
MINUTES

BOARD: HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: MICHAEL SIMONSON

STAFF PRESENT: JEFFREY LONG (HISTORIC OFFICER)

PRESS PRESENT: (NONE)

VISITORS PRESENT: ANDREW GEHRINGER, CHUCK HAWLEY, JOHN LEE, JOSEPH MCCARTHY, ABRAHAM SALOUM, JOSEPH SEDLER, TAREK SHEHAB

MEETING DATE: AUGUST 17, 2026

The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on August 17, 2026, at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall Rotunda, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Chair Gary Lader called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Agenda Item #1

Property Location: 312 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church

Applicant: Joseph McCarthy

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: The church structure is a detached, 3-bay, stone masonry institutional building with a steep gable roof and cross-gable transept. Each bay includes an entrance portal with pointed Gothic arch and upper-level windows, also with pointed Gothic arches. The larger central bay with north-facing rose window extends up to become the church bell tower. Originally called St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, it was constructed ca. 1865 but was later expanded and modified ca. 1886 to become Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church. The church is Gothic Revival in style. The adjacent rectory structure is a 3-story, detached brick masonry residential building with a low-pitched roof and shed-roof dormers. Defining features include an upper projecting ornamental cornice, full-height bays on either side of the central bay and 1-over-1 double-hung windows. Supported by double pairs of wooden columns, the entrance porch leads down to a stone masonry retaining wall with stone piers that delineate access onto the property. Constructed ca. 1910, this structure is Colonial Revival in style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to modify the stone retaining wall along East Fourth Street, restore the side entrance to the rectory, repair the wall between the church and rectory and install an entrance into the rectory basement.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard (SIS) 2** -- The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alternation of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard (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 Standard (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 Standard (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.
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard (SIS) 10.** -- New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
- **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' 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 portions of a building that are significant.
- **Historic Conservation Commission** -- relevant Design Guidelines for new construction

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: Applicant previously appeared before HCC on several occasions with requests to modify landscape between two structures as well as associated stone retaining walls; most recent discussion on May 18, 2026, also introduced proposal for new basement access into rectory as well as modifications to enclosed side access into rectory. During that discussion, HCC unanimously supported motion to table any decisions about appropriateness of proposed modifications until Applicant addressed requested revisions and lacking details.

Current COA Application repeats intent to modify (Application states "restore") existing stone retaining wall at front (north) of rectory property by reducing average height of wall 16-inches (from 3-feet 10-inches to 2-feet 6-inches) and reducing average height of piers 18-inches (from 6-feet 1-inch to 4-feet 7 inches). Because landscape extends to retaining wall just below stone cap, proposed reduction in overall wall height will necessitate significant changes to existing grade. Stone steps and associated metal handrails leading up from public sidewalk to entrance porch would also require modifications in response to lowered wall height ... most likely resulting in removal of top step(s) and need to shorten handrails. Applicant previously noted that set of adjacent steps leading up to neighboring property at east end will not be modified. SIS 2 notes, "The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alternation of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided." SIS 5 explains that "Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved." Based on these standards, proposal to reduce overall height of existing stone walls 16-18 inches is inappropriate. SIS 6 notes "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." Appropriate repairs to existing retaining wall, stone steps and associated handrails should respect these standards.

Detail A on Drawing Sheet SP-4 is section detail for what is called "new structure" ramping from existing macadam down into rectory basement at side (west) façade. Accompanying West Elevation on Drawing Sheet SP-4 is helpful by depicting new basement entrance as viewed from shared drive between both structures; however, view of side entrance from public right-of-way (most critical view for HCC) on North Elevation on Drawing Sheet SP-4 is not depicted. Discussion about what materials can be seen from East Fourth Street is warranted before appropriateness can be determined. Recent walk-by inspection confirmed construction of side entrance is well underway; however, new concrete block walls were completed without Certificate of Appropriateness. According to relevant design guidelines, concrete block walls are inappropriate within Historic Conservation District. Appropriate materials for exterior walls include stone, brick masonry and stucco. Junction of existing stone wall at side (west) of property with yet another proposed set of steps leading up onto existing rectory property will result in removal of distinctive end pier with stone cap. This junction is problematic and also deserves elevation (façade) view from public right-of-way to understand ramifications of proposed new construction on existing historic wall. Though depicted on

provided Site Plan Drawing Sheet SP-1 and also on Drawing Sheet SP-4, there is no mention of these new steps within COA Application or on meeting agenda. Beyond notation about “new concrete steps”, provided drawings offer no indication of proposed materials for side walls, cap, handrail, etc., so appropriateness is not possible without various clarifications. Applicant should be aware that aluminum pipe railing is inappropriate within Historic Conservation District; appropriate painted iron railings should be profiled with lamb tongue returns at top and bottom.

