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## M I N U T E S

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<b>BOARD:</b>	HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION, CITY OF BETHLEHEM
<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	SETH CORNISH, CRAIG EVANS (VICE CHAIR), ROGER HUDAK, MICHAEL SIMONSON, DESIREE STRASSER
<b>MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>	GARY LADER (CHAIR), KENNETH LOUSH, CHARLES PATRICK
<b>STAFF PRESENT:</b>	DARLENE HELLER, JEFFREY LONG
<b>PRESS PRESENT:</b>	NONE
<b>VISITORS PRESENT:</b>	DEVRON EPPS, DIANE LABELLE
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	MARCH 21, 2022

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The regular meeting of the Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) was held on March 21, 2022, at the City of Bethlehem Rotunda, Bethlehem City Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA. HCC Vice Chair Craig Evans called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #1**

**Property Location:** 331 Broadway

**Property Owner:** Tim Gaugler

**Applicant:** Devron Epps

**Building Description, Period, Style, and Defining Features:** This structure is the semi-detached end unit in a series of similar 2 1/2 -story, brick masonry row houses constructed in ca. 1885. The street level façade currently has a brick veneer in light brown color with a half-height storefront shop window and recessed storefront entrance. A sign box above the brick veneer extends across the length of the lower façade. The original brick masonry of the building's remaining façades was treated with a stucco veneer and given an etched pattern (often referred to as "Brickote") in imitation yellow brick sometime during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Two double-hung windows are evenly spaced along the upper-level façade while the dormer with pair of slender double-hung windows is not centered along the Mansard roof. Various façade modifications prevent assignment of a specific architectural style to the structure; however, similar neighboring buildings can be described as simplified Classical Revival style with Italianate influences.

**Proposed Alterations:** The Applicant proposes to remove the aluminum plate on the existing sign box and replace the former 144-inch x 24-inch sign face with a new one of the same size.

### **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.

**Evaluation, Effect on Historic Conservation District, Recommendations:** COA Application indicates intent to remove blank panel within existing aluminum sign box and replace with new vinyl sign printed onto two-piece, 3mm thick composite backer. New sign measures 24-inches tall x 144-inches wide and includes black background with stylized circle in left portion of sign in bright white color. Within circle are words

“Source Code” followed on next line by word “Fashions” in contemporary sans serif lettering ... all in bright white color. Above business name are stylized letters “SC” in cursive all upper-case lettering in medium red color. Beneath business name is text “Urban Style Made Simple” in smaller contemporary sans serif lettering in medium red color. Circle logo corresponds with existing logo on blade sign assessed during HCC meeting on Jan. 18, 2019. At right of circle logo, words “Source Code” repeat in much larger, sans serif lettering in bright white color, with initial upper-case letters in medium red color, followed by word “Fashions” on next line in smaller, sans serif lettering in bright white color.

Relevant signage design guidelines note HCC “encourages removal of pre-manufactured, stock, extruded aluminum sign boxes”. During previous HCC assessment of blade sign on Jan. 18, 2019, Applicant confirmed aluminum sign box was no longer functional, so resulting COA included following stipulation: “Existing sign box no longer illuminates so front panel will receive blank replacement; Applicant has option of replacing sign box at later date with flat sign that would require subsequent HCC review/approval.” Thus, proposal to replace blank with new sign is inappropriate because existing sign box would remain.

Appropriate alternatives include:

- removal of existing sign box and repair resulting damage to façade before installing new signage on rigid backer in similar location ... either centered beneath upper-level windows or centered above storefront window
- retain existing sign box with current blank front and install new signage on rigid backer beneath sign box but centered above storefront window
- retain existing sign box with current blank front and install new signage on inside surface of storefront window

Any alternative necessitates subsequent submittal of scale drawing of front façade (as required on COA Application form) rather than current hand sketch so that actual proportions of new signage in relation to existing architectural features are properly depicted.

