requires full replacement, so discussion is warranted. Flared eave detail and existing ball finial of east dormer are considered character-defining features that should be retained. If proposal to replace existing slate roof with asphalt shingles is determined by HCC as appropriate, new sheathing should include following details:

- GAF Slateline (non-architectural) asphalt shingles in 'Antique Slate' color; all pitched roof landscapes of main upper roof as well as lower front porch roof to receive new sheathing
- during removal of existing slate, any damaged wood should be replaced in-kind, with new ice and water shield to be installed in all valleys, gutter edges and roof perimeters, and with new underlayment to be installed over decking at remaining areas
- new ridge vent detail should be installed under roof-cap shingles for proper ventilation to ensure product longevity
- new copper step flashing should be installed at chimneys and elsewhere, as needed
- all valleys should be open and lined with copper flashing, rather than woven closed with asphalt shingles
- new metal drip edges should be installed and painted to match adjacent trim
- flared eave detail and existing ball finial of east roof dormer must be retained

Discussion: Jose San Miguel represented proposal to remove all roofing materials on main roof and front porch of house (excluding rubber roof on rear first floor) and install one row of ice shield at bottom of roof, synthetic paper and slate line shingles (GAF or equivalent). Applicant inquired if 'Architectural' asphalt shingles are considered appropriate alternative to slate shingles; Mr. Long repeated earlier statement that so-called 'Architectural' shingles are inappropriate within Historic Conservation District. Applicant inquired about need for copper flashings rather than aluminum flashings; Mr. Long repeated earlier statement that all flashings should be copper, with exception for end flashings (where roof terminates) of aluminum but painted to match color of adjacent trim. Mr. Lader inquired if Applicant is willing to accept various details associated with GAF Slateline asphalt shingles described by Historic Officer as acceptable alternative to full slate replacement; Applicant responded with preference for asphalt shingles rather than in-kind replacement of existing slate roof. Mr. Simonson inquired if Applicant intends to install GAF Slateline asphalt shingles at all roof locations; Applicant confirmed main roof (front and rear), both roof dormers and front porch roof would receive new asphalt shingles. Applicant inquired about appropriate color of replacement shingles; Mr. Lader explained HCC preference for "Antique Slate" color rendition. Applicant continued by noting GAF Slateline are currently out of stock, with anticipated availability in two- to three months and inquired about comparable alternatives; Mr. Cornish recalled recent similar experience with need for GAF Slateline asphalt shingles and was informed to expect significant wait time but noted comparable products are currently available. Mr. Simonson encouraged Applicant to search for potential alternatives and submit samples via City of Bethlehem for final review by relevant parties prior to installation.

Public Commentary: none

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

1. Proposal to remove all roofing materials on main roof and front porch of house (excluding rubber roof on rear first floor) and install one row of ice shield at bottom of roof, synthetic paper and slate line shingles (GAF or equivalent) was presented by Jose San Miguel.
2. Appropriate new roof sheathing includes following details:
 - a. GAF Slateline (non-architectural) asphalt shingles in 'Antique Slate' color, or equivalent; all pitched roof landscapes of main upper roof, both roof dormers as well as lower front porch roof to receive new sheathing
 - b. during removal of existing slate, any damaged wood to be replaced in-kind, with new ice and water shield to be installed in all valleys and gutter edges and new underlayment to be installed over decking at remaining areas
 - c. new ridge vent detail to be installed under roof-cap shingles for proper ventilation to ensure product longevity
 - d. new copper step flashing to be installed at chimneys and elsewhere, as needed
 - e. all valleys to be open and lined with copper flashing, rather than woven closed with asphalt shingles
 - f. new metal drip edges to be installed and painted to match adjacent trim
 - g. flared eave detail and existing ball finial of east roof dormer are distinctive architectural features and must be retained
3. Applicant agreed to submit relevant product information (cut sheets, specifications, etc.) and material sample of proposed GAF Slateline asphalt shingles (or equivalent) via City of Bethlehem for final review by Chief Building Inspector, Historic Officer and HCC Chair prior to installation.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

New Business: Mr. Simonson called attention to various draft documents recently provided to HCC by Bureau of Planning and Zoning to encourage input/reactions. Suggested edits to Article 1714 (City's ordinance that created Historic Conservation District South Bethlehem and Mount Airy) include: clarified title of Historic Officer; revised board composition by reducing required number of Mount Airy residents; removal of term "Major Construction" from construction section; introduction of administrative (front counter) approvals for select items (roofs, masonry/chimney construction, window replacements); introduction of processing fees for COA Applications. Mr. Simonson explained current versions are "living" documents being reviewed by various parties and welcomed suggestions for improvement. Mr. Cornish expressed concern about fees associated with COA Applications (might surprise unsuspecting commercial tenants with new signage proposals) and cannot locate fee schedule within draft; Mr. Simonson admitted current draft does not yet include fee schedule but envisions \$25 fee for basic COA Applications (i.e., signage) and highest fees associated with large-scale development projects at \$500-\$1,000. Mr. Cornish also expressed concern that recent large-scale development projects lack qualified architectural teams, so HCC is faced with multiple review sessions where HCC members become part of design process, especially when COA Applications are incomplete due to lack of scale drawings, etc. Mr. Evans stressed need for City staff to ensure Applications are complete before including on meeting agendas and for HCC to intentionally withhold discussion about details/design by committee to avoid lengthy discussions during meetings. Mr. Simonson called attention to new language within draft Ordinance requiring "architectural drawings or other reasonably detailed and measured depictions ..."