COA Application also mentions intent to restore side entrance to rectory while supplemental photos indicate need to demolish existing 2-story wood-frame “surround” in order to accommodate. Detail 2 Elevation West Side on Drawing Sheet SP-4 depicts proposed condition after removal of existing enclosed porch; however, beyond notation about “existing concrete landing” there is no mention of proposed materials for new steps, side wall, railing systems, structural posts, fascia, roof etc., so appropriateness is not possible without various clarifications. Similar to previous comments, depiction of proposed entrance porch viewed from public right-of-way (most critical view for HCC) is missing on North Elevation on Drawing Sheet SP-4 and prevents assessment of appropriateness until further discussion. As previously mentioned, aluminum pipe railing is inappropriate within Historic Conservation District; appropriate painted iron railings should be profiled with lamb tongue returns at top and bottom. Depicted railing at intermediate landing on West Elevation on Drawing Sheet SP-4 does not follow risers of second set of steps leading up into rectory, which is problematic. On same West Elevation on Drawing Sheet SP-4, window at second set of steps leading up into rectory is not depicted when comparing floor plan drawing on Drawing Sheet SP-1; Applicant should clarify intentions with that window ... which is currently only visible inside enclosed porch but will be revealed upon completion of proposed work.

Discussion: Andrew Gehringer, Joseph McCarthy and Joseph Sedler represented proposal to modify stone retaining wall along East Fourth Street, restore side entrance to rectory, repair stone wall between church and rectory and install new entrance into rectory basement.

Applicant recalled prior HCC concerns about re-building stone retaining walls but still proposes to reduce overall height to be consistent with other properties along West Fourth Street, which are on average 30-inches above adjacent public right-of-way (sidewalk); continued that restoration of side entrance into rectory involves removal of non-historic exterior wall enclosure to re-establish entrance directly from outside. Mr. Lader requested clarification about various proposed modifications depicted on Elevation 2 on Drawing Sheet SP-4. Applicant confirmed at center lower right is depiction of new basement entrance that is currently exposed concrete block walls; exterior wall surfaces will receive stucco parging and associated shed roof will have standing-seam metal cladding. Applicant continued that, at left of new basement entrance, is existing side entrance leading up into main entry level; current proposal is to remove non-historic framing and cladding to reveal original open porch beneath. Mr. Lader noted that Section A on Drawing Sheet SP-4 is through new basement entrance and not through existing upper porch. Mr. Chambers inquired if Applicant conducted exploratory demolition at porch enclosure to determine what (if any) original historical building fabric remains. Applicant noted that existing framed “surround” at porch is failing due to poor construction directly on top of existing concrete landing and existing steps are also failing, so original details “are beginning to reveal themselves”. Mr. Chamber inquired about depicted structural post depicted on porch. Applicant responded that post will be new; however, there is need to explore how existing porch roof is framed to determine if/how it should be supported by potential post. Mr. Chambers continued by inquiring if Applicant intends to remove any details from existing porch roof system; Applicant confirmed intent to retain existing historical details, including decorative brickwork adjacent to entrance door. Mr. Evans inquired about potential early photographic record of original side entrance; Applicant confirmed no historical photographs of side porch were located.

Mr. Lader recalled Applicant’s prior justification for lowering height of existing stone retaining walls as effort to save money; however, associated adjustments to front steps, handrails and sidewalk leading from steps up to rectory will all cost money. Applicant admitted potential need to modify top step(s) and associated handrails while existing concrete walkway leading from steps to rectory porch will be replaced. Mr. Evans inquired if Applicant also envisions improving ADA compliance with proposed renovations. Applicant noted intent to apply for exceptions (variances) to current building codes requiring ADA-compliance due to historical nature of existing structures. Mr. Lader suggested new basement access into rectory might offer ADA compliance. Applicant noted that basement access is limited to storage, with no ability to navigate up into upper floor levels; continued that existing ramp at rear of property “offers somewhat ADA accessibility”.

Mr. Lader referred to Elevation 2 on Drawing Sheet SP-4 and requested clarifications about proposed materials. Applicant explained that replacement stairs are cast-in-place concrete, exposed walls of entrance steps as well as new basement entry walls are stucco parging over concrete block walls and new basement entrance roof is standing-seam metal. Mr. Lader noted crosshatch depicted in Section A on Drawing Sheet SP-4; Applicant clarified that is inside face of new concrete block walls and not visible from exterior.

