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## M I N U T E S

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**BOARD:** HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** SETH CORNISH, ROGER HUDAK, GARY LADER, MICHAEL SIMONSON, BETH STARBUCK

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** CRAIG EVANS, KENNETH LOUSH, ANTHONY SILVOY

**STAFF PRESENT:** KELLEY ANDRADE, DARLENE HELLER, JEFFREY LONG, CRAIG PEIFFER

**PRESS PRESENT:** ED COURRIER

**VISITORS PRESENT:** DENNIS BENNER, KIM CARRELL-SMITH, XI CHENG, BENNEY DORNEVIL, ED GALLAGHER, DANA GRUBB, TONY HANNA, RACHEL LEON, KEVIN LUNA, JASON MONROIG, BRIAN NICAS, JOSEPH POSH, SALVATORE VERRASTRO, AL WIRTH, LARISSA WOODS

**MEETING DATE:** APRIL 19, 2021

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The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on April 19, 2021, at the City of Bethlehem Rotunda, Bethlehem City Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA as well as via GoToMeeting virtual meeting platform. HCC Chair Gary Lader called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #1**

**Property Location:** 220 East Third Street

**Property Owner:** Kevin Luna

**Applicant:** Xi Cheng

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

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

#### **Guideline Citations:**

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

an option, select mounting locations that can be easily patched if the sign is removed. This includes locating holes in mortar joints rather than directly into bricks or masonry, which will facilitate repair if the sign is removed or relocated in the future.

**Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations:** COA Application indicates intent to install signage for new commercial tenant. Proposed sign includes 1-inch-thick box aluminum backer with dark brown finish that measures 36-inches high x 144-inches wide; to be installed flush with building façade. Sign reads “HOCAA” in all uppercase, sans-serif bold letters measuring 12-inches high. Sign also includes circular logo with black outlines measuring 20-inches in diameter. Beneath logo are Chinese characters representing corporate name and measuring 5 ¼-inches high; beneath lettering are three stylized graphics measuring 4 ½-inches high followed by slogan “Fresh Bubble Tea” in stylized, sans-serif, bold lettering also measuring 4 ½-inches high. At lower left is street number “220” in sans-serif bold figures. Pinstripe detail in white color is offset around sign perimeter and applied flush with face of backer while remaining details are ¾-inch-thick vinyl cutouts in white color applied to face of backer. Sign to be centered horizontally on building façade, with 6-inch gap between bottom of sign and top of horizontal trim detail above storefront.

Proposed signage is appropriate with following clarifications:

- Property Owner should repair visible scars in stucco façade resulting from removal of previous signage
- Applicant should clarify intended method for installing new signage that avoids future scarring of stucco façade when removed

**Discussion:** Xi Cheng and Kevin Luna represented proposal to install new signage. Applicant confirmed HOCAA is name of new business and expressed desire for new signage to advertise business location. Mr. Lader recalled previous COA Application with proposed signage (white lettering on metallic backer with backlit features) and commented that current design is more appropriate. Mr. Lader continued by inquiring if proposal still includes illumination; Applicant responded that proposed signage no longer includes illumination because adjacent streetlamp provides ample façade illumination. Mr. Lader inquired if Owner is willing to repair stucco façade prior to installation of new signage; Applicant confirmed willingness to repair stucco façade before new signage is installed. Mr. Simonson requested clarification about provided signage detail (potential for installing signage at diagonal as alternative to horizontal orientation); Applicant clarified that provided sign detail is depicted at angle to illustrate which details are flush with backer (offset pinstripe) and which details are ¾-inch vinyl cutouts (lettering and graphics). Ms. Starbuck inquired if signage proposal also includes new signage at side (west) façade; Applicant confirmed COA Application is limited to one new sign at front (north) façade.

**Public Commentary:** none

**Motion:** HCC upon motion by Mr. Lader and seconded by Ms. Starbuck adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed work as presented, with modifications described as follows:

1. Proposal to install sign was presented by Xi Cheng and Kevin Luna.
2. New sign includes following details:
  - a. 1- inch-thick box aluminum backer with dark brown finish that measures 36-inches tall x 144-inches wide; to be installed flush with building façade
  - b. sign reads “HOCAA” in all uppercase, sans-serif bold letters measuring 12-inches tall; beneath lettering are three stylized graphics measuring 4 ½-inches tall followed by slogan “Fresh Bubble Tea” in stylized, sans-serif, bold lettering also measuring 4 ½-inches tall
  - c. also includes circular logo with black outlines measuring 20-inches in diameter; beneath logo are Chinese characters representing corporate name and measuring 5 ¼-inches tall
  - d. at lower left is street number “220” in sans-serif bold figures
  - e. pinstripe detail in white color is offset around sign perimeter and applied flush with face of backer; remaining details are ¾-inch-thick vinyl cutouts in white color applied to face of backer
3. New sign to be centered horizontally on building façade, with 6-inch gap between bottom of sign and top of horizontal trim detail above storefront.

