
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

MEMBERS PRESENT: CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), ROGER HUDAK, GARY LADER (CHAIR), MICHAEL SIMONSON

MEMBERS ABSENT: TODD CHAMBERS, DESIREE STRASSER

STAFF PRESENT: LAURA CLIFTON, JEFFREY LONG

PRESS PRESENT: ED COURRIER (BETHLEHEM PRESS)

VISITORS PRESENT: PETER RAMOS, ED REED, BILL RIVELLINI, BILL SCHEIER, AUSTIN SCOGGIN

MEETING DATE: APRIL 15, 2024

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on April 15, 2024, 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: 411 Webster Street

Property Owner: Americus Properties

Applicant: Paul Mingrino

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a 4-story, 9-bay, detached, brick masonry building with small double-hung windows, a flat roof and high parapet. The structure was constructed during the early 20th century as one of several cigar factories located in South Bethlehem. An Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS) currently painted light gray and dark blue was applied to all façades sometime during the late 20th century. This cladding obscures various defining features and prevents assignment of a specific architectural style; however, the structure's size and scale recall similar early 20th century industrial factories still found in South Bethlehem.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to install one 95-inch-tall x 26.44-inch wide, internally illuminated, double-sided projecting sign.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 9.** -- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- It is the purpose and intent of the City of Bethlehem to promote, protect, enhance, and preserve historic resources and traditional community character for the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation, protection and regulation of buildings and areas of historic interest or importance within the City.
- **Historic Conservation Commission 'Guidelines for Signage'**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to install one 95-inch-tall x 26.44-inch-wide, internally illuminated, double-sided projecting sign at front (west) façade along Webster Street, near main entrance of converted residential building. Scale drawings, indicated as required on COA Application, are not provided so current application is incomplete; rather, supplemental pages include select dimensions of signage, with no indication how sign relates proportionally

to existing façade nor height above public right-of-way. Recent inspection of project site confirmed that signage proposed for HCC assessment is already installed. Inspection also confirmed that can lights and gooseneck fixtures not identified within COA Application and never assessed by HCC were also recently installed at same façade.

According to COA Application, blade sign is fabricated from high-impact acrylic face panels with printed vinyl lettering and aluminum sides. Thickness of sign is indicated on COA Application as 6-inches; however, visual inspection confirmed that sign measures approximately 12-inches thick. Sign fronts are painted white with three-dimensional lettering painted red while all sides are painted black. Two contemporary steel plates painted black with visible stainless steel or aluminum screws serve as wall brackets for new sign while junction box with electrical conduit providing electricity to sign is visible near top of sign extending out from building façade.

From top to bottom, each sign face includes word “THE” in small, sans serif, all upper-case lettering followed by “Cigar” in medium, stylized, cursive lettering, followed by “FACTORY” oriented vertically in large, bold, sans serif, all upper-case lettering, followed by “Lofts” in medium, stylized, cursive lettering, followed by “EST. 2022” in small, sans serif, all upper-case lettering.

Relevant design guidelines note that appropriate double-sided blade signs within Historic Conservation District (HCD) should be hung from decorative iron scroll brackets that extend out over public right-of-way; several structures nearby offer examples of appropriate scroll brackets. Guidelines do not define thickness of blade signs but visual inventory of appropriate signage within HCD indicates typical thickness is maximum 2-inches. Guidelines continue that internally illuminated signs are inappropriate within HCD as are visible conduits, raceways, or junction boxes for needed illumination. Though not defined with relevant design guidelines, HCC traditionally discourages use of bright white color within HCD and encourages signage to include offset pinstripe detail around perimeter painted in complementary color.

Based upon relevant design guidelines, existing blade sign is inappropriate. Appropriate blade signage should not be internally illuminated, with illumination (if needed) accomplished by gooseneck lamps with no visible conduits, raceways, or junction boxes; relevant design guidelines indicate appropriate illumination should be warm white, with HCC traditionally recommending maximum 3000K LED color temperature lights. Appropriate blade signage should also be hung from decorative iron scroll bracket, limited to maximum 2-inches thick, avoid bright white in color and includes offset pinstripe around sign perimeter. Future similar COA Applications should include scale drawings of proposed signage indicating all relevant dimensions, how sign relates proportionally to existing façade and height above public right-of-way along with product details (specifications, cut sheets, etc.) of signage material and applied finishes to confirm they are rated for outdoor use, weather resistant, and fade proof. Applicant should also be aware that new exterior lighting fixtures also warrant assessment by HCC.

