
M I N U T E S

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: GARY LADER (CHAIR)

STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG (HISTORIC OFFICER)

PRESS PRESENT: (NONE)

VISITORS PRESENT: ANTHONY CIVITELLA, ERIC DELONG, CHAD JARRAH, CRAIG JOHNSON, ED WOLFORD

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2026

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on February 23, 2026, at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall Rotunda, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Vice Chair Craig Evans called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #1

Elections of Officers: Mr. Simonson moved to postpone elections until a subsequent HCC meeting due to the absence of a commission member. The motion was unanimously supported, with Mr. Chambers, Mr. Evans, Mr. Simonson and Ms. Strasser voting in favor of the motion.

Agenda Item #2

Property Location: 1506 Calypso Avenue
Property Owner: David and Jeannine Wyke
Applicant: Ed Wolford, Nature Valley Landscaping

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: There is no structure at this street address; however, the empty lot seems to serve as backyard to the detached stone residential structure located at 1505 Prospect Avenue.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to install a new, 48-inch-high split rail fence with black mesh in the front and side yards.

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 'Design Guidelines'**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to install new 48-inch-high split rail fence adjacent to concrete sidewalk along Calypso Avenue and along both sides of property. No scale drawings of proposed fence accompany COA Application, and no written specifications of proposed materials are provided. Accompanying photos indicate that proposed fence is inspired by existing split rail fence at adjacent property that extends along remaining block of Calypso Avenue and turns along 15th Avenue. That fence is constructed of evenly spaced wooden posts, with three split wooden rails inserted between each pair of posts. Supplemental site plan with proposed fence layout in black depicts double-leaf gate that swings into property along Calypso Avenue while proposed fencing at both sides of property extend to meet existing metal picket fence at rear of residence. Relevant design guidelines “encourage use of new materials sympathetic to historic properties in streetscape ... of similar or complementary color, size, texture, scale, craftsmanship and applicability of function performed. Traditional materials such as brick, wood, stone, terra-cotta and wrought iron are recommended.” Same guidelines continued that HCC “will not recommend vinyl, aluminum or asphalt siding ... painted or exposed concrete or concrete block, ornamental pierced concrete masonry walls and screens, chain link fencing, [or] vinyl fencing.” Visual assessment of Mount Airy Neighborhood Historic District reveals that approximately half of all properties have no fencing; half of remaining properties utilize plantings to delineate property boundaries while remaining properties include brick walls, wrought iron and wood picket fences. Existing fence at neighboring property is only example of split rail fencing found within District and implies more rural setting not typical for District; however, size of this and adjacent empty lot along with location at western end of District boundary can be perceived as somewhat rural in character. Compared with relevant design guidelines, proposed fence uses material that is similar in color, size, texture, scale, craftsmanship and applicability of function performed ... pending clarification by Applicant that proposed fence matches material and details of existing adjacent split rail fence. Without any provided details or product specifications for proposed “black mesh”, discussion is warranted before appropriateness of that specific detail can be determined ... noting relevant design guidelines discourage use of chain link and vinyl fencing within District.

Discussion: Ed Wolford represented proposal to install new, 48-inch-high split rail fence with black mesh in front and side yards. Mr. Evans inquired about species of proposed wood; Applicant confirmed that wood species for all split rails and posts is spruce. Mr. Simonson inquired if proposal includes three split rails between each pair of posts to match existing fence at adjacent property; Applicant confirmed that spacing of posts and number of rails (three) between each pair of posts will match existing fence at adjacent property. Mr. Chambers inquired about dimensions of proposed gate along Calypso Avenue. Applicant responded that gate is composed of two 4-foot sections that each swing into property, with double sets of posts on either side. Mr. Evans inquired about nature of proposed wire mesh. Applicant responded that proposed mesh is metal wire netting with black plastic coating affixed to vertical posts; continued that 3/4-inch dimensional mesh spacing is similar to standard chicken wire. Mr. Simonson clarified that proposed mesh satisfies pool safety requirement for this style of fencing when not using wood or metal pickets.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Chambers 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 a new, 48-inch-high split rail fence with black mesh in the front and side yards was presented by Ed Wolford.
2. Appropriate details for new fence include:
 - a. 48-inch-high wood split rail fence constructed with spruce rails and posts
 - b. spacing of posts and number of rails (three) match existing fence at adjacent property
 - c. gate along Calypso Avenue is composed of two 4-foot sections that each swing into property, with double sets of posts on either side
 - d. metal mesh with black plastic coating affixed to vertical posts satisfies pool safety requirement

