
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

MEMBERS PRESENT: CRAIG EVANS, ROGER HUDAK, GARY LADER, KENNETH LOUSH, MICHAEL SIMONSON, BETH STARBUCK

MEMBERS ABSENT: SETH CORNISH, ANTHONY SILVOY

STAFF PRESENT: DARLENE HELLER, JEFFREY LONG, ALICIA MILLER KARNER, CRAIG PEIFFER

PRESS PRESENT: ED COURRIER

VISITORS PRESENT: KIM CARRELL-SMITH, XI CHENG, EMILY FOLLENTA, ED GALLAGHER, DANA GRUBB, RACHEL LEON, ALAN LOCHER, JASON MONROIG, JOSHUA PEPPER, JOSEPH POSH, ANNA SMITH, SALVATORE VERRASTRO

MEETING DATE: MARCH 15, 2021

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on March 15, 2021, at the City of Bethlehem Rotunda, Bethlehem City Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA as well as via GoToMeeting virtual meeting platform. HCC Chair Gary Lader called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #1

Property Location: 220 East Third Street

Property Owner: Kevin Luna

Applicant: Xi Cheng

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a 2-story, masonry, semi-detached building with a low-sloping roof behind a parapet with projecting cornice. The building dates from the late 19th century but has been significantly remodeled over time; in 2013, it became part of a larger renovation project involving the adjacent commercial structure. The entry-level façade has a new aluminum storefront with an entrance door to the right and shop window to the left. The remainder of the entry-level façade is sheathed in large-format stone tiles. The upper-level façade has a stucco finish in light-yellow color along with two small, double-hung, 6-over-6 vinyl replacement windows. Scars above the storefront in the stucco façade resulting from removal of previous signage are currently visible. The building has a modern appearance with no historical integrity.

Proposed Alterations: It is proposed to install a wall sign.

Guideline Citations:

- **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.
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Guidelines for Signage and Awnings'** -- Care should be taken in mounting signs and awnings to minimize damage to historic materials. This includes reusing hardware or brackets from previous signs. If reusing existing hardware or attachment locations is not an option, select mounting locations that can be easily patched if the sign is removed. This includes

locating holes in mortar joints rather than directly into bricks or masonry, which will facilitate repair if the sign is removed or relocated in the future.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to install signage for new commercial tenant. Proposed sign includes 0.08-inch (14 gauge) metal box cabinet with aluminum finish that measures 36-inches tall x 144-inches wide x 3-inches thick; 1 ½-inch spacers allow cabinet to stand proud of façade so it can be halo illuminated. Sign includes individual letters that read “HOCAA” in all uppercase, sans-serif bold lettering; letters measure approximately 12-inches tall x 2-inches thick each and are white in color. Sign also include circular logo in black outline and white in color that measures 21.5 inches in diameter x 2-inches thick. 1 ½-inch spacers allow each letter and circular logo to stand proud of box cabinet face so they can be halo illuminated. Beneath logo is series of Asian characters measuring 6 ½-in tall in white color; beneath lettering are three individual graphics measuring 6 ½-in tall in white color followed by slogan “Fresh Bubble Tea” in stylized, sans-serif, bold lettering measuring 6 ½-in tall in black color on white background. Pinstripe detail in white color is offset 3-inches around sign perimeter. Asian characters, graphics and pinstripe detail seem to be applied directly to face of box cabinet.

Halo back-lighting previously determined by HCC as appropriate within Historic Conservation District (HCD) is limited to pin-mounted letters and logos; however, proposal to back-light sign backer as well as lettering warrants discussion before appropriateness can be determined. To-scale drawing that depicts elevation view of building façade with proposed signage (as required on COA Application) is not provided so proportional relationship of sign with overall façade as well as exact placement of signage cannot be discerned and warrants discussion. HCC typically refrains from assessing color proposals; however, ability to read white lettering and graphics applied to metallic face of box cabinet is questionable. Should HCC adopt motion supporting appropriateness of proposed signage, property owner should also repair visible scars in stucco façade resulting from removal of previous signage.