Mr. Lader inquired about proposed handrail depicted at new side entrance; Applicant envisioned pipe railing for all new railings to differentiate from existing decorative railings and also as more affordable option but is amendable to painted decorative iron rails with profiled railings that terminate in lamb tongue returns at tops and bottoms. Mr. Chambers inquired about potential for existing handrail at side porch enclosure; Applicant confirmed intent to retain all existing railings. Ms. Strasser noted that existing handrail is barely visible on provided supplemental photos and suggested this detail could be replicated for all new handrails. Mr. Chambers agreed, noting that existing should be retained while replacements elsewhere should be similar in material, style, scale, etc. Mr. Lader noted that new handrail at side elevation should not be installed directly into existing building; Applicant recalled similar approach on west elevation of existing church structure and agreed to follow that approach. Mr. Evans inquired about exposed concrete block surfaces at retaining walls for new entrance into basement; Applicant confirmed those walls will receive stucco parging.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Chambers and seconded by Mr. Evans 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 stone retaining wall along East Fourth Street, restore the side entrance to the rectory, repair the wall between the church and rectory and install an entrance into the rectory basement was presented by Andrew Gehringer, Joseph McCarthy and Joseph Sedler.
2. Appropriate details for various modifications include:
 - a. height of stone retaining wall at front (north) of rectory property can be reduced during needed renovations to minimum 30-inches above adjacent public right-of-way (sidewalk)
 - b. new entrance into rectory basement includes stucco parging applied to exterior concrete block walls and standing-seam metal shed roof
 - c. existing (non-historic) enclosure at side porch leading into rectory will be carefully removed, with historical building materials repaired in-kind, as needed; any resulting changes to roof and/or support systems require subsequent HCC assessment

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #2

Property Location: 308 East Third Street

Property Owner: Gina Masotto

Applicant: Jeff Hopkins

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is the eastern half of a mixed-use “twin” or “double”. It is a three-bay, two and one-half story, painted brick masonry commercial and residential building with a shared steeply pitched cross gable, 1-over-1 double-hung windows with shutters, brick segmental arches over the upper-level windows and a first-floor storefront. The storefront has a projecting and bracketed cornice, with a large display window and divided-lite transom. The rear of the property has a series of subsequent additions dating from the early through mid- 20th century. The main building is Victorian Gothic Revival in style and dates from ca. 1880.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to replace existing asphalt shingles with GAF Timberline HDZ asphalt shingles in “pewter” color.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior’s Standard (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.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: Applicant proposes to replace existing roof sheathing with GAF Timberline High-Definition Zone (HDZ) asphalt shingles in “pewter” color. Current roof landscape is inconsistent in material (with original slate shingles replaced over time with various asphalt shingle products) and also failing at various locations, so proposal to replace all roof sheathing with uniform material is appropriate in concept. During removal of existing roofing, any damaged wood should be replaced in-kind, with new ice and water shield installed in all valleys and gutter edges and new underlayment installed over decking at remaining areas. Relevant design guidelines indicate that slate shingles are appropriate for pitched roofs within Historic Conservation District; however, HCC has traditionally considered GAF Slateline asphalt shingles in “Antique Gray” as appropriate alternative when original slate shingles were previously replaced or in such poor condition they cannot be salvaged and repaired. Proposed HDZ asphalt shingles results in different aesthetic than GAF Slateline asphalt shingles, so discussion is warranted ... preferably with associated written specifications and product samples to inspect and compare ... before appropriateness can be determined.

Accompanying work proposal includes description of new aluminum drip edge installed around perimeter of roof landscape, which is appropriate ... pending confirmation that it will be painted to match adjacent finishes. Proposal references integrated ridge vent system for continuous airflow to ensure longevity of replacement sheathing, which is also appropriate. Proposal includes reference as well to “aluminum flashings and counter-flashings at all vertical wall areas and chimney where necessary and applicable”. Relevant design guidelines note that appropriate flashings should be copper, so proposed aluminum flashing is inappropriate; same guidelines note all valleys should be open (not woven closed with shingles) and lined with copper, so clarification is warranted to confirm these details are acceptable to Applicant.

Accompanying proposal does not reference salvaging or replacing gutters and downspouts while project narrative under Section 4 of COA Application notes “gutter removal and replacement on front only”, so clarification is warranted. If existing gutters and downspouts are intended for replacement, Applicant should be aware that appropriate gutters within Historic Conservation District are smooth, half-round, metal gutters while appropriate downspouts are smooth, round, metal downspouts.

