
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: (NONE)

STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG (HISTORIC OFFICER)

PRESS PRESENT: (NONE)

VISITORS PRESENT: SCOTT BARTRUS, ANTHONY CIVITELLA, ERIC DELONG, CRAIG JOHNSON, MIHIR PATEL, BRETT WEBBER

MEETING DATE: MARCH 16, 2026

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on March 16, 2026, 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

Elections of Officers:

HCC upon motion by Mr. Chambers and seconded by Mr. Simonson unanimously approved Mr. Lader to serve as HCC Chair.

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

Agenda Item #2 note: Mr. Lader confirmed a professional conflict of interest with this agenda item and recused himself from any discussion and subsequent voting on the resulting motion

Property Location: 34 East Third Street

Property Owner: Collaboration 3 LLC

Applicant: Ishrat Ilias (Pink Pistachio Café)

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a semi-detached, four-story, three-bay, brick masonry, mixed-use building with an entry-level commercial storefront and upper-level residential units. A stepped parapet defines the upper cornice and flat roof while the entry level façade includes typical storefront elements such as an apron, a recessed glazed entrance with transom, display windows and storefront cornice with integrated sign band. 1-over-1 double-hung windows delineate the upper floor levels of both façades and include expressed windowsills and lintels. Construction of this addition to the so-called Goodman Building was initiated in 2022. Although many building details are influenced by contributing structures within the Historic Conservation District, it is Contemporary in style and considered non-contributing because it was constructed after the District's period of historical significance (ca. 1895-1950).

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to install new building signage.

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 'Guidelines for Signage'**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: HCC meeting agenda describes Applicant's intent is to install "a 15-foot x 24-foot channel letter sign"; however COA Application includes photomontage of existing façade with two proposed signs (one at each street façade) while suggested dimensions of each sign are 2-feet (24-inches) tall x 15-feet (180-inches) wide, so clarification is warranted before appropriateness can be determined. In addition, scale drawing with elevation view is identified on COA Application as required; however, drawing missing so current Application is incomplete.

Provided photomontage depicts proposed signage composed of letters installed into sign bands above recessed entrance at north (front) and east (side) façades; both intended signs seem uniform in size, scale and graphics. According to same photomontage, existing sign band at north (front) façade measures 22-feet (264-inches) wide; height of sign band is not indicated. Existing sign band at east (side) façade is indicated as 40-feet (480-inches); however, that represents overall dimension of two sign band segments while proposed signage is intended for only one segment. As with north (front) façade, height of sign band is not indicated so clarification is warranted to ensure proposed signs fit within height and width dimensions of existing sign band panels.

Computer-generated image implies proposed signs are composed of flat letters installed directly into existing sign bands and seem to be centered horizontally and vertically. Same image implies each sign is composed of tall, thin letters in stylized cursive font and dark pink color that read "Pink Pistachio" followed on next line by word "CAFÉ" in small, thin, all upper-case, sans-serif lettering in bright white color and centered within rectangle in dark pink color. Overall height and width dimensions of letters and rectangle are not indicated; similarly, depth dimension of letters is not indicated. Applicant should be aware that HCC traditionally limits thickness of letters to maximum 2-inches and discourages bright white color within Historic Conservation District; more appropriate color would be warm white or ivory.

Careful attention should be given to very small sketch near bottom right of supplemental information sheet depicting several details of proposed signage that are not evident with provided computer-generated image and warrant further discussion before appropriateness can be determined. Those details include: internal illumination of channel letters, 2-inch x 2-inch aluminum angles at tops and bottoms of both signs, flat aluminum wall plate "every 48-inches", etc. It should be noted that signs with internal illumination are considered inappropriate within Historic Conservation District based on relevant design guidelines; appropriate signage would include letters individually pin-mounted into existing sign band ... with potential for spacers behind letters so they stand proud from faces of sign bands. Another appropriate solution would involve affixing letters onto rigid sign backer to avoid multiple installation locations directly into existing sign band; rigid backer should include offset pinstripe detail in complementary color around perimeter. Should HCC determine proposed signage with channel letters and internal illumination is appropriate, Applicant should be aware that no conduits, raceways or junction boxes associated with illumination can be visible on building façades. Applicant should also confirm that sides of channel letters are painted dark pink in color to match front faces of letters.