Mr. Simonson noted potential for term limitations for COAs but also explained certain projects (i.e., land development, etc.) require lengthy reviews process. Mr. Cornish inquired about typical terms for city construction permits. Mr. Simonson explained that building permits expire if work ceases for at least six months. Mr. Cornish suggested six months might also be valid for COA terms. Mr. Simonson admitted signage and basic renovations typically initiate within six months of COA issuance but also noted review process for adaptive reuse projects extends well beyond six months. Mr. Evans strongly supported concept of term limitations for COAs, noting select projects assessed by HCC more than ten years ago still languish because Applicant failed to initiate work and project site is left to deteriorate. Mr. Simonson also noted potential scenario when Applicant might need to request continuance of COA; continued by noting need to cooperate with other city departments before returning to HCC with recommendations for COA term limitations for various scenarios.

Mr. Lader inquired how proposed administrative approvals are communicated to HARB/HCC; Mr. Simonson suggested Bureau of Planning and Zoning could integrate summary of administrative approvals within meeting agendas of respective commissions. Mr. Cornish inquired about potential need for public review of items receiving administrative approval; Mr. Evans noted reviews could be conducted by commission members and planning staff but final version of COA would still need to be presented during commission meetings to allow for public commentary. Mr. Simonson agreed to clarify issue with City Solicitor.

Mr. Simonson noted recommendation to increase timeframe for processing COA Applications for large-scale projects before appearing on official meeting agendas to allow for internal reviews, potential off-record meeting(s) with Applicant, more time for Historic Officer to prepare assessments, etc. Mr. Simonson also inquired if Historic Officer's assessments of agenda items could be provided to commission members and Applicants in advance of official meetings. Mr. Long described personal goal of completing assessments several days in advance of commission meetings but typically uses day of meeting to re-visit assessments for final revisions, so draft versions of assessments could be made available in advance; however, also clarified that current contract as City consultant does not require completion of assessments in advance and noted personal situations when assessments might not be ready until day of commission meeting. After lengthy discussion, HCC decided not to request Historic Officer's assessments in advance of commissions meetings ... noting special concern that Applicants should not be in possession of draft assessments prior to commission meeting due to importance of dialogue with HCC members during discussion portion of meeting immediately after Historic Officer's assessment.

Mr. Evans inquired about potential language within revised ordinance that identifies consequences for Applicants who ignore or violate terms of COAs (i.e., tinted or reflective windows, etc.). Mr. Simonson noted recent examples when Applicants were required to appear before local magistrate but agreed that City should be more vigilant with such cases; continued that City intends to hire so-called Historic Inspector to be involved with projects with COAs (especially large-scale projects with many details) to ensure COA terms are satisfied. Mr. Simonson continued that proposed fee schedule is intended to fund City's contract with Historic Inspector.

General Business: Mr. Peiffer introduced himself to HCC members as City's (relatively) new Zoning Officer; summarized educational/professional background as well as current responsibilities for accepting and processing COAs prior to inclusion on HARB and HCC meeting agendas.

Mr. Simonson requested HCC to use caution with future motions in support of on-going, large-scale projects that have previous City Council approval ... specifically if previous approval was given for demolition and/or overall project scale but Applicant is returning to HCC for subsequent review of architectural details. Mr. Lader inquired if comment relates specifically to COAs recently tabled by City Council; Mr. Simonson admitted certain projects tabled by City Council are on-going projects, but request is more general in nature. Mr. Cornish noted Robert's Rules of Order allow for clarifications within preamble section of resolutions. Mr. Long explained COA template (as provided by City Clerk) only allows for project description taken from meeting agenda (as provided by Bureau of Planning and Zoning) for "whereas" item within resolution preamble; continued by noting typical statements within introductory portion of motions that clarify such assessments are continuations of on-going project reviews. After quoting from sample COA for on-going, large-scale project recently tabled by City Council, HCC agreed with approach that motions include introductory language clarifying on-going nature of such assessments and resulting motions.

Mr. Cornish encouraged HCC to review Secretary of Interior's Standards (SIS) to understand cultural and economic benefits of historic districts; also noted SIS do not include standards concerning demolition because of intent to salvage rather than demolish historical properties. Mr. Cornish continued by offering brief history of Bethlehem's preservation movement, beginning with urban renewal efforts (including construction of City Hall complex) during 1960s and community action against vision to replace much of North Bethlehem's historic district with new construction; encouraged HCC members to consider current deliberations about development in South Bethlehem as part of on-going tradition to protect and preserve city's historical building fabric.

Mr. Lader recalled HCC tradition of honoring well-deserving Applicants with special preservation recognition; encouraged HCC to review recent COAs to identify exemplary projects completed in 2021. Mr. Evans encouraged fellow commission members to identify potential projects during discussion portion of

subsequent HCC meeting. Mr. Simonson agreed to cooperate with City staff to prepare summary of recent COAs generated by HCC and distribute for reference.

Minutes from HCC meeting on January 5, 2022, were unanimously approved by those attending that meeting, with following amendments as submitted by Mr. Lader (include statement "Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to consider brick for façades at upper-most floor levels" on page 7; revise "Aging Moon log" to "Aging Moon logo" on page 18) and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

There was no further business; HCC meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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