Discussion: Chuck Hawley represented proposal to replace existing asphalt shingles with GAF Timberline HDZ asphalt shingles in “pewter” color. Applicant justified proposal for asphalt shingles that differ from typical GAF Slateline asphalt shingles based on desire to match roof cladding at adjacent twin structure; continued that existing roof shingles are quickly failing, so need to replace is dire. Mr. Lader inquired about intentions with gutters and downspouts; Applicant responded with intent to install new half-round metal gutters and new round downspouts in black color. Mr. Chambers noted that proposed GAF Timberline HDZ asphalt shingles replicate look of wood shake roofs while HCC prefers GAF Slateline asphalt shingles that replicate look of traditional slate roofs. Applicant noted that other nearby structures also have so-called architectural asphalt shingles as roof cladding. Mr. Chambers explained those roofs were probably installed prior to formation of HCC and received no similar assessment. Mr. Chambers inquired with Historic Officer about history of wood shake roofs within Historic Conservation District. Mr. Long explained wood shake roofs within South Bethlehem were typically limited to sheds, garages and other ancillary structures because slate for roof cladding for larger structures was quite common during District’s period of significant development (ca. 1885-1950). Mr. Lader inquired about Applicant’s willingness to install appropriate copper flashings and open valleys rather than proposed inappropriate aluminum flashing and closed valleys. Applicant indicated willingness to use copper flashings but noted existing valleys are woven closed, so preference is to repeat that detail on new roof landscape. Mr. Lader explained proposed product is new to HCC, so material samples and written specifications would be helpful to assist with assessment before potentially allowing exception to typical recommendation. Mr. Evans inquired about cost difference between proposed HDZ asphalt shingles in comparison to HCC’s preferred GAF Slateline asphalt shingles; Applicant

responded that GAF Slateline shingles are approximately 40-50% more expensive when combining material and installation costs. Applicant requested access to previous COAs in support of replacing asphalt shingles with GAF Slateline asphalt shingles. Mr. Long encouraged Applicant to submit request via City's Planning Department so they can access relevant database to provide requested information.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Lader and seconded by Mr. Evans adopted the proposal that City Council DENY a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as presented and as described herein:

1. The proposal to replace existing asphalt shingles with GAF Timberline HDZ asphalt shingles in "pewter" color was presented by Chuck Hawley.
2. The motion to DENY a recommendation to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work was approved 3:1, with Mr. Evans, Mr. Lader and Ms. Strasser voting in support of the motion and Mr. Chambers voting against the motion; therefore, the proposal to secure approval to replace existing roofing was DENIED based upon its failure to comply with Bethlehem Ordinance Article 1714.03 Purposes of the Historic Conservation District as well as Secretary of the Interior's Standard 9 noting "exterior alterations ... will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment." HCC members voting in support of denying a recommendation to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal noted that GAF Slateline asphalt shingle roofing in "Antique Gray" is considered an appropriate alternative to slate roofs and open valleys flashed with copper are appropriate roof details.

Agenda Item #3

Property Location: 115 West Fourth Street

Property Owner: GKY Development

Applicant: GKY Development

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a detached, single-story brick masonry commercial building with a low-sloping roof. The central recessed front entrance is flanked on either side with bow-window display windows, each with twelve fixed lites. A pent roof above the door and display windows extends over the entire width of the structure and is sheathed with cedar shakes while the upper parapet has a simple, tall metal coping. According to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of South Bethlehem, this building was constructed ca. 1945 and was originally divided down the middle, with a "Print Shop" on one side and a "Photo Shop" on the other. That means it could potentially be considered contributing to the Historic Conservation District because it was constructed during the District's period of historical significance (ca. 1895-1950). However, the loss of original defining architectural details and subsequent cladding of the front façade with tan brick during the mid- to late 20th century prevents assigning it a specific style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes rehabilitation of the front façade, including removal of the bow windows and replacing them with aluminum folding doors, demolition of the pent roof, installing a man door and replacing the existing front brick façade with white brick or aluminum siding. The Applicant also proposes to install gooseneck light fixtures and a cabinet sign.