Discussion: Mihir Patel represented proposal to install new building signage. Applicant confirmed understanding that insufficient details for proper assessment by HCC were provided with COA Application and agreed to return during subsequent meeting with requested information. Mr. Evans clarified that HCC needs to see scale drawings indicating various critical dimensions, including height and width dimensions of each existing sign band, height and width dimensions of each proposed sign, dimensions of proposed lettering and other graphics.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Chambers and seconded by Mr. Simonson adopted the proposal to table any decision about the appropriateness of the proposal to install new building signage until the Applicant provides a more comprehensive COA Application that includes required scale drawings with all critical dimensions. The motion was approved 4:0:1, with Mr. Chambers, Mr. Evans, Mr. Simonson and Ms. Strasser voting in support and with Mr. Lader abstaining.

Agenda Item #3

Property Location: 209-211 Mechanic Street

Property Owner: 210 East 3rd Street LLC

Applicant: Scott Bartrus

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a 2 story, 4-bay, semi-detached, brick and concrete block masonry, mixed-use residential and commercial building with a low-slope roof. The building dates from ca. 1915 and originally served as storage for a hardware and appliance store on the same lot but facing East Third Street. Two segmental arch window openings on the upper floor level of the main (south) façade as well as two segmental arch window openings on the entry floor level of the side (east) façade are representative features from that period. Buildings on either side have been demolished over time, revealing brick masonry party walls at the west and east façades that were never intended to be exposed. The side (west) façade has been partially painted dark orange while the main (south) façade has been painted bright white. Masonry and wood frame additions connect this structure to the main commercial building facing East Third Street. Many architectural features have been lost over time, so it can no longer be identified by a defining style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to rehabilitate the building façades.

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** -- see Agenda Item 2
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Design Guidelines'** -- relevant pages concerning Masonry

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to paint all exposed building façades in dark grey color, with windows, doors and all trim painted in black color. HCC is not commissioned to assess paint colors; however, guidance about typical paint colors within Historic Conservation District is offered to Applicants upon request.

Relevant Design Guidelines state "HCC will not recommend for approval ... applying waterproof or water repellent coatings (on masonry and stucco)". HCC traditionally interprets this guideline to include paint applied to unpainted masonry and stucco surfaces, noting Secretary of Interior's Standards encourage deteriorated historical features to be repaired rather than covered over. This approach has typically involved structures with masonry walls originally intended to be exposed. As previously stated, main (south) façade is already painted, as are portions of side (west) wall, while both side façades were originally constructed as party walls to neighboring structures that no longer exist and were never intended to be visible. If Applicant's intent is to unify various existing wall types, simply painting them all one color will not result in desired outcome. Appropriate solution resulting in uniform façades would involve applying traditional stucco finish onto each façade ... with pigmented (not painted) final coat that still allows various façades beneath to "breathe". For reference, existing rear (north) façade already has applied stucco finish in warm beige color, which is typical within District. Supplement to COA Application indicates future intention to replace various windows and doors, which will necessitate subsequent HCC assessment; however, installation of replacement windows and doors might require modifications to existing building facades, so Applicant is encouraged to implement various façade improvements concurrently rather than potentially completing select renovations that require subsequent modifications during next rehabilitation phase.