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #3a

Property Location: 305 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Fulton Row Properties, LLC

Applicant: Chad Jarrah

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a 2 1/2 story, 3-bay, semi-detached, wood-frame residential building. The gable roof is sheathed in gray asphalt shingles and includes a central dormer with gable roof and two 1-over-1 double-hung windows. The building dates from ca. 1890 and once included a single-story front porch across the entire front façade. Similar structures nearby indicate that it originally had Classical Revival architectural details; however, those have been lost over time. During the mid-20th century, the front porch was enclosed, and a second story was added; however, remnants of the porch steps are still visible at the far left. Changes over time include horizontal siding at the upper floor level, unpainted stucco at the entry floor level, inappropriate windows at both floor levels and an inappropriate flush metal front entrance door installed off-center along with unpainted pressure-treated railings. Exterior modifications recently determined by HCC as appropriate are currently ongoing and include new roofing, new siding at the front and rear façades, new windows at both floor levels and new entrance doors at the front and rear façades.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes modifications to the COA recommended as appropriate by the HCC during their meeting on August 18, 2025, and subsequently approved by City Council. Proposed modifications include removal of an upper level “picture window” on the west (side) façade and then cover the resulting opening with siding to match existing siding.

Guideline Citations:

- **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
- **Historic Conservation Commission ‘Design Guidelines’**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to modify previous COA to include removal of large format “picture window” at upper floor level of west (side) façade, located near corner with south (front) façade, and cover resulting opening with new exterior siding to match existing siding. Rather than complete window removal, appropriate solution would include replacing inappropriate picture window with appropriately sized window that aligns vertically with existing window at entry level and matches height of new upper-level windows at front façade. Details previously determined by HCC as appropriate for new windows include:

- a. Andersen 100 Series (or comparable) composite, double-hung, windows with 2-over-2 simulated divided lites, with muntins installed on exterior; color is “Off-White” or “Almond”
- b. windows at upper floor level are 5-feet tall
- c. window trim is composite with smooth surface; sills and lintels extend beyond window openings

Previous COA defined appropriate new siding at front and rear façades as “fiber cement lap siding with smooth finish and 7-inch reveal exposure in “Sage” or “Navaho Beige” color” ... while “existing siding at side façade to be gently power washed to avoid damage”. Proposal to cover resulting opening after picture window has been removed to match existing siding is problematic. Relevant design guidelines note that aluminum and vinyl siding as exterior cladding materials are inappropriate within Historic Conservation District; however, existing cladding at side façade appears to be vinyl siding. Appropriate solution would involve removal of existing vinyl siding and replace with fiber cement lap siding intended for installation at front and rear façades ... if not entire side façade, then at least to vertical joint at junction of enclosed front porch with main house.

Discussion: Chad Jarrah represented proposal to modify COA recommended as appropriate during HCC meeting on August 18, 2025; modifications include removal of upper level “picture window” on west (side) façade and then cover resulting opening with siding to match existing.