Guideline Citations:

- **Bethlehem Ordinance 1714.03 Purposes of Historic Conservation District** -- It is the purpose and intent of the City of Bethlehem to promote, protect, enhance, and preserve historic resources and traditional community character for the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation, protection and regulation of buildings and areas of historic interest or importance within the City.
- **Historic Conservation Commission** -- relevant Design Guidelines for new construction, specific Design Guidelines for storefronts and relevant Design Guidelines for signage

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: Applicant appeared before HCC on July 20, 2026, requesting permission to demolish existing pent roof across entire width of front façade before completing various rehabilitation efforts. Following Historic Officer's assessment that such roofs are not typical within Historic Conservation District, HCC unanimously adopted motion in support of removing pent roof so Applicant could investigate condition and potential details of original brick façade beneath. Recent walk-by inspection confirmed that inappropriate pent roof was removed, revealing original red brick façade ... with large reveals serving as sign bands over each bow window and framed with soldier course bricks. However, Applicant's proposals for façade renovations do not respond to that discovery; rather, there is little change from previous proposal of two potential options for cladding front façade: "white steel siding" and "white brick". No written specifications for proposed cladding materials are provided; product samples would be helpful during discussion with HCC before appropriateness can be determined. Detail 4 on Drawing Sheet A-1 includes one notation that states "paint existing brick veneer in white" while another notation states "remove existing brick veneer down to existing floor line, install new white painted brick veneer system", so clarification is warranted to understand Applicant's preferred approach. Detail 5 on Drawing Sheet A-1 depicts second option and includes notation "remove existing brick veneer down to existing floor line and install new ... steel ship-lap siding in white". Applicant should be aware that relevant Design Guidelines identify materials such as brick and stucco appropriate for façades; however, same guidelines state "HCC will not recommend approval of ... vinyl or metal siding" as appropriate façade cladding. Applicant should also be aware that HCC traditionally recommends avoiding bright colors. If white is preferred color for proposed brick façade, appropriate color hues are warm white or ivory while also noting that traditional brick colors within Historic Conservation District are red, brown and tan. Applicant should present written specifications and material samples of proposed brick units (fabricator, series, unit sizes, etc.) along with intended mortar color for consideration during HCC subsequent meeting.

Applicant also proposes to remove inappropriate bow windows and replace with "black insulated aluminum frame bi-fold door system". Referring to Details 4 and 5 on Drawing Sheet A-1, proposed sets of folding doors have four bays each with full glazing. Applicant should be aware that HCC recently considered similar proposals for segmental folding doors as inappropriate elsewhere within Historic Conservation District. Similarly, First Floor Plan detail drawing 3 on Drawing Sheet A-1 depicts single-leaf door within recessed entranceway and accompanying façade drawings indicate single-leaf door with full glazing. Written specifications of proposed doors are not provided, so appropriateness cannot be determined. Applicant should note that appropriate glazing for all storefront doors should be center-set (not flush with front façade) and also be aware that mirrored, tinted or reflective glass is inappropriate. According to relevant design guidelines, glazed storefront assemblies within Historic Conservation District typically include transoms above, so discussion is warranted if Applicant should integrate that typical detail, as well. Façade drawings also depict coping at upper roof parapet but make no mention of proposed material, color or dimensions, so clarifications are warranted.

Aside from label "signage" and dimensions of 4'-0" tall x 17'-0" wide, no further details of proposed sign band are provided; discussion is warranted before appropriateness can be determined. Applicant might be inspired by soldier course detail around existing sign band niches and use similar detail with proposed sign band on brick façade option. Applicant should be aware that box signage with internal illumination is considered inappropriate within Historic Conservation District. Gooseneck lamps are considered appropriate as supplemental lighting; however, no written specifications for four depicted lamps are provided. Same is true for two proposed downlights, so appropriateness cannot be determined. Applicant should be aware that relevant design guidelines encourage "warm" exterior illumination within Historic Conservation District, so HCC interprets "warm" for LED lighting as maximum 3000-Kelvin color temperature. Applicant should also confirm that no raceways, junction boxes or conduits associated with proposed lighting are visible on building façade.

Rear façade can be seen from public right-of-way, so any proposed renovations to that façade must also be assessed by HCC; however, Applicant previously indicated there are no current intentions to rehabilitate rear façade.

Discussion: John Lee represented proposal to rehabilitate front façade, including removal of bow windows and replacing with aluminum folding doors, demolition of pent roof, installing man door and replacing existing front brick façade with white brick or aluminum siding as well as installing gooseneck light fixtures and cabinet sign. Applicant called attention to revised (updated) drawings submitted to City’s Planning Office on Wednesday, August 12 and intended for current review by HCC. Mr. Long explained his assessment is based on items submitted in satisfaction of July 27 deadline for tonight’s meeting; continued that City’s calendar for and link with various submittals for tonight’s meeting do not include Applicant’s updated drawings. Mr. Lader inquired if HCC can continue meeting by discussing updated drawings; Mr. Long responded that Mr. Lader, as HCC chair, has authority to entertain discussion with Applicant about revised drawings. In response, Applicant summarized recent selective demolition (removal of pent roof across entire width of front façade) and resulting decisions now reflected in revised drawings.