**Note:** Owner agreed to repair visible scars in stucco façade resulting from removal of previous signage prior to installation of new sign.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

## **Agenda Item #2**

**Property Location:** 412 East Fourth Street

**Property Owner:** Mark Sabato

**Applicant:** Benney Dornevil

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** This structure is a 3-story, 2-bay, semi-detached, mixed-use masonry building with a low-sloping roof. It is sheathed with metal siding painted in a medium green color and includes 1-over-1 double-hung upper-level windows, a full-front pent roof above the storefront with a large display window and recessed door with transom. The building dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and (based upon visible elements from the adjacent twin) has simplified Federal Style influences beneath current metal cladding.

**Proposed Alterations:** It is proposed to install a new hanging sign.

### **Guideline Citations:**

- **Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (SIS) 9.** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- see Agenda Item #1
- **Historic Conservation Commission ‘Guidelines for Signage and Awnings’** -- see Agenda Item #1

**Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations:** COA Application indicates intent to install new blade sign for existing commercial tenant. Proposed sign includes 1-inch-thick wooden oval backer measuring 24-inches high x 36-inches wide. Sign includes large cursive-script lettering that reads “Eva’s” followed on next line by small, stylized, bold, serif lettering that reads “Bargain Boutique”; also features filigree scroll graphic above and below lettering. Scroll details and lettering are white in color while backer is black in color. Proposed lettering and details match design of window sticker signage determined as appropriate during HCC meeting on February 27, 2017. Proposed blade sign to be hung from horizontal metal rod with ball finial and attached at single location to front façade ... centered horizontally between left building corner and left louver of left second-floor double-hung window as well as aligned with dividing rail of window.

Proposed signage is appropriate with following clarifications and revisions:

- confirm proposed design graphic is intended for both sides of new blade sign
- clarify method of applying letters and filigree details to sign backer
- replace proposed metal rod with appropriate metal scroll bracket in black color (see detail taken from signage guidelines and image from nearby structure)
- cooperate with Property Owner to properly install bracket at two connection points, noting need to temporarily remove select portions of metal siding to reveal original masonry façade and taking advantage of existing mortar joints for fasteners before replacing siding

**Discussion:** Benney Dornevil represented proposal to install new hanging sign. Applicant confirmed that proposed blade sign includes designs on both sides, with graphics painted directly onto wooden backer; continued that design is very similar to existing sticker signage already affixed to display window. Mr. Lader inquired if Applicant would consider replacing proposed (inappropriate) horizontal metal rod with appropriate scroll bracket, as seen elsewhere within Historic Conservation District (HCD); Applicant agreed to cooperate with signage installer to replace proposed metal rod with decorative metal scroll bracket. Mr. Lader continued that Applicant’s installer should use caution when temporarily removing existing metal siding and then properly installing bracket into existing mortar joints before reinstalling metal siding. Mr. Cornish inquired about potential need for offset pinstripe detail around sign perimeter, as typically required for appropriate signage within HCD; Mr. Long noted that proposed filigree details already serve as detail around sign perimeter so additional pinstripe might compete with remaining design and also noted that existing window signage was previously determined by HCC to be appropriate with similar filigree detail but

without pinstripe surround. Mr. Lader inquired about method for applying graphics onto wooden backer; Applicant responded with intent to paint design onto backer. Ms. Starbuck offered vinyl graphics applied to backer as appropriate alternative to painting directly onto wooden backer that also affords more longevity; Applicant agreed to consider vinyl as alternative to paint. Ms. Starbuck continued by suggesting (not requiring) that shape of oval sign backer could be improved by relating better to filigree graphics above and below various lettering; Applicant agreed to explore revision to oval backer in relation to filigree graphics.