Applicant explained that previous submission involved removing existing picture window and replacing with three ganged windows while current request involves removing existing window but replacing with new siding. Mr. Chambers inquired if windows to be eliminated are at front façade or side façade; Applicant responded that new windows at front façade are currently incorrect height and will soon be changed out in satisfaction of recent COA to make taller; however, current proposal involves removing three proposed windows at side façade. Mr. Simonson inquired if space behind windows at front and side façades in question is one or multiple rooms; Applicant responded that three windows at front façade in combination with three windows at side façade result in one bedroom resulting in no real wall surfaces for furniture placement. Mr. Chambers agreed that removal of upper-level picture window represents improvement but prefers replacement with one single window stacked vertically above existing window at entry level rather than covering over with siding; Applicant was amendable to proposal. Mr. Chambers continued by explaining preference for lap siding to match new siding at front façade that covers resulting void rather than attempting to match existing vinyl siding. Applicant explained intent to replace all existing vinyl siding at side façade with fiber cement lap siding with smooth finish and 7-inch reveal exposure in “Sage” or “Navaho Beige” color to match new siding at front façade. HCC was amenable to that proposal.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Simonson 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 modify the COA recommended as appropriate by the HCC during their meeting on August 18, 2025, and subsequently approved by City Council was presented by Chad Jarrah. Proposed modifications include removal of an upper level “picture window” on the west (side) façade and then cover the resulting opening with siding to match existing siding.
2. Appropriate details for renovations to west (side) façade include:
 - a. remove existing picture window and replace with one new window to match newly installed windows at south (front) façade
 - i. new window is Andersen 100 Series (or comparable) composite, double-hung, window with 2-over-2 simulated divided lites, with muntins installed on exterior; color is “Off-White” or “Almond”
 - ii. vertical dimension is 5-feet tall
 - iii. window trim is composite with smooth surface; sill and lintel extend beyond window opening
 - b. remove existing vinyl and/or aluminum siding at west (side) façade and replace; new cladding is fiber cement lap siding with smooth finish and 7-inch reveal exposure in “Sage” or “Navaho Beige” color to match newly installed siding at south (front) façade

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #3b

Property Location: 307 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Fulton Row Properties, LLC

Applicant: Chad Jarrah

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a 2 1/2 story, 3-bay, semi-detached, wood-frame mixed-use commercial and residential building. The gable roof is sheathed in gray asphalt shingles and includes a central dormer with gable roof and two 1-over-1 double-hung windows. The building dates from ca. 1890 and once included a single-story front porch across the entire front façade. Similar structures nearby indicate that it originally had Classical Revival architectural details; however, those have been lost over time. During the early to mid-20th century, the front porch was replaced with a two-story masonry addition with upper parapet and flat roof along with expressed windowsills and lintels. This structure also received rear additions during the mid- to late 20th century.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes a modification to the COA recommended as appropriate by the HCC during their meeting on August 18, 2025, and subsequently approved by City Council. The proposed modification includes painting the briquette façade to match the color of existing siding.

Guideline Citations:

- **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
- **Historic Conservation Commission ‘Design Guidelines’**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to paint existing front briquette façade in color that matches color of existing siding, which represents modification to original COA that “existing brick façade at front, side and rear façades to be gently cleaned and left unpainted while existing siding at side façade to be gently power washed to avoid damage.” Relevant Design Guidelines state “HCC will not recommend for approval ... applying waterproof or water repellent coatings (on masonry and stucco)”. HCC has traditionally interpreted this guideline to include recommending paint applied to unpainted masonry and stucco surfaces as inappropriate. Discussion with Applicant is warranted to understand necessity for proposed painting. Should HCC determine that exterior painting is appropriate, Applicant should confirm that front and side façades will both be painted and also clarify which siding is being matched with proposed paint color.

Discussion: Chad Jarrah represented proposal to modify COA recommended as appropriate during HCC meeting on August 18, 2025; modification includes painting south (front) and east (side) briquette façades to match color of existing siding. Applicant explained that attempt to clean façade using method described in COA resulted in little improvement; during cleaning process, it became clear that porch addition façade is not composed of true brick units but rather individual briquettes applied to masonry wall. In response, Applicant prefers to paint brick Sherwin-Williams 6148 ‘Wool Skein’ to match color of new fiber cement lap siding at east (side) façade. Similar to previous agenda item, Mr. Simonson noted that enclosed porch includes not only front façade but also portion of side façade. Applicant confirmed intent to paint briquettes at both façades; proposed paint color is close match to color of existing siding.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Simonson 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 modify the COA recommended as appropriate during their meeting on August 18, 2025, and subsequently approved by City Council was presented by Chad Jarrah. Proposed modification includes painting the briquette façade to match the color of new siding.
2. Appropriate details for renovations to south (front) and east (side) façades include applying exterior-grade Sherwin-Williams 6148 ‘Wool Skein’ (or comparable) to existing briquettes to match color of new lap siding at east (side) façade.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