Discussion: Scott Bartrus and Brett Webber represented proposal to rehabilitate building façades by painting them dark gray and also painting window sash, doors and all trims black. Applicant initiated discussion by presenting architectural drawing set dated March 16, 2026, reflecting significant revisions to original proposal. Mr. Long explained that his assessment was in response to COA Application submitted in satisfaction of deadline for tonight's meeting, so any proposed revisions to that Application cannot be assessed in expectation of HCC motion; rather, Applicant is encouraged to submit updated drawings as

part of new COA Application for assessment during subsequent HCC meeting. In response, Applicant requested opportunity to informally share current thoughts about proposed exterior rehabilitation. Mr. Lader polled HCC about listening to Applicant's presentation without passing any motion to table or to support updated proposal; HCC unanimously confirmed willingness to hear about Applicant's proposals for exterior rehabilitation: replacement windows and doors, new folding glass wall within existing garage bay, infilling masonry walls as needed, applying exterior stucco finish to each façade to unify entire building envelope, etc. Applicant confirmed expectation of new commercial tenant(s) at entry level, with potential for residential units at upper floor level. In conclusion, Mr. Lader complimented overall vision of updated exterior rehabilitation proposal and encouraged Applicant to submit new COA Application for formal assessment during subsequent HCC meeting.

Public Commentary: none

Agenda Item #4

Property Location: 327 South New Street

Property Owner: 325 South New Street Development, LLC

Applicant: USA Architects

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: The structure at 319 South New Street is a single-story, semi-detached commercial wood-framed building with a flat roof. The building dates from ca. 1900; however, many architectural features have been lost over time so it can no longer be assigned a defining style. An ornamental cornice at the main (west) façade has been covered over by a steep shed roof with asphalt shingles. The remaining front façade as well as side and rear façades are painted beige. The storefront includes a large double shop window with upper divides set in wood frames, a paneled and glazed entrance door and a retractable awning.

The structure at 321-323 South New Street is a 3-story, 4-bay attached, commercial and residential brick masonry building with a flat roof, ornamental upper cornice, decorative window heads and altered storefronts. The building dates from ca. 1885 and is Italianate in style. The original brick façade is painted beige while the two storefronts include large, divided glass display windows set in aluminum frames, recessed entrances and retractable awnings. The property also includes a series of two-story and single-story rear additions, several dating from the early 20th century, as evidenced by segmental brick arched window and door openings.

The structure at 325 South New Street is a 3-story, 3-bay attached, commercial and residential brick masonry building with a flat roof and altered storefront. Like the adjacent structure, this building dates from ca. 1885 and was probably Italianate in style; however, the exposed front façade was treated with a stucco veneer and given an etched pattern (often referred to as "Brickote") in imitation red brick sometime during the mid-20th century. The storefront was probably altered at the same time, resulting in one set of steps leading up double doors into a commercial space and flanked on either side by small shop windows while another set of steps lead up to a single door that services residential units at upper floor levels. A shed roof with asphalt shingles delineates the entry level from upper floor levels and includes a retractable awning. The remaining visible side façade and the rear façade have been covered in yellow stucco with a textured surface. Original architectural features were lost during façade renovations so it can no longer be assigned a defining style. The entire structure seems to be vacant.