Discussion: Xi Cheng represented proposal to install wall sign. Applicant agreed Historic Officer's comments are clear and willing to consider suggested revisions, noting two Chinese characters beneath logo represent name of business. Mr. Lader expressed concern about white lettering on metal backer, noting potential difficulty in discerning sign ... especially during day; inquired if Applicant would consider black lettering instead. Applicant confirmed backer panel is bright in color and agreed that white letters do not offer much contrast; inquired if HCC would prefer wooden backer instead. Mr. Evans noted HCC is not only concerned about aesthetics and materials for signage but also legibility, noting lack of contrast between backer and lettering is significant issue; suggested Applicant should decide upon backer in light color with lettering in dark color or backer in dark color with lettering in light color so signage is legible for passersby. Mr. Evans continued that pinstripe detail cannot be discerned from provided COA Application and supported Historic Officer's suggestion that property owner should repair damage resulting from previous sign. Ms. Starbuck noted lack of contrast between sign backer and lettering is problematic and cannot discern company name or remaining details of current proposal; continued that signage placement should be raised 3-inches to 6-inches above horizontal division in façade above entry level (rather than flush, as currently depicted) so surface area of upper façade is visible around entire perimeter of new sign. Mr. Hudak agreed most details of proposed signage cannot be discerned and new sign should be raised; concluded that Applicant should return to HCC with proposed revisions before appropriateness can be determined. Mr. Loush agreed with previous commentary, noting inability to discern lettering or details on provided COA Application beyond slogan in black color; continued that HCC motion in support of proposed signage should be tabled until Applicant returns with revisions reflecting various commentary. Mr. Simonson inquired about proposed graphics beneath company name; Applicant responded that Chinese characters beneath round logo represent company name. Applicant expressed appreciation for various commentary and agreed to cooperate with sign fabricator to select new colors for sign backer and lettering. Mr. Lader suggested Applicant could retain white graphics and lettering but with backer in dark color; also noted HCC recommendation to raise installation height of proposed sign and need for off-set pin-stripe detail around sign perimeter. Ms. Starbuck encouraged Applicant to reference Design Guidelines for Signage within Historic Conservation District, available on City of Bethlehem website. Mr. Lader continued that City Planning Office as well as Historic Officer can assist to prepare subsequent COA Application.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: HCC upon motion by Mr. Loush and seconded by Mr. Lader adopted proposal to table decision about proposed wall sign. HCC felt it provided sufficient feedback concerning inability to determine appropriateness of current proposal and encouraged Applicant to return for subsequent review of proposal that responds to concerns.

The motion to table was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #2 -- note: Mr. Loush confirmed a conflict of interest with this agenda item, abstaining from discussion and resulting resolution.

Property Location: 14-18 West Third Street

Property Owner: Joseph C. Posh Properties

Applicant: Joseph Posh

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: 14 West Third Street is a 3-story, 2-bay brick masonry structure with flat roof that dates from ca. 1890 while 16-18 West Third Street is a similar three-story, four-bay brick masonry structure with flat roof that dates from ca. 1905. Both are late Italianate in style and comprise the central portion of what was originally an entire block of structures along West Third Street constructed between 1885 and 1910, each with business locations at the entry level and residential units in the upper two levels. Several of these structures were designed by famed Bethlehem architect A.W. Leh; however, the architect of these specific buildings cannot be confirmed without further investigation. 14 West Third Street is attached to a non-contributing contemporary 6-story commercial structure to the east while 16-18 West Third Street lost its neighbor to the west and is now an end structure. Original entry-level storefronts of both structures have been manipulated over time and now include recessed entrances and contemporary storefront windows with oversized frames and simple aprons. Both structures have similar cornices and glazed transoms above the storefronts, with mid-twentieth century glass blocks installed at 14 West Third Street and early (if not original) leaded glass installed at 16-18 West Third Street. Brick pilasters at 14 West Third Street frame the facade and lead to an upper decorative cornice. The second-floor level has two very large, 14-over-1 double-hung windows topped with segmental brick arches while the third-floor level has three, 8-over-1 double-hung windows topped by jack arches that support the upper decorative cornice. The simpler brick façade at 16-18 West Third Street includes four, 2-over-2 double-hung windows with flat masonry lintels at each floor level and terminates in a decorative upper cornice with stepped parapet. The end wall was not constructed as an independent façade, so removal of the adjacent building compromised its integrity and necessitated installation of wood-frame shoring as lateral bracing, which is visible along the west façade.