Mr. Lader inquired about horizontal string of dimensions across upper front façade near top of Detail 4 Front Elevation on Drawing Sheet A-1 (dated August 7, 2026). Applicant confirmed they are existing dimensions of various details of original façade revealed during recent demolition of pent roof; continued that existing white metal coping at front parapet is 12-inches tall, while new proposed coping “will be shorter”. Mr. Lader inquired about condition of existing thin-brick veneer. Applicant confirmed existing masonry is full brick units and not veneer; continued that existing tan bricks will remain, so desire is to paint all brick masonry types bright white for overall uniform appearance while HCC’s prior comments about preference for warm white or ivory as more appropriate hue is not being considered.

Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to align openings for proposed folding doors with inner dimensions of sign band panels above. Applicant was amendable to that suggestion for both sets of new folding doors but noted that width of existing central recessed entrance cannot be revised. Mr. Lader continued by inquiring if height of proposed folding doors could be raised one brick course, so they align with soldier coursing of sign bands above. Applicant responded that upper-most brick course represents needed header for new openings. Mr. Chambers suggested that Applicant could integrate shelf angle instead. Mr. Chambers continued by inquiring about condition of bricks revealed beneath recessed panels of original sign bands. Applicant responded that condition of original bricks is “fairly good, with no significant deterioration but need for spot re-pointing”. Mr. Chambers noted that drawings indicate “new EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finish System) stucco system” over original recessed brick panels; continued by explaining that EIFS is considered inappropriate within Historic Conservation District based on relevant design guidelines. Applicant was amendable to traditional hard-coat stucco system as alternative to proposed EIFS system.

Mr. Lader inquired about proposed exterior lighting. Applicant explained that previous proposal for gooseneck lighting was abandoned while simple wall sconces on either side of new folding doors is now preferred; agreed to return to HCC for subsequent review of proposed lighting, with written specifications and material samples provided in advance. Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to continue developing current vision, including aligning door openings, more details about proposed wall sconces and centering proposed signage within revealed sign band panels. Mr. Evans also noted need for details of proposed replacement coping. Mr. Chambers explained HCC traditionally does not support proposals to paint brick masonry façades; however, existing building does not contribute to Historic Conservation District and Applicant’s desire to paint over various brick types for resulting uniform appearance is understandable. Mr. Evans noted that painted brick “can always be undone”. Mr. Chambers concluded that subsequent submittal for HCC review should also include language about proposal to paint exterior façade along with product information about exterior-quality paint product.

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 rehabilitate the front façade was presented by John Lee.
2. Appropriate details include:
 - a. revealed recessed sign band panels receive traditional hard stucco finish (no EIFS)
 - b. both sets of new folding doors align with recessed sign band panels above

Note: Applicant agreed to submit subsequent COA Application along with supplemental details (including written specifications and material samples, as needed) for future review of proposed folding door system, new entrance door, exterior lighting, parapet coping, exterior masonry paint and signage.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #4

Property Location: 127 East Fourth Street

Property Owner: Rikin Patel

Applicant: Abraham Soloum

Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features: This structure is a four-story, detached, stone and brick masonry institutional building with a flat roof. Defining architectural features include a raised, stepped and arched front parapet with a triple-arched entry portal and banks of double-hung windows. The building dates from 1925 and is Italianate Revival in style.

Proposed Alterations: The Applicant proposes to remove infill windows due to conflict with newly-installed floor plate and install new vinyl picture windows with faux divided lites.

Guideline Citations:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard (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 Standard (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 Standard (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.

Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations: According to meeting agenda, Applicant proposes to remove infill windows due to conflict with newly-installed floor plate and install new vinyl picture windows with faux divided lites. Within project description (Section 4. near bottom of COA Application), Applicant notes that proposed work includes "removing existing exterior windows and installing new windows".

This project was previously assessed during series of HCC meetings in late 2021 and early 2022. Among various issues discussed with Applicant at that time was proposed replacement of existing windows on all four façades. Because existing windows are not original and Applicant wanted to improve energy efficiency, HCC incorporated following language into motion that was ultimately approved by Bethlehem City Council on February 15, 2022:

- "a. existing window openings to receive new aluminum window replacements:
 - i. existing sash configurations (single-hungs, double-hungs, triple-hungs) to be retained but with divided lites (typically 6 lites per sash) to replicate original character-defining details; lites are true divided lites or simulated divided lites (i.e. muntins applied to exterior glass surface, not sandwiched between glazing)
 - ii. existing mullions between gangs of windows to be retained; window replacements must be custom sized to fit existing historical openings
 - iii. new interior wall systems cannot interrupt individual window sash

- iv. reflective, tinted and/or colored glazing is inappropriate

In addition, closed historical window openings are to be re-opened, with missing details (sills, lintels, mullions, etc.) to match existing; historical opening at entry level on side (west) façade (near southwest corner) to remain closed while existing inappropriate infill to be replaced so brick units and mortar joints match historical building fabric.”