The structure at 327 South New Street is a single-story, attached commercial wood-framed building with a flat roof and includes a large, single-story masonry rear addition. The main building dates from ca. 1900, as does the rear addition; however, many architectural features have been lost over time so it can no longer be assigned a defining style. An ornamental upper cornice at the main (west) façade remains visible and is painted deep red while the upper façade has been covered over and painted bright white. The remaining front façade is painted deep red while the rear façade has been covered in yellow stucco with a textured surface. The storefront includes an off-center paneled and glazed entrance door, a large shop window set in wood frames, two smaller shop windows set in aluminum frames and a retractable awning.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to demolish all four existing structures to construct a new 7-story mixed-use building with ground floor retail and tenant amenity space.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 5.** -- Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- **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 other visual qualities and where possible, materials.
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 9.** -- see Agenda Item 2
- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- see Agenda Item 2
- **Historical 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:
 - (1) Size, Scale, Proportion - New construction should relate to the dominant proportions, size and scale of period buildings (1895 to 1950) in the district.
 - (2) Rhythm and Patterns - Design elements of principal facades should reflect and maintain neighborhood patterns of period buildings (1895 to 1950), including but not limited to the following: prevalent number of bays; door and window placement; floor-to-floor and cornice heights; spacing between windows and doors and between windows and cornices or rooflines; and dimensions of the facade's base and cornice.
 - (3) Window and Door Openings - The size and design of window and door openings should be similar to those of period buildings (1895 to 1950) in the immediate neighborhood.
 - (4) Materials and Textures - Building materials, textures and treatments should be compatible with those of period buildings (1895 to 1950) in the immediate neighborhood. Traditional materials common in the Historic Conservation District, such as brick, wood and stone, are preferred.
 - (5) Architectural Details - New construction should include details and appurtenances reflecting the character defining features of neighborhood buildings of period significance (1895 to 1950), such as porches, porticos, cornices, lintels, arches, quoins, and chimneys.
 - (6) Shape and Massing - New construction should incorporate massing, building shapes, and roof shapes that are present in period buildings (1895 to 1950).
 - (7) Streetscapes - New construction shall reflect prevailing setbacks, and physical elements which define streetscapes, such as brick walls, wrought iron fences, building facades or combinations of these which form visual continuity and cohesiveness with the period buildings (1895 to 1950).
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Guidelines for Signage and Awnings'**
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Guidelines for Storefronts'**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to demolish all four existing structures to construct new 7-story mixed-use building. HCC previously conducted series of discussions about this proposed project during 2020 - 2022. Initial meetings with (now former) Applicant also included substantial public commentary objecting to project proposal and resulted in two consecutive HCC recommendations that Bethlehem City Council deny proposed development project ... mainly due to inappropriateness of building height and proposed demolition of several contributing historic structures. Subsequent HCC meetings occasionally involved input from select City Hall staff and on-going public commentary ... resulting in divided HCC support (4-2-1) of smaller-scale project during meeting on June 21, 2021. That COA was approved by City Council soon thereafter and identified which structures could be demolished and what historic structure must be retained along with appropriate overall "shape and massing", "size, scale and proportion" and "streetscapes" of design proposal. Applicant returned to HCC several more times to address such design concerns as "rhythm and patterns", "window and door openings", "materials and textures" as well as "architectural details" ... leading to HCC's recommendation of

second COA during extra-ordinary meeting on January 5, 2022, that was subsequently approved by City Council. Drawing set prepared by Bállina Group, LLC dated December 6, 2021, served as basis for HCC's recommendations.

Those two COAs and accompanying drawing set represented last time HCC considered this development project until Applicant reappeared before HCC on February 23, 2026, with new COA Application and accompanying drawing set prepared by USA Architects dated January 29, 2026. During that discussion, Applicant expressed concerns about retaining historic façade at 321-323 South New Street, as required by active COA, by referencing supplemental 2-page engineering report that describes existing structure as failing brick masonry building sitting on wood framing above storefronts below. Applicant summarized recent discussions with engineering specialist to begin addressing structural problems associated with salvaging front façade; however, subsequent conversation with intended demolition company confirmed that historical façade will not survive process of shoring to prepare for demolition of remaining structure while loss of existing tiebacks between front and side façades will result in structurally unsound front wall. Applicant described envisioned construction approach for proposed development project as so-called "podium construction" with lowest floor levels constructed for non-combustible fire rating and with wood framing at upper floor levels; continued by explaining that existing historical façade would not be code compliant with that construction approach. Applicant also noted that historical façade is actively failing, as evidenced by through plates previously installed in attempt to keep it in place; continued that such structural supports would be lost during demolition of remaining portions of existing structure ... ultimately rendering historical façade structurally unsound. In summary, Applicant concluded with input from other professionals that COA requirement to retain existing historical façade is not viable. Applicant also noted that active COA indicates intent to build nine-story structure while current proposal envisions seven-story building.

