
**MEETING MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD
JANUARY 9, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Melosky, Chairman
Joy Cohen
Thomas Barker
Eddie Burgos

VISITORS PRESENT

Attorney James Preston
John Lee
Ali Saaem, Applicant, Property Owner
Samantha Cummings, 314 Hanover St.
Chuck Cummings, 314 Hanover St.
Diayana Rodriguez, 315 Rauch St.
Cedric Jacques, 315 Rauch St.
Judith Ross, 317 Rauch St.
Michael Pipestone – 1130 W. Market St.
Kristina Hadded, Liberty St.
Eva Burkhardt, 307 Hanover St.
Evelyn Baxevane, 504 Spring St.
Jo Daniels, 829 Broadway

MEMBERS ABSENT

Matthew Malozi, Vice Chairman

STAFF PRESENT

Matthew Deschler, Solicitor
Darlene Heller, Bureau of Planning & Zoning
Craig Peiffer, Bureau of Planning & Zoning
Basel Yandem, Public Works
Stephany Sebesta, Secretary

The January 9, 2025, meeting of Planning Commission held at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall, was called to order by Chairperson, Robert Melosky at 5:00 PM.

AGENDA ITEM #1: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Attorney Deschler chaired the meeting initially so that members could elect a chairperson for 2025. Ms. Cohen made the motion to re-elect Robert Melosky as the Chairperson of the Planning Commission for 2025. Mr. Barker seconded the motion. Being no further nomination, the motion passed 4-0.

Once appointed, Mr. Melosky chaired the remainder of the meeting. Ms. Cohen made a motion to re-elect Matthew Malozi as Vice Chairperson. Mr. Melosky seconded the motion. Being no further nominations, the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Melsoky made a motion to elect Craig Peiffer as the Secretary of the Planning Commission for 2025. Mr. Barker seconded the motion. Being no further nominations, the motion passed 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM #2: APPROVAL OF MINUTES December 12, 2024

Motion #1: Ms. Cohen

Second: Mr. Barker

Result of Vote: The motion carried 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM #3: SKETCH PLAN REVIEW

Property Location: 312 Hanover Street

Property Owner: Hanover Rauch LLC

Developer/Engineer:

Proposed Work: Representing the property was Attorney James Preston, John Lee project architect, and Ali Saaem, the owner of the property.

Discussion: Attorney Preston introduced the Applicant and spoke about their Zoning Hearing Board hearing. At that meeting there was a lot of opposition, for that reason, a new plan is proposed that requires no zoning relief.

Mr. Lee gave a brief overview of the proposed plan. Mr. Lee stated Rauch Street would be the access point, each unit has a two-car garage. The plan also includes a four-car surface lot adjacent to the existing two-unit structure. Attorney Preston then asked Mr. Lee is the project engineer did the renderings for this project. Mr. Lee affirmed this statement. Attorney Preston stated that the Applicant is willing to comply with all comments in the City's review letter.

Mr. Melosky asked the City is there is anything in the letter that needs to be addressed. Mr. Peiffer spoke of the height comments stating, that overall dimensions from grade to pitch of roof needs to be clear so that Fire can determine whether the fire access drive shall be 20ft or needs to be increased to 26ft. Mr. Lee confirmed the height and the fire access road will only need to be 20ft. Mr. Peiffer brought up the width of Rauch Street being only 12ft at the Spring Street intersection. In the City's review letter, traffic made a comment that signage shall be provided so that people know it is left in and out only. Mr. Melosky wanted clarification if any zoning relief is needed. Mr. Peiffer responded it was his understanding, that as submitted and presented no relief is needed at this time.

Mr. Barker asked if the rendering was showing just white vinyl. Mr. Lee affirmed that it is white vinyl and stated they are open to looking at other options. Mr. Barker suggested maybe adding stone for a more appealing look. Mr. Saaem is open to all suggestions the Planning Commission makes and is willing to change façade materials. Mr. Barker questioned if there is a plan for garbage on site. Attorney Preston agreed there is nothing on the plan as there should be. Mr. Lee acknowledged this and stated that they are obligated to accommodate garbage. He will speak with the engineer for the project to get those details. Lastly, Mr. Barker suggested placing some lights to brighten the space.