Proposed Alterations: It is proposed to demolish two buildings and construct a new 8-story building that includes the abutting property.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 9.** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Design Guidelines' concerning demolition** -- HCC will not recommend approval for demolition unless proposed demolition involves a non-significant building, provided that the demolition will not adversely affect those parts of the site or adjacent properties that are significant.
- **Historic Conservation District Design Guidelines concerning New Construction** -- including but not limited to following: Size, Scale, Proportion; Rhythm and Patterns; Window and Door Openings; Materials and Textures; Architectural Details; Shape and Massing; Streetscapes.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: During HCC meeting on June 15, 2020, Applicant requested dialogue before finalizing intentions with two historical structures and adjacent empty lots along West Third Street. At that time, Applicant presented initial proposal to demolish both structures and develop resulting site as well as adjacent properties to complete triangle of empty lots. Applicant's vision was single structure rising five to seven stories, with commercial tenants at entry level and offices at upper floor levels.

Applicant returned to HCC on December 14, 2020 with COA Application to retain historical façades but demolish other components of existing buildings before incorporating façades into overall development project. Entry level of remaining block included storefronts with awnings for commercial tenants as well as second-story brick masonry façade with multi-lite windows and topped with heavy cornice. Corner condition was anchored by taller 2-story brick construction with large arched windows and entrance door, corbel detailing as well as heavy cornice. Proposal also included four additional residential floor levels of glass curtain wall construction; upper-most floor level was set back 12-feet from front façade to create terrace shaded by thin projecting roof.

During resulting discussion, Applicant requested HCC motion to recommend approval of proposed demolition before continuing with on-going investigations ... leading to determination if historical façades can be rehabilitated and integrated into development project. HCC responded with various concerns about appropriateness of design proposal, including:

- lack of reference to existing structures to inform remaining development along West Third Street ... noting differences in size and scale, rhythm and pattern along with architectural details of existing historical façades compared with uniform design of proposed streetscape
- overall scale of development project; Applicant was encouraged to reduce floor heights to reflect residential use at upper levels rather than matching taller floor heights of adjacent non-contributing commercial building in order to reduce overall height of project proposal
- inappropriateness of glass curtain wall construction for upper floor levels

HCC unanimously adopted proposal to table decision to recommend approval for demolishing both buildings, retaining façades and constructing new 6-story building, noting it provided sufficient feedback for Applicant to present appropriate development project that satisfies relevant design guidelines. Applicant was encouraged to consider context of other nearby properties and surrounding neighborhood for appropriate scale and materials for design proposal rather than referencing adjacent non-contributing contemporary structure.

Current COA Application represents Applicant's response to previous HCC discussion. Accompanying cover letter bases request for approval to demolish both existing structures "on demonstrated lack of structural integrity of properties, to allow for improved economic an(d) aesthetic impact ... new development will have on this critical area of South Bethlehem and provide appropriate neighbor to ... development immediately to east on West Third Street." Cover letter is accompanied by site plan completed in April of 2020, engineering assessment and accompanying photos completed in 2016 by Lock Ridge Engineering as well as supplemental engineering assessment and accompanying photos of existing conditions completed in November of 2020 by Barry Isett & Associates. Architectural drawings completed in February of 2021 by Spillman-Farmer Architects include to-scale floor plans, to-scale exterior elevations (façades) and computer-generated depictions of proposed project from three vantage points. Cover letter does not reference rehabilitation of existing structures and accompanying drawings no longer depict historical façades as part of proposed project.