Discussion: Austin Scoggin represented proposal to install one 95-inch-tall x 26.44-inch wide, internally illuminated, double-sided projecting sign. Applicant noted that D-Signs (sign fabricator and installer) claims COA Application for signage assessment by HCC was submitted almost two years ago; however, City’s Planning Bureau found no record of submittal. Applicant continued that Certificate of Occupancy (CO) was secured in 2022 and assumed all relevant requirements, including determination of appropriateness of new signage, were satisfied at that time. Mr. Simonson clarified that process of satisfying CO requirements is independent from HCC assessment of proposed signage.

Applicant continued by explaining that signage references history of site (former cigar factory) and requires internal illumination for visibility after dark. Mr. Evans noted that new signage has some interesting details but violates many design guidelines when compared with signage deemed appropriate by HCC elsewhere within HCD; continued that such details could have been addressed prior to fabrication and installation if Applicant had reviewed HCC’s Design Guidelines for Signage. Mr. Simonson agreed to provide Applicant with relevant guidelines. Mr. Lader noted that Applicant could make signage more appropriate by removing internal illumination, reducing overall thickness to maximum 2-inches and hanging from decorative metal scroll bracket. Applicant explained that sign company representative is absent from meeting, so immediate confirmation is not possible but agreed to inquire with him about possible options; continued by expressing concern that HCC might request amending irregular shape of sign. Mr. Evans responded that custom shape of sign is attractive but current thickness is too wide while integration of offset pinstripe in complementary color around outer perimeter would make sign more appropriate. Applicant continued by inquiring if lighting

can be integrated into new sign and still be appropriate. Mr. Lader explained that relevant design guidelines consider interior illumination inappropriate; however, supplemental lighting can be achieved with gooseneck light fixtures. Mr. Lader continued by recommending Applicant to cooperate with sign fabricator to determine what details of current sign can be salvaged for new signage that is appropriate before submitting new COA Application that includes required scale drawings of sign and decorative scroll bracket (including size, location, dimensions, etc.), avoids internal illumination, has maximum thickness of 2-inches and includes offset pinstripe detail. If supplemental lighting is needed, specifications of proposed fixtures are required and LED lighting is limited to maximum 3000K color temperature; Applicant must also ensure that no conduits, raceways or junction boxes are visible on building façade.

Public Commentary: None

Motion: Commission upon motion by Mr. Lader and seconded by Mr. Hudak unanimously adopted proposal to table any decision about appropriateness of proposal to install one 95-inch-tall x 26.44-inch wide, internally illuminated, double-sided projecting sign. HCC felt it provided sufficient feedback concerning inability to determine appropriateness of existing sign and encouraged Applicant to return for subsequent review of revised proposal that responds to expressed concerns.

Agenda Item #2

Property Location: 311 East Third Street

Property Owner: PD Taylor, LLC

Applicant: John Callahan

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a detached, 5-story, 10-bay, mixed-use, masonry structure with a flat roof and inner courtyard. Though conceived as one structure, the overall building mass changes in façade materials to appear as a series of row houses. The fourth floor terminates in an ornamental cornice while the fifth-floor façade is clad in scallop siding to help “read” as a Mansard roof. Defining architectural features include traditionally inspired glass storefronts, a simplified cornice at the lower sign band, a combination of double-hung windows, casement windows, and Juliette balconies as well as cast sills and lintels. HCC assessments of this new development project, which references Italianate detailing found throughout South Bethlehem, were conducted in 2021 through 2022 and construction is almost complete; thus, this structure is a contemporary building and therefore non-contributing to the HCD.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to install a 240-inch-tall x 42-inch-wide sign for the newly constructed mixed-use building.

- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Historic Conservation Commission ‘Guidelines for Signage’**

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to install one 240-inch-tall x 42-inch-wide, internally illuminated, double-sided projecting sign at front (south) façade along East Third Street, near corner at side (west) façade along Taylor Street. Provided scale drawings indicate sign is 12-inches thick, with 3-inch-thick channel letters on each side for total thickness of 18-inches. Proposed sign projects 9-inches from building façade using 3-inch square tube steel welded to 6-inch x 18-inch steel wall plates; metal components are black in color. Bottom of sign measures 19-feet (228-inches) above public right-of-way, resulting in top of sign at 39-feet (468-inches).