During resulting discussion, HCC expressed inability to support proposed demolition of historical façade unless Applicant offers significant proof that every potential design solution was explored to preserve that specific structure. HCC agreed that retaining historical façade might not be most practical design solution but assumed there are other approaches that retain and integrate existing façade (and potentially all or portions of entire structure at 321-323 South New Street) into overall design while still satisfying relevant construction codes. HCC noted that further analysis of proposed development project is nearly impossible because of inadequate drawings ... specifically lack of any depictions of proposed building within context of existing streetscapes and three-dimensional views from strategic vantage points. Applicant was also encouraged to be inspired by design details found at existing nearby historic structures that are considered contributing to Historic Conservation District.

With no public commentary, HCC unanimously adopted proposal to table any decision about appropriateness of proposal to demolish all four existing structures in order to construct new 7-story mixed-use building with ground floor retail and tenant amenity space until Applicant can provide more comprehensive design proposal that explores options to retain existing historical façade at 321-323 South New Street and all or portions of existing structure that would allow façade to remain, as needed. Scale drawings of new design proposals should also depict context of existing (west) streetscape along South New Street and adjacent (north) Greenway along East Graham Place so HCC can also assess shape and massing, size, scale and proportion along with streetscapes. Computer-generated three-dimensional (perspective) renderings of views taken from critical vantage points along South New Street and Greenway are also encouraged to help place proposed replacement structure within context of immediate streetscapes as well as within overall Historic Conservation District.

Agenda for current HCC meeting states, "Applicant was previously before HCC in February (of) 2026 and is returning to HCC with modifications to the plans after discussion with the (Commission)"; however, upon review of provided supplemental items, there are no discernable revisions to proposed design of development project presented to HCC on February 23, 2026. Instead, Applicant supplemented re-submitted previous design drawings with supplemental computer-generated perspective view taken at street level of northwest corner and looking southeast (Page 01, Site Plan & Rendering) as well as bird's eye view looking down onto main (west) and side (north) façades (Page 03, Isometric Site Rendering) that were encouraged by HCC during previous discussion. Similarly, supplemental west façade streetscape scale drawing (Page 09, Streetscape Elevation S. New Street) places main façade within context of existing structures along remaining block of South New Street ... also in response to HCC's previous request. This additional drawing best illustrates HCC concerns that current design no longer adheres to compromises

captured within previous COAs ... specifically: floor heights of lowest levels should match those of neighboring buildings; intermediate cornice above third floor level should emphasize transition from commercial street level to residential upper floor levels above; storefronts at front (west) façade should respond to pitch of South New Street by stepping down to meet adjacent public sidewalk. Final supplement (Page 10, Details) depicts typical wall sections at windows through façades clad in brick and in fiber cement lap siding. These details warrant further clarification, noting minimal dimensions of window rails and stiles in comparison to traditional windows found throughout Historic Conservation District. Especially concerning is Detail B (Window Detail at Fiber Cement) depicting no discernible recess of window units within window openings but rather inappropriate window units that are flush with exterior cladding and have no expressed headers (lintels).

Provided drawings include initial Sheet with "First Floor Plan" and "Second through Seventh Floor Plan". Subsequent drawings include Sheet 2 "West Elevation", Sheet 3 "North Elevation", Sheet 4 "East Elevation" and Sheet 5 "South Elevation", with each building façade at left in gray scale labeled "Previously Approved HCC Elevation" and depictions of each building façade at right in color labeled "Proposed". In summary, many items previously determined by HCC as appropriate and subsequently approved by City Council are being requested by current Applicant to modify. This assessment presents each item from approved COAs followed by Applicant's proposed modifications; some are minor while others are quite significant. Ultimately, each line item warrants discussion to determine appropriateness.