Current assessment and potential resulting motions supporting appropriateness of proposed development project should focus on three main concepts: demolition of two contributing structures, including historical façades; size and scale of proposed 8-story development project to replace two 2 ½-story structures and complete remaining triangular lot; proposed new construction, with storefront detailing at street level, brick masonry construction with multi-lite windows at seven residential floor levels and glass curtain-wall construction at corner condition.

Demolition: Design guidelines for demolition note Applicant must "evaluate significance of buildings within historic district" and "all attempts to reuse historical buildings are exhausted prior to considering demolition". Guidelines continue that HCC will not support demolition unless "proposed demolition involves non-significant buildings or building additions, provided demolition will not adversely affect parts of the site or adjacent properties that are significant" or when "Applicant has demonstrated they have exhausted all other options and will suffer undo (sic) economic hardship". While storefronts and rear portions of both existing structures have indeed been compromised, upper floor level façades exhibit size, scale and proportions as well as windows typical of district's mixed-use buildings and retain original architectural detailing; thus, they continue to serve as contributing structures within HCD. Based upon relevant design guidelines, proposal to demolish both structures at 14-18 West Third Street (including historical façades) cannot be supported by

HCC unless Applicant demonstrates exhaustion of all other options and will suffer undue economic hardship.

Size and Scale: Should HCC support proposed demolition, requests are predicated on Applicant's ability to replace lost contributing buildings with proposal that satisfies Design Guidelines for New Construction within HCD. Relevant guidelines note "new construction should reflect the dominant cornice and roof heights of adjacent buildings and proportions of building elements to one another and the streetscape" and continue "In South Bethlehem, where two-, three- (and four-)story buildings are the norm, buildings that digress from these standards by any great degree seriously impact the Historic Conservation District. If large-scale construction is considered, particular attention will be given to ... the effect of the proposed building on the streetscape and the (District) as a whole." Current design proposal addresses existing cornice heights by incorporating detailing above entry-level façade; however, Applicant's new design rises another seven stories, resulting in 8-story building and represents increase of two floor levels to previous 6-story proposal. While current design approach might succeed at street level, broader issue is impact of proposed high-rise building on overall HCD. Based upon relevant design guidelines, Applicant's proposal for 8-story structure is inappropriate for immediate streetscape and more generally for overall district.

New Construction: Design guidelines encourage new construction to be compatible with character of streetscape and overall HCD; guidelines continue by identifying elements and principals of existing historical buildings to consider during design process of appropriate new construction, including: Rhythm and Patterns, Window and Door Openings, Materials and Textures, Architectural Details, Shape and Massing as well as Streetscapes.

Proposed entry level includes metal and glass storefronts with historically inspired detailing, such as masonry pilasters, window awnings and lower cornice that emphasizes transition from commercial street level to residential floor levels above. Integration of historical facades with previous design offered differences in lower cornice heights, which helped to animate entry-level façade while current design includes stretch of unbroken lower cornice along entire length of building. Similarly, previous design retained historical façades with interesting architectural details that could serve as inspiration for design of new construction, such as double-hung windows with multiple lites, cast masonry sills and lintels, segmental brick arches above windows as well as brick corbeling at upper parapet. Such details do not appear on current front (West Third Street) façade, which includes over-sized multi-lite windows inspired by nearby industrial structures. Two upper-most floor levels set back from front façade at eastern-most structural bays (perhaps to match setback at adjacent contemporary building) and upper-most floor level is delineated with massive half-round windows, which have no precedent within HCD. It should also be noted that appropriate window lite divisions within HCD are never wider in dimension than in height so many current windows are inappropriate. Rear (Greenway) façade reflects more residential scale at upper floor levels with individual windows and cast details. Should HCC determine 8 stories are appropriate, rear façade seems more successful at mitigating overall building height by delineating upper two floor levels with simplified façade system above upper cornice at 6th floor level that sets back slightly while front façade appears more massive and monolithic with larger industrial windows and crowned by large projecting cornice. Series of vertical bays also animate rear façade at upper floors levels by breaking monotony of overall length; however, pointed bay design is not typical for HCD and should be reconsidered while placement of bays should also inform storefront design at entry level. HCC commended previous design of corner condition that referenced masonry corbel detailing of nearby historical flatiron building; however, current design replaces corbeled brick façade with glass curtainwall construction above street-level that is off-set from north corner, wraps around south corner and extends beyond upper cornice. While not identified within design guidelines as historically appropriate, HCC recently approved select applications of curtain wall construction for nearby project sites; however, those examples were not eight stories tall and only represented connectors to existing structures of differing scales and materials. Discussion is warranted before appropriateness of proposed glass curtainwall construction can be determined, noting design guidelines do not allow tinted or reflective glass so full glazed wall systems with clear glass and no shading devices are challenging to implement.