According to COA Application, proposed blade sign is fabricated from 1/8-inch-thick translucent vinyl overlays on each sign front over 2-inch internal aluminum tube framing. From top to bottom, each sign face includes large, bold, stylized, upper-case letter “T” in light gray color within 33-inch circle logo in teal color followed by “TAYLOR” oriented vertically in 20-inch tall, slender, sans serif, all upper-case lettering, followed by “FLATS” in small, slender, sans serif, all upper-case lettering with thin underline followed by graphic pattern consisting of 10 rows of 1/4-inch push-through small circles; background is light gray in color, channel letters and underline are dark gray in color while small circles are bright white in color. Proposed sign includes internal illumination using 6500K LED lights, with no visible conduits, raceways, or

junction boxes. Circle logo, channel letters, underline, and graphic pattern are translucent while accent tubing in teal color on vertical end of sign receives internal LED stripe lighting.

As stated with previous Agenda Item, relevant design guidelines note that appropriate double-sided blade signs within HCD should be hung from decorative iron scroll brackets that extend out over public right-of-way and typical thickness is maximum 2-inches. Guidelines continue that internally illuminated signs are inappropriate within HCD. Though not defined with relevant design guidelines, HCC traditionally discourages use of bright white color within HCD and encourages signage to include offset pinstripe detail around perimeter painted in complementary color.

Based upon relevant design guidelines, proposed blade sign is inappropriate. Appropriate blade signage should not be internally illuminated, with illumination (if needed) accomplished by gooseneck lamps with no visible conduits, raceways, or junction boxes; relevant design guidelines indicate appropriate illumination should be warm white, with HCC traditionally recommending maximum 3000K LED color temperature lights. Appropriate blade signage should also be hung from decorative iron scroll bracket, limited to maximum 2-inches thick, avoid bright white in color and include offset pinstripe around sign perimeter. Future similar COA Applications should include product details (specifications, cut sheets, etc.) of signage material and applied finishes to confirm they are rated for outdoor use, weather resistant, and fade proof. Applicant should also be aware that new exterior lighting fixtures also warrant assessment by HCC.

Discussion: Bill Rivellini and Ed Reed represented proposal to install 240-inch-tall x 42-inch-wide sign for newly constructed mixed-use building. Applicant confirmed that proposed sign is located within HCD while smaller in size but similar in design to signage at other development projects located further east along East Third Street; continued by confirming those two sites (#510 East Third Street and #610 East Third Street) are located beyond HCD and did not require assessment by HCC to determine appropriateness of signs prior to fabrication and installation. Applicant explained desire to maintain aesthetics of signage at other locations with current sign proposal but also expressed willingness to consider HCC recommendations for improvement prior to fabrication and installation; continued by maintaining that current sign proposal is appropriate for size and scale of associated new development project.

Mr. Lader expressed appreciation for Applicant's desire to maintain brand identity with consistent signage at all three buildings; continued by commending developer for incorporating various architectural details previously determined by HCC as appropriate at this location. However, Mr. Lader expressed concern about size, scale and opaqueness of proposed sign ... not only as perceived by residents within HCD but also for tenants living in new building ... especially those with windows adjacent to proposed sign. Applicant responded that sign is "not that bright" and already conducted review of tenants' windows to determine that views looking west along Third Street are only slightly obscured by sign and limited to one or two windows while internal illumination will never shine directly into any apartment units.

