
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

MEMBERS PRESENT: CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), GARY LADER (CHAIR), MICHAEL SIMONSON, DESIREE STRASSER

MEMBERS ABSENT: TODD CHAMBERS

STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG (HISTORIC OFFICER)

PRESS PRESENT: NONE

VISITORS PRESENT: TAYLOR ROMERO

MEETING DATE: JUNE 16, 2025

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on June 16, 2025, 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: 306 Brodhead Avenue

Property Owner: Angela M, LLC

Applicant: ValleyWide Signs

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: 306 Brodhead Avenue is comprised of two very similar adjoining buildings. Both are three-story, three-bay, brick masonry mixed-use structures with flat roofs; one has subsequently lost its neighbor and is now a semi-detached end structure while the other is attached. Both are late Italianate in style and comprise the end portion of an entire block of similar structures along Brodhead Avenue constructed between 1890 and 1900, each with business locations at the entry level and residential units in the upper two levels. Original entry-level storefronts of both structures have been manipulated over time and now include recessed entrances and large display windows with painted aluminum frames flanked on either side by brick piers. Both storefronts share a simplified cornice over the entry level while the sign band is defined by similar windowsills at the second level. Each upper floor facing Brodhead has three pairs of double-hung windows. Brick pilasters above the sign band lead up to a brick corbeled cornice. Exterior façades of both structures have been painted, with entry-level storefronts light beige in color and upper floor levels yellow in color. The exposed end (north) façade is smooth stucco painted light beige in color.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to install three new signs.

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’**
- **Historic Conservation Commission ‘Guidelines for Storefronts’**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to install three new signs to reflect new commercial tenant. Application is incomplete due to lack of accompanying “scale drawing with elevation view” that depicts building façade and locations of proposed signage, which are indicated on Application as required.

Proposed non-illuminated sign for existing sign band measures 37-inches tall x 221-inches wide; sign material is 3/8-inch-thick individual acrylic letters and logo graphic pin-mounted using non-corrosive metal studs. Design includes lettering and logo centered vertically and horizontally within existing sign band above both display windows. Text includes words “Let Them” in medium, thin, stylized cursive lettering followed by “DRINK TEA” in large, bold, all upper-case, stylized serif lettering followed by logo composed of silhouette figure drinking from teacup; all lettering and logo are gold in color. Relevant design guidelines for signage within Historic Conservation District (HCD) reference individual pin-mounted lettering, so proposed sign is appropriate ... pending confirmation of overall dimensions of existing sign band to ensure that proposed signage actually fits.

Aside from photomontage of proposed signage within right display window depicted in bright white color, important details such as size, material, distances from top, bottom and sides of display window, etc. are not provided; thus, discussion is warranted before appropriateness of proposed window signage can be determined. Applicant should be aware that HCC traditionally encourages pinstripe detail around sign perimeter to frame logo and lettering while also encouraging installation of window signage on inside surface for easier maintenance and to help avoid unwanted damage.

Proposed non-illuminated sign for side (north) façade measures 48-inches tall x 64-inches wide; sign material is 3mm Aluminum Composite Material (ACM; trade name: Dibond) rigid sign backer installed using 3/16-inch masonry screws with washers and decorative trim caps. Design of sign includes logo composed of silhouette figure drinking from teacup above words “Let Them” in medium, thin stylized cursive lettering followed on next line by “DRINK TEA” in large, bold, all upper-case, stylized serif lettering; all lettering and logo are bright white in color and outlined in gold color while sign background is pink in color. Relevant design guidelines do not mention secondary façades as appropriate locations for signage within HCD, so discussion is warranted before appropriateness can be determined. Should HCC consider proposed side façade location for proposed signage as appropriate, Applicant should confirm distances from top, bottom and sides of sign in relation to overall façade. Applicant should be aware that HCC typically encourages offset pinstripe detail around sign perimeter to frame logo and lettering while also encouraging avoiding bright white color but rather warm white or ivory color as appropriate. Applicant should also clarify how proposed installation screws satisfy HCC recommendation that fasteners are concealed or painted to match sign background.

Discussion: Taylor Romero represented proposal to install three new signs. Mr. Lader inquired about lack of required Property Owner signature on COA Application. Applicant explained this oversight was subsequently addressed, with corrected Application submitted to City of Bethlehem Planning Office; Mr. Simonson agreed to investigate and provide needed contact details to relevant parties.

Mr. Lader called attention to proposed signage for existing sign band, as depicted on provided photomontage; continued by inquiring about overall dimensions of sign band in relation to dimensions of proposed signage. Applicant agreed to collaborate with sign fabricator to secure needed dimensions to confirm that proposed signage fits within sign band before providing to relevant parties. Mr. Lader inquired if Applicant’s preference for individual letters and logo in gold color on pink background is connected with color scheme of other commercial location; Applicant confirmed that Nazareth commercial location includes pink awning with applied lettering and logo in gold color. Mr. Lader noted that HCC does not dictate paint colors within Historic Conservation District; continued with concern that gold letters and logo might not be “readable” against pink background and encouraged Applicant to discuss with sign fabricator to potentially “tweak” envisioned colors accordingly. Applicant expressed preference for same color scheme at other business location and distributed product sample (3/8-inch thick acrylic letter) in gold color. Mr. Simonson

inquired if only sign band or entire façade will be painted pink; Applicant confirmed that pink color is only envisioned for sign band. Mr. Evans requested Applicant to provide paint swatch of proposed pink paint color with subsequent submittal. Ms. Strasser suggested reducing number of metal studs used for mounting individual letters from three to two as means to limit number of holes for subsequent repairs if signage is ever replaced or updated; Applicant agreed to discuss suggestion with sign fabricator. Ms. Strasser continued that existing/former signage must be removed before installing proposed sign. Applicant confirmed that former signage is already removed but resulting holes in sign band must still be repaired. Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to consider shifting signage to right rather than centered above both display windows to take advantage of taller sign band above right display window; continued that required scale drawing would help to properly locate signage. Ms. Strasser suggested that Applicant might consider centering signage above right display window to take full advantage of greater height and to reinforce commercial location behind that window. Applicant explained that entire entry-level commercial location (including both display windows) is location for proposed business. In response, Mr. Evans suggested that proposed window signage is more appropriate within left display window if signage within sign band is installed above right display window. Applicant was amendable to various suggestions and agreed to cooperate with sign fabricator to produce required scale drawing depicting both signs.