Should HCC determine new signage is appropriate as currently proposed, Applicant should consider revising bright white color of various design elements to ivory or warm white to comply with more period-appropriate signage within Historic Conservation District. It should be noted that HCC typically encourages off-set pinstripe in complementary color around sign perimeter for appropriate signage, so circle logo and wording must be reduced in size to accommodate pinstripe detail. Similarly, HCC typically encourages use of serif lettering, unless wording is integral to corporate logo design.

**Discussion:** Devron Epps represented proposal to remove aluminum plate on existing sign box and replace former 24-inch x 144-inch sign face with new one of same size. Mr. Cornish inquired if bright white color of proposed lettering and various details can be changed to more appropriate warm white or ivory; Applicant noted proposed bright white color matches white of existing blade sign. Applicant continued that HCC previously approved bright white color for details of blade sign; Mr. Long noted previous COA requested Applicant to revise proposed bright white details of blade sign to warm white or ivory prior to fabrication and installation. Applicant explained existing sign box is several decades old, so efforts to remove it and then to repair exposed façade are cost prohibitive; continued by confirming that proposed signage is already fabricated and paid for. Mr. Evans inquired if new sign fills entire front panel ... noting potential to include typical off-set pin-stripe detail “after the fact” while Ms. Strasser inquired if existing sign box has exposed metal-flange surround at front of sign that might serve as requested border. **note:** Applicant received permission to call sign fabricator and then placed him on speaker phone. Sign fabricator clarified that existing front flanges are irregular and not plumb, so requested off-set pin-stripe detail would emphasize those irregularities even more. Mr. Cornish suggested wide border around entire sign perimeter as compromise solution; sign fabricator expressed preference for 3-inch-wide border around entire sign and confirmed ability to include new detail with no additional cost to Applicant. Mr. Cornish concluded that border detail should match bright white color of remaining sign rather than introducing new color into overall design scheme but also encouraged Applicant to submit COA Applications for HCC assessments of future signage proposals prior to purchase and fabrication of new signs.

**Public Commentary:** none

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

1. Proposal to remove aluminum plate on existing sign box and replace former 144-inch x 24-inch sign face with new one of same size was presented by Devron Epps.
2. Appropriate new signage includes following details:
  - a. existing blank panel within aluminum sign box will be replaced with new vinyl sign printed onto two-piece, 3mm thick composite backer measuring 24-inches tall x 144-inches wide; existing sign box will not be internally illuminated
  - b. includes black background with stylized circle in left portion of sign in bright white color; within circle are words "Source Code" followed on next line by word "Fashions" in contemporary sans serif lettering ... all in bright white color; above business name are stylized letters "SC" in cursive all upper-case lettering in medium red color; beneath business name is text "Urban Style Made Simple" in smaller contemporary sans serif lettering in medium red color. **note:** circle logo corresponds with existing logo on blade sign assessed during HCC meeting on Jan. 18, 2019
  - c. at right of circle logo, words "Source Code" repeat in much larger, sans serif lettering in bright white color, with initial upper-case letters in medium red color, followed by word "Fashions" on next line in smaller, sans serif lettering in bright white color
  - d. 3-inch-wide border around entire sign perimeter is bright white color
3. Applicant may utilize bright white color for lettering and various details (rather than more appropriate warm white or ivory color) to match similar lettering and details on existing blade sign.
4. Applicant has option of replacing existing sign box at later date with flat sign that would require subsequent HCC review.

The motion for the proposed work was unanimously approved.

**Discussion Item:** Presentation of Southside's Tomorrow (successor to Southside Vision 2020) Master Plan Lighting Study by Dianne LaBelle -- see attached notes, as provided by presenter. Ms. LaBelle concluded presentation by explaining committee's desire to implement select details of overall study to try out certain lighting techniques and to attract interest in overall vision. Desired approach would include illumination of select structures mostly associated with Polk Street (some located within Historic Conservation District) to delineate "Theatre Row": Zoellner Arts Center, Touchstone Theatre, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, with longer-term goal of including SteelStacks campus and Banana Factory within overall lighting plan.