Mr. Lader inquired with Historic Officer for guidance about size limitations of appropriate signage within HCD. Mr. Long explained that size of signage is dictated by Bethlehem's zoning ordinance while HCC's 'Guidelines for Signage' address such issues as appropriate materials, aesthetics and hanging methods. Similarly, Mr. Long noted that Zoning also allows for tall structures within HCD while HCC might determine such buildings as inappropriate based upon other factors described within relevant design guidelines. Mr. Long continued by explaining that HCC's design guidelines for signage offer appropriate alternatives to blade signs, including rigid signs affixed to sign bands as well as pin-mounted lettering installed into building façades ... noting those signs typically reference commercial tenants while current proposal serves as branding moniker for developer with no commercial space at project site. Mr. Evans noted Goodman Building (30-32 East Third Street) previously included tall vertical signage at front façade, but also noted that sign advertised first floor commercial tenant. Mr. Long explained that former Goodman sign dated after HCD's period of interpretation and would not be considered appropriate based upon current signage design guidelines. Mr. Evans continued that internal illumination of proposed signage is his greatest concern, with potential to serve as example for subsequent proposals if approved by HCC. Applicant explained that internal illumination would be limited to logo detail, channel letters and cutout graphics before distributing supplemental night view of proposed sign to illustrate visual effect. Mr. Evans noted that provided graphic was helpful to confirm internal illumination is limited to select details rather than entire sign box. Mr. Hudak expressed appreciation for proposed sign.

Mr. Simonson inquired about potential for backlighting select details of signage as alternative to interior illumination. Applicant expressed willingness to consider proposal where logo and lettering are backlit for halo effect. Mr. Simonson explained that HCC recently considered similar proposals as appropriate elsewhere within HCD. Applicant agreed to inquire with Client about potential for backlighting select details as acceptable alternative to internal illumination.

Mr. Lader countered that inappropriateness of proposed signage is not limited to internal illumination, noting it does not relate to any commercial tenant at building location and does not meet various design guidelines; continued that, from architectural perspective, proposed sign has no relevance to historical details influencing building's façades that Applicant previously cooperated with HCC to include. Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to consider different signage options that do not detract from building's architecture and cannot be considered "foreign" when compared with other signage within HCD. Mr. Lader also challenged Applicant to reconsider placement of signage, noting corner location implies it is associated with commercial tenant below; however, that location recently received HCC approval of different signage, so entrance into apartments must be located elsewhere. Applicant confirmed that entrance for residential tenants is centrally located along front (south) façade. In response, Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to relocate signage that also responds to relevant design guidelines and includes street numbers to differentiate entrance for residential tenants from entrance for commercial tenant.

Applicant requested further guidance before submitting revised signage proposal for subsequent HCC assessment. Mr. Lader explained previous Applicant was requested to reduce overall signage thickness to maximum 2-inches but admitted such dimensions might prove impossible for current (very tall) signage proposal. Applicant requested clarification if HCC is against developer's intention to "brand" new building with signage. Mr. Lader clarified that concept of "branding" buildings within HCD is not typical, but HCC is not necessarily against; rather, current proposal for overly tall blade sign with no deference to relevant design guidelines prevents HCC from determining it as appropriate. Mr. Lader continued that Applicant might consider pin-mounting logo and individual letters onto building façade with backlit halo effect or even integrating reliefs of logo and lettering into face of façade's stone cladding, noting such approaches are more appropriate for historically inspired façade than current contemporary sign proposal. Applicant inquired if draft versions of subsequent signage designs could be submitted for internal review prior to formal submission to HCC. Mr. Simonson agreed to accept Applicant's subsequent proposals via City of Bethlehem as drafts for internal review to assist Applicant with design of more appropriate signage in preparation for subsequent COA Application.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: Commission upon motion by Mr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Hudak unanimously adopted proposal to table any decision about appropriateness of proposal to install a 240-inch-tall x 42-inch-wide sign for the newly constructed mixed-use building. HCC felt it provided sufficient feedback concerning inability to determine appropriateness of proposed sign and encouraged Applicant to return for subsequent review of revised proposal that responds to expressed concerns.

Agenda Item #3

Property Location: 313-315 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Pedro Ramos

Applicant: Peter Ramos

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: These two adjacent structures are mirrored twins, each originally constructed as a 2 1/2-story, 3-bay, semi-detached, brick masonry residential building with 1-over-1 double-hung windows. Each gable roof is sheathed in dark gray asphalt shingles and also includes a central dormer with gambrel roof and two 1-over-1 double-hung windows. Both buildings date from ca. 1885 while a common front porch extends across both front façades and dates from ca. 1910. It has Classical Revival details, including five round Doric posts atop square pedestals that also support the porch railing, which was replaced over time and is no longer consistent. The original brick masonry front façade at #313 is painted light brown while remaining façades were sheathed in the late 20th century with light brown vinyl siding. All façades at #315 were sheathed sometime during the mid-20th century in warm

white aluminum siding. Various single-story rear appendages to both structures date from the mid-20th century and are also clad with vinyl and aluminum siding.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to replace existing roof sheathing at the front façades of both structures using GAF Slateline asphalt shingles.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 9.** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- see Agenda Item #1