**Public Commentary:** none

**Motion:** HCC upon motion by Mr. Cornish and seconded by Mr. Hudak adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed work as presented, with modifications described as follows:

1. Proposal to install new hanging sign was presented by Benney Dornevil and Mark Sabato.
2. New hanging blade sign includes following details:
  - a. 1-inch-thick wooden oval backer measures 24-inches tall x 36-inches wide
  - b. includes large cursive-script lettering that reads “Eva’s” followed on next line by small, stylized, bold, serif lettering that reads “Bargain Boutique”
  - c. also features filigree scroll graphics above and below lettering; oval sign is appropriate as proposed but can be changed to better relate with filigree design, with finalized design to be submitted via City of Bethlehem for approval by HCC Chair and Historic Officer
  - d. filigree graphics and lettering appear on both sides of blade sign and are white in color while backer is black in color; graphics and lettering can be painted or applied vinyl details
3. Sign to be hung from appropriate metal scroll bracket painted in black color; bracket to be centered horizontally between left building corner and left louver of left second-floor double-hung window and aligned with dividing rail of window.

**Note:** Applicant agreed to cooperate with Owner to properly install scroll bracket at required connection points by temporarily removing select portions of existing metal siding to reveal original masonry façade and taking advantage of existing mortar joints for fastener locations before carefully replacing metal siding.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

### **Agenda Item #3**

**Property Location:** 125-127 West Fourth Street

**Property Owner:** Larissa Woods and Luis Rivera

**Applicant:** Larissa Woods and Luis Rivera

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** This structure is a 1-story, brick masonry, detached building with a flat roof behind a stepped parapet. The building dates from circa 1925 and was most likely associated with the emerging automobile industry at that time (car dealership or mechanical shop), as evidenced by similar structures throughout Bethlehem. This structure originally had a central recessed entry flanked on either side by large glass storefronts; however, the façade has been significantly manipulated over time and has lost its original architectural character. Leaded glass or glass block transoms above lost storefronts are covered over by a full-front projecting pent roof sheathed with rough-hewn wooden shingles. Glass display windows in simple metal frames are located on either side of the entrance, which is currently flush with the exterior façade. The front façade received T1-11 vertical plywood sheathing (currently painted in medium blue color) below the pent roof and vertical metal siding (currently painted in bright white color) above the pent roof during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Proposed Alterations:** It is proposed to renovate the front façade.

#### **Guideline Citations:**

- **Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (SIS) 1.** -- A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 2.** -- The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- **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, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SIS) 7.** -- Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
- **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 reconfigure what is currently two-unit commercial structure into two rear dwelling units and two front commercial units. Proposed rehabilitation of front façade includes removal of inappropriate plywood sheathing, projecting pent roof and metal siding to reveal original façade, which will also reestablish original recessed entrance configuration. Demolition of inappropriate façade elements is appropriate; however, care should be taken by contractor to appropriately address various concerns upon reveal of original façade. Proposal to install aluminum caps at stepped parapet requires investigation of existing conditions before appropriateness can be determined. Proposal to repair revealed transoms as well as to install new transoms to replace missing by matching existing is appropriate. COA Application makes no mention of entrance doors (currently located within recessed entrance but revealed upon removal of sheathing), so clarification is warranted. Clarification is also warranted about notation that existing building signage will be temporarily removed because no indication given of final intent with signage. Supplemental hand sketch depicts two locations for new signage indicated in red (with notation: "to be submitted by tenant") above revealed transoms, with each sign to be illuminated by three gooseneck fixtures. Signage within parapet is appropriate; however, full removal of current siding might reveal historical locations for building signage so appropriateness should be withheld until more details are provided. Similarly, gooseneck fixtures have been determined by HCC as appropriate within HCD; however, location of new signage should be finalized before HCC can assess proposed fixtures ... noting appropriateness depends upon no cables, conduits or junction boxes visible on exterior façade and LED bulbs are limited to max. 3000K light temperature.

Applicant assumes that original brick walls will be revealed at street level upon removal of current plywood siding, as indicated on Drawing Sheet A-1.1, Detail 3 "Building Elevation (Front Façade)". When compared with similar nearby structures, lower portions of front façade originally included glass storefronts instead of solid brick walls. Indeed, interior photograph provided by Applicant (not numbered but labeled "Window Panes being Refurbished" at top) depicts stud wall in-fill construction and no brick masonry exterior walls. Applicant is encouraged to return to HCC upon removal of various inappropriate façade elements with resulting findings about exterior wall conditions and intended measures to address resulting issues before appropriateness can be determined.

Finally, COA Application includes photograph of rear façade (visible from Rink Street) with hand-written notation "Awning" at two locations along with accompanying image of "Awntech Houstonian ... Fixed Awning" product; no further details concerning rear façade are provided. Clarification is warranted before appropriateness of proposed rear façade rehabilitation can be determined.