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 with a flat roof. 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.** -- 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
- **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 represent last time HCC considered this development project. Current COA Application and accompanying drawing set now prepared by USA Architects are dated January 29, 2026; accompanying project narrative is lacking in specifics typical of large-scale development projects. Supplemental items include letter from North Star Construction Management, Inc. dated Feb. 3, 2026, addressed to Mr. Palomino (Owner representative) along with supporting documents from DCI Engineers and USA Architects that summarize respective conclusions against retaining historic front façade at 321-323 South New Street.

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 for modifications. This assessment presents each item from approved COA followed by Applicant's proposed modifications; some are minor while others are quite significant. Ultimately, each line item warrants individual discussion to determine appropriateness.

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

- 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**
- 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**
- 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***
- 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; *unable to discern if floor heights of lowest levels match those of neighboring buildings due to lack of context for remaining block (further south) and also due to loss of historic façade at 321-323 South New Street; intermediate cornice is now above entry floor level***

Discussion: Anthony Civitella, Eric DeLong and 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. Applicant expressed concern about retaining historic façade at 321-323 South New Street, as required by active COA. Applicant continued 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 tie-backs 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 wood framing above; 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 as 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 nine-story structure while current proposal envisions seven-story building. Mr. Chambers acknowledged that he was not HCC member during series of original assessments leading to current COAs; however, based on conditions defined with those COAs he “would find it difficult in good conscience” to support proposed demolition of historical façade unless Applicant can offer significant proof that every potential design solution was explored to preserve that structure. Mr. Chambers agreed that retaining historical façade might not be most practical design solution but assumes there are other approaches that retain and integrate existing façade into overall design while still demolishing less historically significant neighboring structures. Mr. Chambers concluded by noting that further analysis of proposed development project by HCC 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.

Mr. Simonson requested clarification about how proposed construction approach would be compromised if historical façade is retained. Applicant responded that existing front façade is wood construction, so podium non-combustible construction proposed for lowest floor levels would be compromised if existing façade must be integrated into overall project. Mr. Chambers clarified his previous comment that design approaches may potentially result in retaining entire structure (or portions thereof) at 321-323 South New Street in order to integrate historical façade into overall development project and still satisfy relevant construction codes.

Ms. Strasser inquired if Applicant considered potential to salvage existing façade details and reuse within new development project if historical façade cannot be retained. Applicant noted that existing brick façade has been painted, so salvaging individual brick units is not possible. Ms. Strasser clarified that she intended potentially salvaging and reusing such ornamental details as lintels, sills, cornices, storefronts, etc. Applicant responded that such existing details are all fabricated from wood, so salvaging and integrating into new design is not possible; however, proposed design is influenced by those and other details found at existing nearby historic structures. Ms. Strasser noted that such details do not seem evident with current design proposal and encouraged Applicant to integrate such details with future design submittals.

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: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Evans and seconded by Ms. Strasser 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 provides a more comprehensive design proposal that explores options to retain the existing historic façade at 321-323 South New Street and all or portions of the existing structure that allow the façade to remain, as needed. Scale drawings of the new design proposals should also depict the context of the existing (west) streetscape along South New Street and the 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 the Greenway are also encouraged to help place the proposed replacement structure within the context of the immediate streetscapes as well as the overall Historic Conservation District.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on December 15, 2025, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance ... noting HCC meeting scheduled for January 26, 2026, was cancelled due to inclement weather.

There was no further business; meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY: _____

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