Proposed window styles were based on historical photographs and architectural drawings that confirmed original window configurations. At that time, previous Applicant did not present proposal for large, double-height window openings at rear (north) façade as well as at both side (east and west) façades because they were still closed over; however, Applicant agreed to investigate potential for existence of original character-defining mullions between gangs of windows before returning to HCC with modified design approach for those windows for subsequent assessment. Previous Applicant also agreed to submit relevant product information (cut sheets, specifications, etc.) and material samples of all proposed windows (and doors) via City of Bethlehem for final review by Chief Building Inspector, Historic Officer and HCC Chair prior to fabrication and installation. No such product information or samples of proposed windows and doors were presented, so no final review was ever conducted.

Current COA Application identifies different Applicant while supporting documentation is lacking in basic information needed for HCC assessment of proposed rehabilitation efforts. Only one elevation drawing on supplemental drawing sheet A-12 (labeled “right side elevation”) is provided. Clarification is warranted to determine if lack of other elevation drawings implies windows on remaining façades are not being proposed for replacement. Windows that are depicted on provided drawing do not adhere to conditions of previous COA specific to divided lites, etc. Similarly, large double-height window openings do not indicate attempt by Applicant to investigate existence of original character-defining mullions between gangs of windows while proposed replacements are inappropriate for various reasons. Two supplemental drawings depict cross-sections of what is presumed to be proposed replacement windows; however, those drawings are not accompanied by any written specifications, so full understanding of proposed product is not possible. Company logo “Kolbe” at top left of drawings offers indication of potential product; however, cross-section drawings imply all-polymer (i.e. vinyl) replacement windows, which are identified in relevant Design Guidelines as inappropriate within Historic Conservation District. Unless current Applicant can clarify otherwise, this proposal is inappropriate and original details of COA dated February 15, 2022, still stand, as recommended by HCC and approved by City Council. Should HCC determine proposed replacement windows as appropriate during discussion with Applicant, inappropriate divided lites must be addressed: vertical dimension of each lite should be greater than horizontal dimension of each lite, noting that current lites are inappropriately greater in horizontal dimension than in vertical dimension.

Similarly, other critical information within original COA does not seem to have been communicated to new Applicant so concerns are not limited to replacement windows. Original COA also included additional details agreed upon by former Applicant, including:

- proposal includes conversion of former Holy Infancy School into mixed-use building, with commercial tenant and 24 residential units
- Applicant agreed to modify design of new ADA-compliant exterior ramp with new entrance at side (west) façade that avoids interruption of historical window configuration before returning to HCC with modified design approach for subsequent assessment
- existing plain, modern, flush entrance doors to be replaced with commercial aluminum entrance doors with lower panels and upper divided lites to match character-defining original doors; Applicant agreed to submit relevant product information (cut sheets, specifications, etc.) and material samples of all proposed doors via City of Bethlehem for final review by the Chief Building Inspector, the Historic Officer and the HCC Chair prior to fabrication and installation
- project scope to include cleaning of exterior masonry surfaces as well as careful removal of abandoned fasteners, conduits, hanging brackets for former air-conditioning units, etc. at all façades and patch resulting voids to match existing materials, as needed; **note:** Applicant is encouraged to reference relevant Preservation Briefs issued by National Park Service for appropriately cleaning historical masonry surfaces
- existing PVC piping downspout segments to be replaced with appropriate copper downspouts to match existing, as needed

- Applicant encouraged to reconsider existing scenario at northwest corner (utilitarian metal stairs leading to concrete steps that terminate in metal fence with padlocked gate) to improve access to and visual connection with nearby public Greenway
- Exterior light fixtures as well as signage necessitate subsequent HCC reviews

If current proposal for inappropriate replacement windows is any indication, it can only be assumed that Applicant is unaware of these additional important details, as well. Any revisions to above details must be incorporated into new motion and submitted to City Council for subsequent review and approval.