**Discussion:** Larissa Woods represented proposal to renovate front façade. Recalling Historic Officer's assessment, Mr. Lader requested Applicant to conduct further investigations by removing inappropriate elements before completing informed assessment of masonry façade beneath. Applicant admitted that COA Application seems confusing because of potential unknown situation beneath existing layers of siding; continued that interior vestibule exhibits original exterior brick walls in good condition so existing interior doors would become exterior doors. Applicant also confirmed recent removal of carpeting within vestibule to reveal original floor tiles. Applicant continued with desire to install new display windows within existing window openings and noted existing transoms across entire width of building are to be repaired, as needed

while others are missing and will be replaced in-kind to match original transoms. Mr. Lader noted that provided photos of existing brick masonry wall within vestibule depict variety of brick types; Applicant confirmed that existing brick walls include multiple types of brick. Mr. Lader continued that brick façade does not seem original and appears to be series of infill patches that allowed for later reconfiguration of front façade. Mr. Lader also noted existing doors do not appear original and might not adequately serve as exterior doors; Applicant expressed desire to retain existing doors but to replace door hardware to appear more “industrial”. Mr. Lader continued that Applicant should cooperate with licensed design professional to ensure resulting entrance doors are ADA-compliant. Mr. Lader inquired about Applicant’s ability (budget and time) to address potential damage to façade upon removal of various inappropriate siding; Applicant acknowledged challenging nature of current project but confirmed desire to move forward. Ms. Starbuck encouraged Applicant to remove inappropriate siding and pent roof to reveal what is beneath and then create informed proposal to rehabilitate resulting façade before re-submitting to HCC; continued that current display windows are “grandfathered” so proposal to replace in-kind is possible even though original façade included large glass storefronts. While HCC typically avoids recommending Applicants to paint brick masonry façades, Ms. Starbuck noted that revealed brick façade may be damaged and/or patchwork of various brick types so painting of exterior might be potential future option for Applicant to consider. Mr. Cornish agreed with recommendation that Applicant remove various siding and pent roof to reveal façade beneath, noting similar examples previously determined by HCC as appropriate to assess condition of original façades. Mr. Simonson also agreed with approach to remove inappropriate siding to assess condition of façade beneath; continued by confirming willingness to cooperate with Applicant to ensure resulting commercial spaces are code compliant. Ms. Starbuck concluded discussion by noting current proposal for awnings at rear façade (along Rink Street) is inappropriate; suggested Applicant to consider simple canvas awnings with open ends as appropriate alternative.

**Public Commentary:** none

**Motion:** HCC upon motion by Ms. Starbuck and seconded by Mr. Hudak adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed work as presented, with modifications described as follows:

1. Proposal to renovate front façade was presented by was presented by Larissa Woods.
2. Approved renovations include following details:
  - a. removal of inappropriate plywood sheathing below pent roof
  - b. removal of inappropriate metal siding above pent roof
  - c. removal of inappropriate projecting pent roof

**Note:** Applicant agreed to submit subsequent COA Application after inappropriate cladding materials are removed and original façade is revealed to provide HCC with informed proposal for façade renovations, including repairs to existing transom windows as well as new shop windows, signage, lighting, etc.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

#### **Agenda Item #4**

**Property Location:** 14-18 West Third Street

**Property Owner:** Joseph C. Posh Properties

**Applicant:** Joseph Posh

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** 14 West Third Street is a 3-story, 2-bay brick masonry structure with flat roof that dates from ca. 1890 while 16-18 West Third Street is a similar three-story, four-bay brick masonry structure with flat roof that dates from ca. 1905. Both are late Italianate in style and comprise the central portion of what was originally an entire block of structures along West Third Street constructed between 1885 and 1910, each with business locations at the entry level and residential units in the upper two levels. Several of these structures were designed by famed Bethlehem architect A.W. Leh; however, the architect of these specific buildings cannot be confirmed without further investigation. 14 West Third Street is attached to a non-contributing contemporary 6-story commercial structure to the east while 16-18 West Third Street lost its neighbor to the west and is now an end structure. Original entry-level storefronts of both structures have been manipulated over time and now include

recessed entrances and contemporary storefront windows with oversized frames and simple aprons. Both structures have similar cornices and glazed transoms above the storefronts, with mid-twentieth century glass blocks installed at 14 West Third Street and early (if not original) leaded glass installed at 16-18 West Third Street. Brick pilasters at 14 West Third Street frame the facade and lead to an upper decorative cornice. The second-floor level has two very large, 14-over-1 double-hung windows topped with segmental brick arches while the third-floor level has three, 8-over-1 double-hung windows topped by jack arches that support the upper decorative cornice. The simpler brick façade at 16-18 West Third Street includes four, 2-over-2 double-hung windows with flat masonry lintels at each floor level and terminates in a decorative upper cornice with stepped parapet. The end wall was not constructed as an independent façade, so removal of the adjacent building compromised its integrity and necessitated installation of wood-frame shoring as lateral bracing, which is visible along the west façade.