Public Comments:

Samantha Cummings, 314 Hanover Street, asked what the access road is for the fire apparatus. Mr. Peiffer explained on the plans what the access road is and Mr. Peiffer spoke with the Fire Marshall prior to the meeting and he felt comfortable that the fire apparatus would be able to get access on to Rauch Street from Spring Street. Ms. Cummings then asked that in the City's review letter that fire mentioned that only a particular fire apparatus can maneuver that turn. Ms. Cummings wants to know if the City only has one truck with that capability. Mr. Peiffer responded he does not know the answer to that question and Ms. Cummings acknowledged that these questions would be better fit for the Fire Marshall.

Chuck Cummings, 314 Hanover Street, did not understand the fire comments in regard to the access road needing to be 20ft wide and Rauch Street is only 12ft. Mr. Peiffer responded that the Fire Marshall can make his comments clearer in the next comment review letter or possibly participate in the meeting to give clarification. Mr. Cummings asked how this property will be defined as there is a two-family detached dwelling there currently. The proposed building is being looked at as townhomes. Since the proposed plan is being viewed as townhomes, each dwelling is looked at individually. Mr. Cummings asked the requirements for that type of dwelling. Mr. Lee responded that he does not know the exact numbers but the plan as submitted meets all requirements. Ms. Heller stated that they will bring these comments to the Zoning Officer.

Daiyana Rodriguez, 315 Rauch Street, asked for confirmation of where the driveway entry was located. Mr. Lee explained where the location was and that it is a two-way. Ms. Rodriguez spoke of her concerns with the width of the driveway and Rauch Street being too narrow for cars and fire apparatuses. There is a tree that falls on Ms. Rodriguez's property and acts as a cooling agent for her home. With the new construction she is worried that the tree will not be preserved. Ms. Rodriguez asked Mr. Lee how close the pavement will be to her

property. Mr. Lee responded as he is not the engineer, he cannot give a definitive answer; it looks to be a few feet from Ms. Rodriguez's property. Another concern of Ms. Rodriguez's is the proposed townhomes will be facing her home and the lights from them will come into her home. Mr. Lee explained that there will be fencing installed so that will not occur. Ms. Rodriguez spoke of her concerns with the fire comments, the trees for clean air and acting as a cooling agent for her home and the safety of the pedestrians that walk along Rauch Street.

Cedric Jacques, 315 Rauch Street, spoke about the narrowness of Rauch Street and he is concerned a fire apparatus will not fit down Rauch Street.

Judith Ross, 317 Rauch Street, voiced her concerns in regard to her foundation and the adjoining home due to prior work being done in the neighborhood her home has had water infiltration. With the construction that is proposed now this could ruin the foundation further. Ms. Ross asked the architect how much land will be paved. Mr. Lee explained that they are required to have stormwater management on the property. Ms. Ross voiced her concern of the fire apparatus not fitting down Rauch Street. Lastly Ms. Ross spoke of her concern if the apparatus that fits down the alley is in use in another location, what will happen to the

Michael Pipestone, 1130 W. Market Street, talked on the subject of greenery and the benefits of a healthy life with greener areas. Mr. Pipestone states not only is it good for his neighbors but for the environment as a whole community. Water run-off was brought up as a concern. While the stormwater may be managed there is concern it will drain into public areas.

Kristina Haddad, 346 Liberty Street, spoke of the importance of greenery and preserving the tree for the environment and the people in the neighborhood and loss of value to property. Ms. Haddad states that this is a scholarly and economic matter. Ms. Haddad explained that trees tie into the aesthetic of a neighborhood.

Eva Burkhardt, 307 Hanover Street, said that Rauch Street is a one-way street with a steep incline which makes it hard for drivers to see if there are any pedestrians. The house on the corner of Spring Street and Rauch Street is at a lower level of elevation than the rest of Rauch Street. This raises concerns because stormwater can easily flood the home.

Evelyn Baxevane spoke on behalf of her mother that resides at 504 Spring Street. Ms. Baxevane's mother is elderly and with the new construction she has concerns of water run off going into her mother's home.

Jo Daniels, 829 Broadway, requests that the developers consider a different style home like a single-family home and listen to those who live in the neighborhood and the City's Planning Commission.

Mr. Jacques spoke again stating that if this construction occurs, it could devalue the neighborhood and reiterated his concerns for the environment.

Mr. Melsoky asked the Applicant if they are willing to agree to comments in the letter and if they will continue to talk with the City. Attorney Preston stated that the Applicant is willing to work with the City and adhere to all requirements needed.

AGENDA ITEM #4: DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Peiffer reviewed the upcoming Agenda items.

There being no further business, upon a Motion by Robert Melosky, a Second by, Ms. Cohen and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 PM.

ATTEST:

Craig Peiffer, Commission Secretary