Active COA dated June 21, 2021, provided below in **bold green**; current proposal for comparison in *italics red*:

- a. **demolition of existing structures at 319, 321-323 (except 3-story Italianate front façade), 325 and 327 South New Street; demolition of all existing structures;** based upon previous discussions and resulting COA, this approach is inappropriate and warrants discussion
- b. **rehabilitation of salvaged front façade at 321-323 South New Street, for integration into overall development project; front façade at 321-323 South New Street no longer integrated into overall development project;** based upon previous discussions and resulting COA, this approach is inappropriate and warrants discussion
- c. **replacement structure is 9-story, mixed-use building that measures approx. 110-feet wide, approx. 75-feet deep, approx. 88-feet high at shortest (southwest) corner and approx. 92-feet at tallest (northwest) corner ... excluding mechanical penthouse; replacement structure is 7-story, mixed-use building that measures approx. 93-feet wide, approx. 76.5-feet deep, approx. 75-feet high at shortest (southwest) corner and approx. 78.5-feet high at tallest (northwest) corner ... no mechanical penthouse proposed;** reduction in overall building height and width is appropriate
- d. **entry level includes 6,500 SF of commercial and community spaces while upper floor levels include 8,000 SF each, with mix of one-bedroom/one-bath and two-bedroom/two-bath apartments; entry level includes approx. 1,900 SF of commercial space and 4,300 SF of community (tenant only) spaces while upper floor levels include approx. 6,200 SF each, with mix of one- and two-bedroom residential units (no apartment layouts provided, so numbers of bathrooms not discernable)**
- e. **floor heights of lowest levels match those of neighboring buildings while intermediate cornice above third floor level emphasizes transition from commercial street level to residential upper floor levels; floor heights of lowest levels no longer match those of neighboring buildings due to loss of historic façade at 321-323 South New Street while intermediate cornice is now above entry floor level;** proposed revisions warrant discussion before appropriateness can be determined

As with previous designs, current storefronts on West and North elevations fail to animate public right-of-way and require further development ... noting that typical storefronts within Historic Conservation District include at least 75% glazing. Applicant is encouraged to reference relevant Design Guidelines for Storefronts that illustrate critical components of appropriate storefronts before considering design improvements -- refer to provided copy of relevant page from Design Guidelines.

Discussion: Anthony Civitella, Eric DeLong, Craig Johnson represented proposal to demolish all four existing structures to construct new 7-story mixed-use building with ground floor retail and tenant amenity

space. Mr. Lader acknowledged personal inability to attend previous HCC meeting when Applicant's proposal was initially presented but read through resulting meeting minutes and understands current HCC concerns ... specifically with proposed loss of historical façade due to Applicant's change of construction approach. Applicant confirmed that new approach involves so-called "podium construction", with Type I construction at initial two floor levels and Type III at remaining five floor levels. Mr. Lader noted that Applicant's change in construction approach results in current proposal to demolish existing historical façade that was previously determined by HCC as contributing to Historic Conservation District and worthy of retaining, rehabilitating and integrating into overall new development project. Mr. Lader continued by expressing appreciation for Applicant's reference to historical façade by introducing tan brick for central portion of new design; however, HCC prefers Applicant to retain actual historical features rather than reinterpreting them. Applicant responded by calling attention to supplemental photos of existing conditions of historical façade, with intention of incorporating similar details into new design; continued by noting that existing historical façade is actually red brick painted tan, so new design will include tan bricks as historical reference while upper floor levels will include fiber-cement cladding to mimic existing wood siding at other façades that will be lost to approved demolition. Applicant also noted that new design will include cornice mouldings with dentil details that recall original building details. Mr. Lader requested Applicant to focus on issue of proposed demolition, which is current concern; continued that, if time allows, Applicant will be given opportunity to discuss specific design details. Applicant defended desire to discuss building details because current drawings depict façades assuming that proposed demolition will be approved but without many architectural details intended for overall design ... such as windowsills, lintels, cornice mouldings, etc. Ms. Strasser inquired if select details from existing historical façades can be retained, rehabilitated and integrated into overall design concept. Applicant responded that existing brick façade is quite deteriorated, so salvaging and reusing brick units is impossible if Type I construction is intended at initial two floor levels; continued with assumption that existing brick façade will fail as soon as return walls are removed.