**Proposed Alterations:** It is proposed to demolish two properties for future development based on the demonstrated lack of structural integrity of the properties and construct an 88 ft. high mixed-use building on these 2 parcels and the abutting lots.

**Guideline Citations:**

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

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

Applicant returned to HCC on December 14, 2020 with COA Application to retain historical façades but demolish other components of existing buildings before incorporating façades into overall development project. Entry level of remaining block included storefronts for commercial tenants and second-story brick masonry façade topped with heavy cornice. Corner condition was anchored by taller 2-story brick construction and heavy cornice. Proposal also included four additional residential floor levels of glass curtain wall construction; upper-most floor level was set back from front façade to create terrace. Overall building measured 88-feet high (not including mechanical penthouse) x 244-feet wide. HCC responded with various concerns about appropriateness of design proposal, including:

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

Applicant returned to HCC again on March 15, 2021 with COA Application to demolish both contributing buildings, citing undue economic hardship if required to retain, stabilize, rehabilitate and incorporate historical façades into new design scheme. Proposed entry level included metal and glass storefronts with historically inspired detailing while remaining front (West Third Street façade) included over-size, multi-lite windows inspired by nearby industrial structures. Two upper-most floor levels set back from front façade at eastern-most structural bays and upper floor level were delineated with massive half-round windows. Rear (Greenway) façade reflected more residential scale at upper floor levels with individual windows and cast

details; building height at rear was mitigated by delineating two upper floor levels with simplified façade system above upper cornice at 6<sup>th</sup> floor level that set back slightly. Corner condition included glass curtainwall construction above street-level and extended beyond upper cornice. While heights of individual floor levels were reduced to reflect residential use, Applicant increased total number of floor levels from 6 to 8 so overall building height remained more than 80-feet tall. HCC responded with various concerns about appropriateness of design proposal, including:

- lack of variation with proposed storefront design ... especially uniform lower cornice along entire 244-foot building width
- lack of reference to contributing historical structures now proposed for demolition to inform remaining development
- overall scale of development project; Applicant was encouraged to reduce building height ... including potential of stepping down incrementally from height of adjacent non-contributing commercial building to appropriate building height at corner condition as well as setting back façade above traditional building height at 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> floor level
- inappropriateness of glass curtain wall construction at corner condition

Current COA Application represents Applicant's response to previous HCC discussions. Accompanying cover letter bases request for approval to demolish both contributing buildings because "structural modifications and renovations to repair the structure(s) would prove to be too difficult and prohibitively expensive" and continues "any salvageable building elements of the existing buildings shall be donated to others looking to repair like historical building elements". Cover letter is accompanied by site plan completed in April of 2020, engineering assessment and accompanying photos completed in 2016 by Lock Ridge Engineering as well as supplemental engineering assessment and accompanying photos of existing conditions completed in November of 2020 by Barry Isett & Associates. Architectural drawings completed in April of 2021 by Spillman-Farmer Architects include to-scale floor plans, to-scale exterior elevations (façades) and computer-generated depictions of proposed project from three vantage points.

Assuming HCC approves Applicant's request to demolish two contributing structures (including historical façades) current assessment and potential resulting motion supporting appropriateness of proposed development project should focus on two main concepts: size and scale of proposed 8-story development project to replace two 2 ½-story contributing structures and to complete remaining triangular lot; proposed new construction, with storefront detailing at street level, brick masonry construction with multi-lite windows at upper residential floor levels and metal-panel sheathing at select façade locations.