For on-going project development, Applicant should also reference 'Guidelines for Signage and Awnings' before conceiving overall building signage concept to avoid future tenants from approaching HCC with individual sign proposals. Same guidelines will also serve to create informed awning designs at entry-level storefronts ... noting current proposal only envisions awnings at north façade while southern exposure includes no awnings or other shading devices.

Discussion: Jason Monroig, Joseph Posh and Salvatore Verastro represented proposal to demolish two buildings and construct new 8-story building that includes abutting property. Mr. Lader encouraged discussion to focus on three main issues identified within Historic Officer's assessment, starting with clarification that existing historical façades are no longer proposed for rehabilitation. Applicant noted studies were conducted after previous discussion with HCC to conclude salvaging and rehabilitating historical façades would result in enormous expense. Applicant explained previous design retained existing façades and resulted in more delineated front façade while current design (without historical façades) appears more uniform but also more coherent by interpreting historical details of Historic Conservation District (HCD); continued that resulting project shows appreciation for surrounding environment and will also improve property values of neighborhood. Mr. Lader recalled that previous assessment by HCC resulted in request for Applicant to provide cost comparison to reflect incorporation of rehabilitated historical façades into overall development project vs. demolition and overall new construction approach. Applicant responded that retaining existing historical facades is impossible to calculate at this phase of project development, noting current intent to carefully salvage historical details and donate to worthy recipient also results in additional project expense. Mr. Lader responded that previous design included details within new construction inspired by existing historical façades while such details now seem lost as well.

Applicant admitted that proposed building height (tallest dimension not including mechanical penthouse = 89-feet) is potentially contentious for HCC but justified need for eight floor levels to make overall project economically viable. Although existing historical structures are three stories tall, Applicant continued that limiting new construction to three stories at project location is inappropriate ... especially as viewed from West Third Street (heading east) due to resulting blank façade (west wall) of adjacent contemporary structure. Ms. Starbuck inquired about proposed building height; Applicant responded that ceiling height of upper-most floor level is 81-feet. Ms. Starbuck continued with understanding that construction above 75-feet is less economical due to need for additional fire-proofing measures, etc.; Mr. Simonson noted structures taller than 75-feet are considered "high rise" and trigger different construction codes. In response, Ms. Starbuck inquired if "high rise" category results in more expensive construction; Mr. Simonson responded that each development project must be considered individually, noting other compromises and economics of scale might result in additional savings with high rise construction. Ms. Starbuck continued with desire to see acknowledgement of existing historical façades ... if not rehabilitated, at least incorporation of salvaged details within overall development project rather than donating elsewhere. Ms. Starbuck continued by agreeing with Applicant's comment that limiting current development to three stories would reveal blank wall of neighboring building (also admitted adjacent project represents previous mistake in judgement by HCC) and suggested new building could step down incrementally from eight stories at adjacent structure to three stories at corner condition in order to relate in height with nearby structures; expressed appreciation for brick masonry façades (rather than previous glass curtainwall construction) but also concern about overall monotony of façades (stretching over 200-feet long) and encouraged Applicant to improve façade delineation. Applicant defended current proposal of eight continuous floor levels rather than stepping down height of building along overall length. Mr. Lader noted perspective views of front façade better depict setback at upper floor levels (adjacent to neighboring structure), although over-sized half-round windows at top floor level appear awkward and are inappropriate ... especially as currently depicted with no defined trim surrounds; Ms. Starbuck responded that upper-level setback is currently limited to three structural bays and encouraged Applicant to further explore. Ms. Starbuck continued by explaining glass curtainwall at corner condition is inappropriate and repeated suggestion that Applicant explore design concept of stepping down from eight to three floor levels, noting proposed development is more than three times wider than adjacent contemporary structure.