Mr. Long explained HCC reviews lighting fixtures attached to structures within Historic Conservation District (not free-standing street and sidewalk illumination) and summarized relevant design guidelines concerning exterior lighting:

- HCC encourages using small-scale, indirect, or hidden lights (such as gooseneck or wall-mounted lights) directed toward sign, awning, or building
- HCC encourages lights that are consistent with character of historic building and signage
- HCC encourages low-wattage bulbs directed towards sign, awning, or building to minimize potential glare to other properties, pedestrians, and vehicle operators; **note:** HCC currently interprets "low-wattage" for LED lighting as maximum 3500 Kelvin temperature
- HCC will not recommend for approval signs (with lighting) that move, flash or are intermittently illuminated
- HCC encourages individualized neon designs complimenting building's architecture and reflecting business identity ... but discourages stock neon signage

Mr. Evans expressed appreciation for presentation, noting HCC does not review free-standing streetlamps but is tasked with assessing lighting attached to structures within Historic Conservation District; continued that fixture types should be consistent with historic character of associated structures while no conduits,

raceways, or junction boxes for new fixtures should be visible on building exteriors. Ms. Strasser inquired if proposed “festoon lighting” for marquee façades would always illuminate; Ms. LaBelle explained marquee lighting would only illuminate when associated theater is operational. Mr. Long continued by inquiring if proposed marquee lighting would flash intermittently, resulting in “chasing” lights; Ms. LaBelle confirmed marquee lighting would indeed flash. Mr. Simonson requested clarification about proposed LED “neon” lighting that would move across façade of Charter Arts School; Ms. LaBelle explained proposed fixtures are static, so resulting lighting does not move ... although design of lighting implies movement. Mr. Cornish encouraged Ms. LaBelle and team to speak with representatives of National Museum of Industrial History about potential cooperation for similar lighting proposals; Mr. Hudak encouraged team to also speak with representatives of new development project with integrated parking garage at 600 block of East Third Street (between Pierce and Buchanan Streets). Mr. Evans concluded by noting certain lighting concepts contradict relevant design guidelines, so proposals require assessment by HCC in more detail and on individual basis when lighting team is prepared to officially submit COA Applications for review.

**General Business:** Mr. Evans noted mention of potential ‘Preservation Awards’ during previous HCC meeting; continued by recalling Mr. Lader’s suggestion of Brinker Lofts as possible recipient and also suggested Seven Sirens (façade renovations) as well as Couch Potato (signage). Mr. Cornish requested clarification about reason(s) for considering Seven Sirens as worthy for preservation award. Mr. Evans acknowledged long process of HCC reviews to establish appropriate design solution for Seven Sirens project but was ultimately completed with careful consideration and with specific details requested by HCC; continued by stressing importance of acknowledging Applicants who expend much effort resulting in historically appropriate design solutions.

Mr. Cornish inquired about typical number of awards given annually; Mr. Simonson agreed to contact Philip Roeder (former HCC chair) to inquire about quantities of previous awards. Mr. Evens recalled previous awards tended to be commercial clients and encouraged inclusion of residential projects as well, noting personal preference for 4-5 awards presented annually. Mr. Cornish suggested ‘The Nest’ as another successful and appropriate solution by independent Applicant rather than typical developer team.

Mr. Simonson agreed to review projects assessed by HCC over previous 3-4 years and create resulting list for ease of reference; agreed to provide list in advance of subsequent HCC meeting. Mr. Cornish requested list to include names of Applicants (including business names for commercial locations) along with associated street addresses to assist in recalling projects. Ms. Heller suggested that awards could relate to specific categories: adaptive reuse, historic preservation, new construction within historical context, etc.; continued with desire to have list of award recipients for presentation during May City Council meeting.

Minutes from HCC meeting on January 24, 2022, were unanimously approved by those attending that meeting, and with abstention by those not previously in attendance.

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

Respectfully submitted,



BY:

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