**Size and Scale:** Should HCC support proposed demolition, requests are predicated on Applicant's ability to replace lost contributing buildings with proposal that satisfies Design Guidelines for New Construction within Historic Conservation District (HCD). Relevant guidelines note "new construction should reflect the dominant cornice and roof heights of adjacent buildings and proportions of building elements to one another and the streetscape" and continue "In South Bethlehem, where two-, three- (and four-)story buildings are the norm, buildings that digress from these standards by any great degree seriously impact the Historic Conservation District. If large-scale construction is considered, particular attention will be given to ... the effect of the proposed building on the streetscape and the (District) as a whole." Current design proposal addresses dominant cornice heights by incorporating detailing above entry-level façade and again above 6<sup>th</sup> floor level, with setbacks in upper façade. During previous assessments, HCC requested Applicant to reduce overall building height ... initially 6 stories at 88-feet and then 8 stories at 81-feet; select members also admitted regrets with previous HCC decision that size and scale of adjacent contemporary structure (6 stories rising 89-feet high) was appropriate (realizing upon project completion) and encouraged Applicant to refrain from referencing that structure during on-going design. At 244-feet wide, it should also be noted that current development project is more than twice as wide as adjacent non-contributing contemporary structure. While current design might succeed at street level, broader issue is impact of proposed high-rise building on overall HCD. Based upon relevant design guidelines and commentary previously expressed by HCC, Applicant's proposal for 8-story structure with height of 86-feet at its tallest and overall width of 244-feet is inappropriate for immediate streetscape and more generally for overall district.

**New Construction:** Design guidelines encourage new construction to be compatible with character of existing streetscape and overall HCD; guidelines continue by identifying elements and principals of existing historical buildings to consider during design process of appropriate new construction, including: Rhythm

and Patterns, Window and Door Openings, Materials and Textures, Architectural Details, Shape and Massing as well as Streetscapes.

Proposed entry level includes metal and glass storefronts with historically inspired detailing, such as masonry pilasters, glass transoms and awnings along with lower cornice that emphasizes transition from commercial street level to residential floor levels above. Pilaster details animate lower cornice along front (West Third Street) façade and help mitigate overall width of building. Remaining façade sheathed in brick includes oversize, multi-lite windows inspired by nearby industrial structures on 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> floor levels and separated between levels with decorative metal panels. 6<sup>th</sup> floor level façade includes oversize plate-glass windows with cast sills and lintels (**note:** appropriate lintels extend each direction beyond window opening) and is capped with simplified cast upper cornice. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floor levels set back from front façade at three eastern-most structural bays to match setback at adjacent contemporary building and sheathed in metal siding; remaining upper-most floor levels step back slightly and are sheathed in brick to match remaining façade. 7<sup>th</sup> floor level includes windows matching those at 6<sup>th</sup> floor level and separated by large half-round windows at 8<sup>th</sup> floor level with decorative metal panels. Upper-most windows include half-round cast surrounds with keystone detailing. It should be noted that appropriate window lite divisions within HCD are never wider in dimension than in height so many current windows are inappropriate. Rear (Greenway) façade reflects residential scale at upper floor levels with individual windows and cast details, noting need for lintels to extend each direction beyond window openings. Should HCC determine 8 stories are appropriate, rear façade seems more successful at mitigating overall building height by delineating upper two floor levels with metal siding above cast upper cornice at 6<sup>th</sup> floor level that sets back slightly. Series of vertical bays also animate rear façade at upper floors levels by breaking monotony of overall width. Current design of corner condition sheathed in brick emphasizes importance of corner location with large half-round windows and door with cast details at street level along with lower cornice. 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> floor levels include protruding bays of tall windows set in metal frames while 6<sup>th</sup> floor level includes 1-over-1 double-hung windows, cast sills and lintels along with cast upper cornice. 7<sup>th</sup> floor level includes similar 1-over-1 double-hung windows with cast sills and lintels while taller building height of corner at 8<sup>th</sup> floor level is emphasized by series of tall half-round windows with cast sills and surrounds, delineated brick façade with corbel details and height of cast cornice that rises 5-feet above upper cornice of remaining structure.

In summary, proposed details such as brick masonry façade, detailed pilasters, entry-level storefronts with glass transoms and awnings, cast sills and lintels for various window types as well as cast cornices satisfy relevant design guidelines and are appropriate; however, clarification is requested before appropriateness can be determined for proposed decorative metal panels that separate upper-level windows, metal panel system proposed as sheathing for upper floor levels as well as protruding metal window bays at corner condition. Applicant should also note design guidelines do not allow tinted or reflective glass.