Mr. Chambers recalled from previous HCC meeting that Applicant was requested to explore design options that do not involve demolition of existing historical façade ... with proposed development project constructed around existing building (perhaps not only façade) in order to preserve it. Applicant countered that retaining and preserving existing façade is not possible from building code perspective, so current proposal is inspired by existing structure instead. Mr. Chambers clarified that design approaches could retain existing historical structure unaltered, with taller apartment tower constructed around and above it ... even maintaining existing wall and floor systems; continued with understanding of potential loss of residential tenants due to limitations of existing building, so Applicant might re-consider 7-story building height limit ... noting that current COA allows for 9-story structure. Mr. Chambers elaborated that HCC needs to understand if Applicant has explored all potential development options before making any decision on proposed demolition that amends current COA that requires existing historical façade to be retained, rehabilitated and integrated into overall development project. Applicant noted that such approaches pose several challenges, including: entry level retail needs taller and larger square footages than existing historical façade affords, so retaining that element as central segment within longer streetscape divides retail opportunity rather than allowing one large space; agreed to explore such options but assumes it will not be feasible and repeated claim that existing façade materials are no longer viable and cannot be reused. Applicant continued that footprint of historical building represents approximately one-third of overall usable square footage at entry level but because of central position within overall development site, proposed core for remaining building (elevators, stairs, mechanical chases, etc.) cannot physically succeed within existing structure, so those items need to be located elsewhere and making them no longer economical. Applicant also explained that proposed podium construction is limited to maximum 7 stories in height, so 9-story building would require more expensive construction approach. Mr. Chambers explained difficulty in understanding Applicant's claims without seeing design approaches that depict exact location of existing historical building, with potential for firewalls to separate existing from new construction. Applicant claimed that integrating firewalls as effort to retain existing historical building is not possible and still have rentable spaces. Mr. Chambers responded that HCC would need to see Applicant attempt to make such scenarios possible before any decision to reconsider terms of current COA can be made. Mr. Chambers continued that if Applicant is able to confirm no such design solution is possible, Applicant should then propose one design solution that reconstructs existing historical façade with salvaged materials, including current window sizes and locations, maintains cornice size and location, windowsill and lintels, brick façade

(prefers tan brick), etc.; however, preference is for solution that retains existing historical façade and constructs new building around it. Applicant requested clarification about what HCC would need to see in order to prove that all design approaches have been explored but failed to find solution that retains existing historical façade. Mr. Evans explained that such proof would not be speculative evaluation but rather specifically “if we do this, it will cost \$? and that is not economically viable”. Applicant repeated previous comment that 9-story building might seem economically viable but current construction budget determined decision for proposed construction approach but is limited to maximum 7-stories tall. Mr. Evans responded that Applicant’s economic assessment could include mention of loss of revenue with reduction in rental units if historical structure is integrated into overall development project. Mr. Lader inquired about potential for all-wood construction. Applicant responded that Type III-B construction is limited to 5 stories in height; continued that such construction would allow for retail that is similar in size to current proposal, but height restriction would result in fewer apartment units ... noting “retail is not really economic generator with development projects”, so potential revenue would be significantly less.