Mr. Evans observed significant changes between previous and current submission ... especially with articulation of front façade along West Third Street; earlier design scheme presented itself as "amalgamation of buildings" while current design seems more uniform and industrial rather than residential in nature. Mr. Evans continued by encouraging Applicant to reference existing buildings (even if eventually lost) to help with façade articulation; agreed that proposed height is most concerning issue ... cautioning against eight floor levels at uniform height along façade length of more than 200-feet and encouraging Applicant to explore suggested approach to step down from existing contemporary building to corner condition. Mr. Evans agreed with previous statement that proposed glass curtainwall ... even as detail and no longer major façade element ... is inappropriate within HCD; continued that current design responds to

certain items discussed during previous HCC meeting but requires additional development. Mr. Evans expressed appreciation for Applicant's willingness to conduct amical dialogue with HCC and stressed current discussions are not intended to stifle development at project location but rather to foster appropriate and cohesive design, admitting process might seem arduous at times but is vital during initial design phase to avoid regrets during construction. Mr. Hudak described current design proposal as inappropriate, stating if rehabilitation of existing historical façades is not feasible then development should at least pay homage to lost facades; continued that current proposal makes no reference to existing façades. Mr. Hudak also expressed concern about proposed building height as "out of sight" but also recognized Applicant's comments about overall development costs.

Applicant explained select design ideas pay homage to existing buildings: incorporation of leaded glass transoms above storefronts, cornice detailing for new façades, etc. Lower cornice currently has off-sets but are barely perceptible; Applicant suggested variations in cornice heights might help mitigate uniform appearance. Ms. Starbuck appreciated Applicant's willingness to explore cornice height adjustments but noted off-sets should relate to logical divisions within overall façade; also noted heavy upper cornice might be more successful at sixth floor level to mitigate overall building height, with upper-most floors perceived as secondary façades. Ms. Starbuck continued by repeating previous comment that design proposal should step down to corner condition as further measure to mitigate building height and uniform length ... noting 200-feet of uniform construction is inappropriate. Mr. Lader requested clarification about different design approaches for two main façades; Applicant responded that West Third Street façade reflects nearby industrial construction while Greenway façade is influenced by residential neighborhood. Mr. Lader expressed preference for Greenway façade, noting material difference for two upper floor levels helps to mitigate overall mass of entire building while lower portion relates better to heights of existing buildings within HCD; also noted double-hung windows and bay windows reference typical details of nearby residential construction. Mr. Lader concluded that relevant design guidelines encourage new construction to differentiate itself from existing historical context, noting proposed Greenway façade better relates to contributing structures within HCD while also differentiating itself from those same structures. Ms. Starbuck agreed that Greenway façade seems less massive than West Third Street façade due to delineation of upper-most floor levels but prefers removal of top two floor levels, with resulting top two floors (5th and 6th floor levels) set back from front façade; continued by agreeing that new construction should not mimic older construction but should still be informed by historical details. Mr. Evans appreciated Applicant's explanation of two different façade approaches but noted West Third Street was historically residential in nature (as attested by two existing structures) and suggested current residential approach for Greenway façade is more appropriate for both façades.