**Discussion:** Jason Monroig, Joseph Posh and Salvatore Verrastro represented proposal to demolish two properties for future development based on demonstrated lack of structural integrity and construct 88 ft. high mixed-use building on these two parcels and abutting lots. Applicant called attention to cost analysis recently prepared by Barry Isett & Associates (supplemental to COA Application) with estimated expenses to rehabilitate existing historical façades and integrate into overall project. Applicant continued by requesting that HCC not focus on number of stories but rather on proposed height, acknowledging decision not to reduce overall building height in response to previous HCC discussions as justified due to economics of developing project site. Applicant also suggested previous HCC recommendation to step building from adjacent contemporary structure down to corner is inappropriate ... requiring tallest segment to abut adjacent structure (to avoid visible blank side façade) and then diminish in height toward corner; continued by noting only few flat iron corner conditions in Bethlehem and all are typically taller structures than adjacent surroundings to emphasize significance of corner location. Applicant also described “dramatic loss of usable square footage” with floor plans when approaching corner, which also limits economic viability of project site. Applicant explained need to acknowledge adjacent contemporary building (match building height) while also emphasizing corner condition (added height) to serve as gateway into South Bethlehem when approaching from west (Hill-to-Hill Bridge, West Third Street, etc.). In summary, Applicant encouraged HCC to consider project not just from height/scale perspective but also in terms of economic feasibility and opportunity to emphasize flat iron corner condition.

Applicant continued by describing updated design, including entry-level storefronts that reference details from lost historical buildings; also noted two upper-most floor levels are set back from front façade (eastern

most structural bays) to align with adjacent contemporary building, which also serves to break up building mass. Applicant admitted total width of proposed development project is problematic within context of existing streetscape but called attention to details (vertical columns, windows, etc.) that break up overall façade; also described proposed metal panels as “architectural decorative elements that recall historical details and bring architectural relief to (overall) massing”.

Mr. Lader acknowledged setback at two upper floors adjacent to contemporary structure clad in metal siding mitigates overall width of building façade; encouraged Applicant to consider stepping back entire length of both upper floor levels (rather than just three eastern bays) to also mitigate building height. Mr. Cornish expressed appreciation for revised project details but recommended removal of top two floor levels to reduce overall building height. Ms. Starbuck agreed with suggestion by Mr. Cornish, noting HCC is charged with assessing scale of proposed new construction in relation to existing historical context; continued by noting nearby structures (except for adjacent contemporary structure) are between one and four stories tall so appropriateness of current proposal cannot be justified. Ms. Starbuck acknowledged various improvements to previous design proposal but questioned why HCC is charged with assessing inappropriately large structure that would also result in loss of historical fabric that defines South Bethlehem (commenting that similar proposals would never be entertained by HARB in North Bethlehem); continued by explaining proposed project must not be limited to two or three floor levels but eight stories is obviously inappropriate. Mr. Hudak expressed appreciation for current design proposal and countered that HCC is not commissioned with dictating building heights but rather City Council. Mr. Simonson recognized various design revisions from previous proposal and especially appreciated development of street level façades; continued by noting recent meetings with South Bethlehem Task Force, which contemplates 90-foot building height limit at project location so current proposal fits within those limitations.

Mr. Lader expressed appreciation for mix of contemporary and historical materials (brick patterns/textures, etc.) and assumes more details are forthcoming; noted differentiating materials help to avoid confusion that design is historical structure. Mr. Lader expressed concern that overall height and width of design proposal in combination with adjacent contemporary structure will cast deep shadows toward north for most of each day. Mr. Lader requested clarification about use of top floor level at corner condition, noting small footprint but double-story height of resulting space; Applicant responded that corner room at upper-most floor level is envisioned as community space for adjacent apartment units, while ceiling height emphasizes corner as “beacon or bell tower” that is taller than remaining structure. Applicant acknowledged need to provide additional details concerning decorative metal panels and understands that cast lintels should extend beyond window openings while glass should not be reflective or tinted, beyond what is allowed by building code.

Ms. Heller read letter of support of current design proposal from Mayor Donchez into Meeting Minutes (see attached); also noted importance of proposed streetscape to compensate for current lack of development as well as significance of corner condition as important visual seen from western gateway into South Bethlehem. Ms. Lader acknowledged streetscape views provided by Applicant as supplements to COA Applicant but noted vantage points of various views make overall design project appear even more massive than flat elevation (façade) drawings; encouraged Applicant to mitigate building mass by revising to include additional details.