Mr. Lader felt compelled to discuss other components of proposed development, noting some appropriate details ... including tan brick façade that references what is lost through demolition; continued by appreciating supplemental drawings that depict proposed development project within context of adjacent structures ... which led to inquiry about proposed window types. Applicant responded that proposed windows are Fibrex by Andersen (fiberglass) with muntins sandwiched between thermal panes. Mr. Lader noted that appropriate muntins should be expressed on exterior of window and also questioned Applicant’s use of ganged windows (two and sometime three adjacent windows) while provided context of existing streetscape does not indicate such window types as typical within Historic Conservation District. Mr. Lader also appreciated center section of front façade with tan brick that helps delineate otherwise long and uniform streetscape but questioned why that concept ceases above fourth floor level ... also noting that windows even lose muntins within upper floor levels. Applicant inquired where best to terminate brick façade; Mr. Lader noted that upper-most floor level with black fiber cement cladding appears “foreboding” with no relation to lower-level façade and suggested it might be more successful if stepped back from main façade. Mr. Lader continued that Secretary of Interior’s Standards “do not encourage looking backward” so use of contemporary materials is allowed; however, careful detailing is important, with guidance provided by Design Guidelines for New Construction within Historic Conservation District. Mr. Lader concluded by noting preference for retaining and rehabilitating existing historical façade; however, if that proves impossible, would discourage Applicant from replicating existing details, so current approach is “heading in right direction by alluding to memory of existing historic structure without replicating it.” Mr. Chambers noted that existing historical structure already has retail at entry level and residential units above, so Applicant’s claim that square footages are too small to support first floor commercial use and rentable units above is questionable; continued with preference for continuing brick façades at full building height rather than ceasing brick at fourth floor level, as currently depicted. Mr. Evans noted that upper-most floor level with dark cladding could imply mansard roof similar to nearby Taylor Flats building that sets back slightly and integrates exterior “fish-scale” cladding to help mitigate perception of overall building height. Mr. Simonson inquired if Applicant might consider integrating four windows within middle section that better recalls existing historical structure but then using tan brick full building height to help mitigate overall width of uniform streetscape. Mr. Chambers expressed appreciation of tan brick “as nice nod to existing historical building” but questioned Applicant’s proposal for paired windows rather than individual double-hung windows currently found along existing streetscape.

Applicant requested clarity about HCC’s expectations for moving forward. Mr. Lader concluded by noting that Applicant should return to HCC with design options that preserve existing historical structure by building around it but in combination with economics associated with such approaches in comparison with economics of current approach. If Applicant can satisfy HCC’s requirement about proven undue economic hardship, then Applicant is commissioned with preserving memory of what is lost because original intent was to retain existing historical façade. Applicant commented that “such memory might not be located exactly where it is now”; Mr. Chambers noted his preference for placing such memory in same location as existing historical façade but also understands potential need to move it slightly to address entrance sequence and to align windows vertically.

Mr. Long offered to continue discussion by comparing details of proposed façade materials (e.g., cladding types, cornice mouldings, windows, doors, storefronts, etc.) with materials previously determined by HCC

as appropriate; however, HCC felt such discussions were premature until more general issues, such as proposed demolition along with “shape and massing”, “size, scale and proportion” and “streetscapes” of proposed replacement structure, are resolved.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: With mutual consent from Applicant representatives, the Commission upon motion by Mr. Chambers and seconded by Mr. Evans unanimously adopted the proposal to table any decision about the appropriateness of the proposal to demolish all four existing structures in order to construct a new 7-story mixed-use building with ground floor retail and tenant amenity space until the Applicant explores design solutions that include retaining the existing historical façade (and potentially portions or the entire structure) at 321-323 South New Street along with providing cost estimates that detail the resulting economic viability or confirm undue economic hardship of such design solutions.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on February 23, 2026, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

Mr. Lader noted ongoing personal efforts to seek potential new HCC members. Ms. Strasser inquired which member categories remain vacant; Mr. Lader noted need for: licensed realtor (broker, not agent), South Bethlehem resident, another resident of Mount Airy Historic District. Mr. Evans recalled City ordinance that created Historic Conservation District and Mount Airy Historic District identifies needed qualifications of various commission members.

Mr. Evans noted new commercial tenant at 306 Brodhead Avenue already installed various signage (illuminated signs above storefronts with visible conduits and junction boxes, vinyl signage in storefront display windows, billboard on side façade, etc.) without securing HCC assessments of new signs. Mr. Evans also noted condition of nearby structure at 314-316 Brodhead Avenue (former Elks Lodge) continues to deteriorate, with spalling bricks that fall onto public sidewalk below and window sash beginning to fail, so inclement weather will begin to enter inside.

There was no further business; meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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