Discussion: Abraham Saloum and Tarek Shehab represented proposal to remove infill windows due to conflict with newly-installed floor plate and install new vinyl picture windows with faux divided lites. Applicant clarified that new owner is Rikin Patel; also offered to help clarify various issues of confusion. Applicant recalled recent walkthroughs of project site with City officials who explained that current project scope only requires HCC assessment of replacement windows within large openings on rear and both side façades; otherwise, various rehabilitation efforts are limited to interior changes and not under HCC purview. Applicant continued that current project reflects increase from 24 to 37 residential units resulting from newly-inserted floor plate within former gymnasium. That revision resulted in need for new windows in former double-height window locations. Mr. Lader explained HCC's appreciation of reviewing all architectural drawings (floorplans, elevations, sections, etc.) for comparing previous development proposal and clarifying subsequent revisions. Applicant recalled conversation with City representative who identified these two drawing sheets (A-9 Door Frame details and A-12 Right Side Elevation) as sufficient for HCC review of current proposal. Mr. Evans emphasized significance of this specific project within Historic Conservation District and recalled various covenants with property deed during previous sales transaction that restricts rehabilitated exterior appearance to historical period when structure served as high school ... noting this as justification for HCC's careful assessment of all window replacement proposals. Mr. Lader recalled spending considerable time with previous Owner to discuss overall project scope leading to formulation of thoughtful resolution with appropriate details for exterior rehabilitation; continued that HCC assumes current owner would follow through with previous requirements.

Mr. Lader inquired about status of permitting process; Applicant confirmed building permits were secured to allow for ongoing interior work. Mr. Lader continued that various drawings were apparently approved in support of ongoing permits and inquired about status of similar exterior drawings; Applicant confirmed that all approvals were secured by submitting complete set of engineering drawings (including floor plans, exterior elevations and various details) to City's planning office. Ms. Strasser inquired if new owner was provided with previous Certificate of Appropriateness. Applicant could not recall ever seeing previous COA during property sale or thereafter during various reviews with City representatives. Ms. Strasser continued by inquiring about status of proposed floor plate; Applicant responded that new floor plate has already been installed and called attention to supplemental photographs documenting that process and need for replacement windows in resulting locations. Mr. Lader inquired about intentions with current infill siding within previous large-scale window locations and questioned why relevant City staff did not communicate conditions of previous COA to new owner.

Mr. Lader suggested limiting current discussion to issue of proposed replacement windows, with need to clarify remaining concerns during internal meeting with relevant City staff. Mr. Chambers countered that Applicant should be encouraged to explore removal of existing siding within large-scale window openings to discern potential for original historical details, as described within previous COA. Mr. Chambers continued that new Applicant should have been in possession of not only resulting COA but also minutes of all previous HCC meetings when this project was discussed ... continuing that "whoever bought this building should have been provided those details by the Seller". Mr. Evans noted if HCC must consider each line item within active COA, current Application is insufficient and should be denied. Mr. Long suggested that HCC could table any motion rather than deny if all parties (including Applicant) are mutually in agreement, allowing Applicant longer timeframe to address various concerns. Mr. Lader encouraged Applicant to explore various window proportions that relate to original (historical) window openings. Ms. Strasser supported that suggestion, noting that appropriate individual lites should be more vertical than horizontal. Mr. Lader inquired if proposed windows are fixed sash or operable; Applicant responded that current proposal is for fixed sash. Mr. Lader explained that subsequent COA Applications must include all four elevations (existing and proposed) along with all floor plans and relevant building section drawings; continued by noting that HCC does not consider vinyl windows appropriate within Historic Conservation

District, so appropriate alternatives must be considered with revised application as well. Mr. Chambers encouraged internal meeting with City's planning department to review details of previous COA with Applicant that includes Mr. Simonson, Mr. Lader, Mr. Long and others, as needed.

Public Commentary: none

Motion: The Commission upon motion by Mr. Chambers and seconded by Ms. Strasser unanimously adopted the proposal to table any decision about the appropriateness of the proposal to remove infill windows due to conflict with newly-installed floor plate and install new vinyl picture windows with faux divided lites until the November HCC meeting (or before), pending the Applicant's ability to meet with the City's Chief Building Inspector, the HCC Chair and the Historic Officer (along with other relevant City planning staff, as needed) with the purpose of reviewing terms and conditions of the previous Certificate of Appropriateness for this project location. When the Applicant returns to HCC, all proposed revisions to various terms and conditions of the previous Certificate of Appropriateness must be addressed.

General Business:

Minutes from HCC meeting on July 20, 2026, were approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

Mr. Evans noted that 213 West Fourth Street (Dunkin' Donuts) recently completed exterior modifications (painting of façade and various new signage, including blinking window signs) without HCC assessment; continued that damaged trash corrals were never repaired or replaced.

Mr. Evans noted that new commercial tenant at 306 Brodhead Avenue (Pica Pollo Grandma Fried Chicken) re-installed inappropriate flashing signage within storefront window.

There was no further business; meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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