Ms. Starbuck countered previous comment that HCC does have ability to limit building height based upon design guidelines (size, scale, massing, etc.) while City of Bethlehem has right to promote taller development by changing ordinance that created Historic Conservation District; continued with suggestion to deny COA for current design proposal based upon inappropriate height, overall building width (should also be divided vertically to mitigate overall scale). Mr. Lader agreed that decisions must be based on current design guidelines even though potential changes to guidelines are pending ... noting that current guidelines serve to preserve character of historic district. Ms. Starbuck recalled original design proposal included six floors (with taller ceiling heights) while current proposal includes eight floors (with lower ceiling heights) and questioned Applicant’s claim about economic viability of latest iteration; continued by noting several similar successful development projects located nearby that are only four stories tall and fit better within scale of historic district. Ms. Starbuck concluded by cautioning fellow HCC members from using such terms as “like” and “dislike” during project assessments but rather “appropriate” and “inappropriate” ... noting personal appreciation of current design (especially if reduced by two floor levels) but must justify resulting motion of (in)-appropriateness based upon conformance with design guidelines.

**Public Commentary:**

Dana Grubb noted ability to observe several recent HCC meetings and wondered why City of Bethlehem continues to acknowledge Historic Conservation District because of on-going trend of developers with inability to design projects that respect relevant guidelines, noting personal participation in forming original historic district and associated ordinance; continued by expressing appreciation for current design and noted that provided street views are more helpful than previous vantage points; noted that South Side Task Force continues to deliberate and has not yet submitted recommendations for approval so mention of Task Force “potential” findings is inappropriate for on-going assessment, which must be based on current design guidelines; appreciated comment by Mr. Cornish to remove upper-most two floor levels but suggested preference for retaining two upper floors and removing two intermediate floor levels instead; noted opinion that politicians should refrain from attempting to influence group of volunteers commissioned to reference design guidelines and Secretary of Interior’s Standards before making recommendations to City Council ... noting if politicians no longer wish for South Bethlehem to have historical designation, they should take action to remove status; concluded by repeating appreciation for revisions to previous design but noted proposal would only be appropriate outside boundaries of Historic Conservation District.

Rachel Leon commented that current design is improvement over previous efforts and especially appreciated street level (storefront) design; expressed serious concerns about overall building height and believes current design of corner condition makes structure look even larger than previous iterations.

**Motion:** HCC upon motion by Ms. Starbuck and seconded by Mr. Cornish adopted the proposal that City Council DENY a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as described as follows:

1. Proposal to demolish two properties for future development based on demonstrated lack of structural integrity of properties and construct 88-ft.-high mixed-use building on these two parcels and abutting lots was presented by Jason Monroig, Joseph Posh and Salvatore Verastro.
2. Motion to DENY recommendation to issue Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed development project was approved: 3-2; therefore, proposal to secure COA for demolishing two properties for future development based on demonstrated lack of structural integrity of properties and constructing 88-ft.-high mixed-use building on these two parcels and abutting lots was DENIED. Those voting in support of denying recommendation to issue Certificate of Appropriateness for proposal expressed support for developing project location, including potential demolition of two existing contributing structures; however, proposal to replace two 3-story buildings with 8-story structure was determined to be inappropriate for existing streetscape as well as for overall Historic Conservation District based upon its failure to comply with: Secretary of Interior’s Standards (SIS) 9. concerning new construction (specifically that new work “will be compatible with historic ... size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect integrity of property and its environment), Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District, Historic Conservation Commission Design Guidelines concerning Demolition as well as Historic Conservation Commission Design Guidelines concerning New Construction. Mr. Hudak opposed motion, noting appreciation for floor plan layouts (especially at street level), stating design proposal is compatible with adjacent (non-contributing) 6-story commercial building and surrounding streetscape while also expressing appreciation for proposed Greenway (south) façade. Mr. Simonson also opposed motion, expressing appreciation for provided computer-generated views of design proposal and noting proposed building fits project site well by successfully addressing current open space.

**New Business:** Mr. Long reported on intent by New Bethany Ministries (NBM) to replace existing (broken) three-gang, 1-over-1, double-hung wood and aluminum-clad windows (sashes only) to match existing; appropriate replacement sashes are Pella ‘Reserve’ series aluminum-clad wood windows, painted to match existing upon installation. Mr. Long noted current broken sashes prevent NBM from distributing food to patrons during pandemic limitations on inside gatherings. Ms. Starbuck expressed appreciation for update; also noted situation is good example for City to move forward with internal staff determination of appropriateness of common rehabilitation issues such as roofs, certain signage, lighting, windows and doors, etc. upon receipt and then report during subsequent HCC meeting.

**General Business:** Minutes from HCC meeting on March 15, 2021 were unanimously approved by those attending that meeting, with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

There was no further business; HCC meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m., noting HCC will reconvene Monday, April 26 @ 6:00 p.m. to address remaining Agenda items.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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