Mr. Lader noted that Applicant's proposal for signage on two different building façades is not typically found within Historic Conservation District but agreed that discussion is warranted; continued that proposed sign for side (north) façade "looks a bit lost" and suggested locating it closer to corner with front façade and beneath cornice element that turns corner. Applicant expressed concern about lowering proposed sign, calling attention to existing electrical transformer in adjacent park near traffic intersection that partially blocks view of side façade. Mr. Lader noted that supplemental photomontage of proposed signage indicates Applicant's intent of installing sign at 90-inches above public right-of-way to underside of sign. Ms. Strasser agreed with suggestion to locate proposed sign closer to storefront to create relationship with front façade and recommended installing just below cornice. Mr. Evans suggested that proposed sign resembles billboard and might not be interpreted by passersby as signage for this specific location; continued by recommending frame around proposed sign that helps emphasize signage is specific to this location. Mr. Simonson inquired if proposed frame would replace typical off-set pinstripe detail or be in addition; Mr. Evans clarified that proposed frame would replace typical off-set pinstripe detail. Mr. Evans continued that thickness of frame surround should measure minimum 3-inches, painted to match color of existing cornice and installed so that frame also conceals all fasteners. Ms. Strasser supported suggestion of frame around sign and clarified HCC recommendation for warm white or ivory color because bright white quickly appears dirty; continued that Applicant could also install decorative arrow symbol beneath sign to emphasize location of commercial entrance around corner.

Mr. Lader requested clarification about proposed window signage. Applicant explained that proposed signage is composed of vinyl cutout letters and logo within existing display window; continued by agreeing to collaborate with sign fabricator to confirm critical dimensions of existing window in relation to proposed vinyl elements. Mr. Lader inquired about potential for additional lettering in storefront and/or on entrance door indicating operational hours; Applicant confirmed desire for such lettering on entrance but did not realize HCC should assess, as well. Mr. Simonson inquired which door(s) leading into commercial space would include vinyl lettering. Applicant explained that front façade includes three doors: door at left and door at right lead up to residential units while door second from right leads into commercial space. Mr. Evans observed that operational hours on Applicant's door will emphasize which door leads into commercial space. Mr. Simonson inquired if Applicant envisions anything beyond operational hours on door; Applicant could not think of other details. Ms. Strasser suggested also installing silhouette logo on entrance door to emphasize connection with corporate logo on signage elsewhere.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Lader 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 install three new signs (plus door signage) was presented by Taylor Romero.
2. Appropriate details for new non-illuminated signage for sign band include:

- a. sign measures 37-inches tall x 221-inches wide; to be installed within sign band and centered above right display window
 - b. sign material is 3/8-inch-thick individual acrylic letters and logo graphic pin-mounted using non-corrosive metal studs
 - c. design includes lettering and logo centered vertically and horizontally within existing sign band above right display window; all lettering and logo are gold in color;
 - d. text includes words "Let Them" in medium, thin, stylized cursive lettering followed by "DRINK TEA" in large, bold, all upper-case, stylized serif lettering followed by logo composed of silhouette figure drinking from teacup
 - e. sign band is painted in pink color; **note:** Applicant agreed to submit relevant color swatch to City of Bethlehem (via Planning Department) for inclusion into project file
3. Appropriate details for new window signage include:
 - a. vinyl logo and cutout letters installed on inside surface of left display window
 - b. all lettering and logo are warm white or ivory in color
 - c. design includes logo composed of silhouette figure drinking from teacup above words "Let Them" in medium, thin, stylized cursive lettering followed on next line by "DRINK TEA" in large, bold, all upper-case, stylized serif lettering
 4. Appropriate details for new non-illuminated signage at side (north) façade include:
 - a. sign measures 48-inches tall x 64-inches wide; sign material is 3mm Aluminum Composite Material (ACM; trade name: Dibond) rigid sign backer installed using 3/16-inch masonry screws
 - b. sign to be installed 8- to 12-inches below cornice and 12-inches from outside corner
 - c. design of sign includes logo composed of silhouette figure drinking from teacup above words "Let Them" in medium, thin stylized cursive lettering followed on next line by "DRINK TEA" in large, bold, all upper-case, stylized serif lettering
 - d. all lettering and logo are warm white or ivory in color and outlined in gold color while sign background is pink in color
 - e. minimum 3-inch-wide frame around sign will conceal needed fasteners
 - f. Applicant has option to include decorative arrow symbol beneath sign indicating location of commercial entrance around corner
 5. Appropriate details for new door signage include:
 - a. vinyl cutout letters and numbers indicating operational hours installed on inside surface of door at second from right; Applicant also has option to install silhouette logo
 - b. all lettering and logo are warm white or ivory in color

Note: Applicant agreed to cooperate with sign fabricator to submit scale drawings via City of Bethlehem (Planning Department) with elevation views of relevant building façades that depict proposed signage and include all critical dimensions for final review by Historic Officer, HCC Chair and Chief Building Inspector prior to installation.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on May 19, 2025, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

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