Public Commentary:

Dana Grubb noted project proposal repeats issues of concern with several development projects recently assessed by HCC in terms of massing and height; found Greenway façade more attractive because it relates better to contributing structures within HCD but thought it could still be better delineated to avoid overall massive appearance; noted current design of West Third Street façade reflects nearby industrial architecture but reminded Applicant this block historically included three-story structures, with commercial uses at entry level and residential units above; explained need for virtual presentations (computer-generated perspectives) to depict proposed project within context of surrounding neighborhood and not only in relation to adjacent (non-contributing) contemporary structure.

Rachel Leon agreed with commentary by HCC and Mr. Grubb concerning inappropriate height of current design, noting potential approval of current project in combination with other recent/pending projects will set dangerous precedent about future development in this area of South Bethlehem.

Alan Locher inquired about HCC considerations during recent approval for demolition of structures at nearby Banana Factory redevelopment project in comparison to current development proposal; also inquired if Applicant must secure site plan approval before requested demolition permit is issued. Mr. Lader confirmed City of Bethlehem has procedures in place to avoid issuance of demolition permit until various approvals are secured; Ms. Starbuck noted recent HCC support of Banana Factory development project included approval to demolish select non-contributing structures as compromise for appropriate new construction that is limited in height to three stories.

Kim Carrell-Smith echoed HCC concerns about inappropriate height of proposed project and stressed need for delineation along West Third Street façade to replicate scale and details of nearby contributing

structures that would result in eclectic mix rather than single homogenous façade; continued that design guidelines do not encourage neighboring structures of differing heights but this circumstance might allow for solution that steps down from adjacent contemporary structure to more appropriate height for overall neighborhood at corner condition; expressed appreciation to Applicant for on-going cooperation but noted HCC is not commissioned with assessing economic development potential and encouraged developer to become well informed about limitations of development within HCD (and required adherence to relevant design guidelines) before finalizing purchase of properties.

Applicant expressed appreciation for public commentary and agreed to consider delineation of front façade along West Third Street to recall existing nearby streetscapes. Applicant cautioned against requests to reconsider height of proposed project, recalling nearby historical flatiron building (which is five stories tall) in relation to shorter neighborhood structures and noting current project location encourages similar flatiron design that is taller than neighboring structures while stressing that development limited to three or four stories is not economically feasible. Mr. Lader noted corner condition could become tallest point of step-down design approach; also questioned why Applicant reconceived corner that received positive HCC commentary, especially considering previous comments about inappropriateness of curtainwall construction. Mr. Lader continued by encouraging Applicant to delineate West Third Street façade by expressing building portions dedicated to residential entrance as different from commercial storefronts. Applicant agreed to reconsider corner condition and noted importance of incorporating concepts for building signage because of potential design implications. Mr. Evans expressed appreciation to Applicant for congenial communication with HCC and general public, stressing various parties should not be seen as adversaries but rather as cooperative body all striving for benefit of overall community through improved design ... noting current submission comes much closer than previous design proposal to appropriate solution and encouraged Applicant with on-going design development. Mr. Lader requested Applicant to prepare drawings for subsequent presentation to HCC that include shadow studies as part of site study that shows context and relationship of proposed development project to surrounding neighborhood.

Motion: HCC upon motion by Mr. Lader and seconded by Mr. Evans adopted proposal to table decision about proposed demolition of two buildings and construction of new 8-story building that includes abutting property. HCC felt it provided sufficient feedback concerning inability to determine appropriateness of current proposal and encouraged Applicant to return for subsequent review of design proposal that responds to expressed concerns. HCC encouraged Applicant to provide further studies concerning: overall building height and massing in relation to immediate streetscape, overall block and surrounding neighborhood; improved delineation of both main façades to mitigate overall building length; details concerning proposed windows and doors; indication of initial signage concepts.

The motion to table was approved: 5-0-1 (abstention by Mr. Loush)

General Business: Minutes from HCC meeting on February 22, 2021 were unanimously approved by those attending that meeting, with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

There was no further business; HCC meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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