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: COA Application indicates intent to remove existing asphalt shingles on main roof of both front façades and replace with GAF Slateline asphalt shingles. Proposed replacement roofing is appropriate, pending confirmation of following details:

- new roof sheathing is GAF Slateline non-architectural shingles in 'Antique Slate' color
- during removal of existing roofing, any damaged wood should be replaced in-kind, with new ice and water shield to be installed in all valleys and gutter edges and new underlayment to be installed over decking at remaining areas
- new ridge vent detail should be installed under roof-cap shingles for proper ventilation to ensure product longevity
- all valleys at roof dormers and chimneys should be open and lined with copper flashing, rather than woven closed with asphalt shingles
- new metal drip edges should be installed and painted to match adjacent trim

Applicant should clarify intention with roof of common front porch. Applicant should also clarify intention with gutters and downspouts (salvage and rehang existing or install new); appropriate new gutters should be smooth and half-round while new downspouts should be smooth and round.

Recent inspection of project site indicated ongoing work on roof landscapes at sides and rears of both structures ... noting those roofs can be seen from public Greenway (at rear of properties) and from Parham Park ... open public greenspace between #315 and #321 (Touchstone Theatre). Such work was not previously assessed by HCC, so clarification is warranted.

Discussion: Peter Ramos represented proposal to replace existing roof sheathing at front façades of both structures using GAF Slateline asphalt shingles. Applicant confirmed that all pitched roof landscapes of both structures (fronts, sides and rears) will receive GAF Slateline asphalt shingles for uniform appearance; also confirmed that existing gutters and downspouts will be salvaged and reinstalled. Mr. Simonson explained that Applicant recently approached City's Planning Bureau with emergency request to initiate work due to ongoing roof leak, so work was already initiated to address. Applicant confirmed that work is almost complete, so typical HCC-required details (open valleys lined with copper flashing, new metal drip edges, ridge vent detail, etc.) were not observed. Mr. Lader sympathized with Applicant's need to initiate work prior to HCC review in order to address leak but expressed disappointment that HCC could not guide Applicant through review process prior to installation of new roof sheathing. Applicant also confirmed that no work will be conducted on low-sloping roof of common front porch.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Simonson and seconded by Mr. Hudak 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 replace existing roof sheathing of both structures using GAF Slateline asphalt shingles was presented by Peter Ramos.
2. Appropriate sheathing for all pitched roof landscapes at both properties is GAF Slateline (non-architectural) asphalt shingles.
3. Existing gutters and downspouts will be salvaged and reinstalled upon completion of work.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved, noting that roofing details typically recommended by HCC as appropriate (i.e., open valleys lined with copper flashing, metal drip edges, ridge

vent detail, etc.) are not required in this specific case because new sheathing was already installed to address an emergency roof leak.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on March 18, 2024, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

Reflecting upon motion to table Agenda Item #2, Mr. Simonson noted that recent new development projects are larger (taller) than existing contributing structures within HCD and suggested signage guidelines might be revised to encourage differing sign types accordingly. Mr. Evans welcomed opportunity to discuss appropriate signage alternatives and suggested dedicating specific opportunity during future HCC meeting. Mr. Evans continued that current Applicant (developer) references corporate logo as part of overall branding of nearby development projects and HCC typically accepts logos without manipulation as acceptable for appropriate signage. Mr. Lader countered that HCC is not concerned with consistent branding for project signs outside HCD; continued that, beyond corporate logo, proposed signage including many inappropriate details, including size and scale, internal illumination, lack of scroll bracket, missing pinstripe detail, etc. Mr. Lader admitted that HCC is more flexible with appropriateness of signage proposals to reflect eclectic nature of HCD in comparison with more stringent interpretation design guidelines for HARB district; however, current proposal is significantly different from previous signage proposals within HCD and cautioned that recommendation to approve might result in series of subsequent proposals for much larger and brighter signs. Mr. Evans agreed that internal illumination is inappropriate for all signage within HCD and always encourages Applicants to consider external illumination.

There was no further business; HCC meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY: _____

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