

New Hope Borough Planning Commission Workshop

Wednesday, May 12, 2020, 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The New Hope Borough Planning Commission May Workshop meeting was held virtually. Members in attendance included Jason Apuzzio (JA), Peter Meyer (PM), and Keith Voss (KV). Staff members included Tracy Tackett (TT), Zoning Officer and Matthew Walters (MW), Bucks County Planning Commission.

A. Call to Order at 7:00 PM

B. Public Comment

1. No comment at this time.

C. Discussion

1. KV asked the members if they were willing to start the meeting earlier to better accommodate the availability of another member of the PC. It was noted that the Borough would have to readvertise the meetings to accommodate an earlier start time. It was suggested that TT look into the expense of readvertising and check with the other member of the PC regarding whether 6:30 PM would work better.
2. It was suggested that if the public had comments they could offer it at this time. It was suggested that members of the public should provide their email addresses.
3. **Hybrid Zoning and Discussion-** MW explained that the discussion for the evening will be a blending of the agenda items because they are interrelated. MW presented language relating to a proposed draft Conservation Overlay District that incorporates standards from the design guidelines that could be applicable beyond the historic district. MW review the purpose section noting that this section is consistent with the existing design guidelines. It is anticipated that this overlay would regulate the following:
 - **Demolition of any building with a footprint greater than 500 square feet,**
 - **Any proposed addition larger than 200 square feet to an existing building,**
 - **Any new building**
 - **The size, height, and design of any new building**
 - **The location of any new building on a lot**

KV asked about the 500 square foot footprint standard. It was noted that a few dwellings in the Borough could have a footprint of less than 500 square feet. This would be applicable to small dwellings in addition to accessory structures. Question was raised about whether the size should be smaller. Suggested that the language about an addition should be reworded to be clear that it is applicable to additions of 200 square feet or more.

MW was asked to provide an overview of where this would be applicable. The applicable area was proposed to be the entire area of North Main Street, the majority of the historic district, but end at the southern end of the LC District. It was suggested that the boundary be extended

further south to include the homes along the Towpath. It was asked how this would work with the existing Historic District given that these properties are already subject to HARB review. It was explained that this overlay would have setback requirements that are not part of the design guidelines. There will be some additional building heights and setbacks that will be applicable. It was suggested the boundary be extended to the south to the mixed-use zoning district line.

The PC discussed whether the overlay should be extended further up Bridge Street to include Kiltie and possibly beyond. It was asked whether the purpose of this overlay is to relax setbacks to reduce variances? If so, should the proposed overlay be limited to those areas that are nonconforming. It was decided that the language of the overlay should continue to be reviewed and then the PC can come back to potential boundaries. It was suggested the purpose of the overlay needs to be clarified. If the intent is to address nonconformities, then the Kiltie Road area probably does not need to be included. It was clarified that in addition to addressing nonconformities, the goal is to incorporate standards for new development to ensure that the scale of the development is keeping with the existing character of the surrounding neighborhood. MW confirmed that the overlay is intended to address the scale and massing of new development.

MW continued to review the proposed language of the proposed overlay district and reviewed the proposed application process. As written, the zoning officer reviews and approves the proposal unless Borough Council review is required. MW reviewed the draft design guidelines. Discussion occurred regarding the detailed wording of the proposed language. Concern was expressed regarding some of the subjective language proposed for determination by the zoning officer. It was noted that the language relating to architectural style of new buildings should refer to the architectural style of nearby historic buildings. TT explained that language to be interpreted by the zoning officer cannot be subjective and the term 'shall' needs to be used rather than 'should.'

Discussion continued about the need for the language to be clear and specific. It was questioned how radius would be measured. It was mentioned that existing zoning language has a provision to allow new dwelling to have a similar front yard setback to existing houses within 100 feet on either side. It was asked whether it makes more sense to count a specific number of lots. It was noted that the distance could be used in combination with a minimum number of lots. MW will rework the proposal to reflect the comments and concerns of the PC members.

MW moved on to discuss building form standards. This would apply to new construction and additions. Proposal includes texture and pattern of exterior materials, porches, accessory buildings, fences/walls, and parking lots. Proposed language focuses on compatibility with existing. KV noted that he would like new development to also be compared to existing development across the street, not just on the same side of the street. Language relating to setbacks was discussed including an inclusion of 30 percent adjustment. More detail needs to be added. It was suggested that the members of the PC get comments relating to the current draft to MW and then MW will work on clarifying the language. **MW will forward the draft to the members following the meeting and then members will provide preliminary comments within two weeks.**

Height- MW reviewed language relating to building height and how it relates to new buildings. Draft language includes provisions that building height be within 15 percent of the average. KV

suggested that if using an averaging technique for height of housing then the height of old buildings demolished should be taken into account. Discussion continued regarding how this would affect the development proposed on North Main Street. MW stated he would conduct analysis of how these regulations would affect the Riverwalk development had they been in place. MW will provide the map and draft ordinance.

KV asked if consideration should still be given to creating new zoning districts that have area and bulk standards more in line with the existing development in various neighborhoods, so is the preference to have the overlay district discussed this evening. MW indicated that the overlay may be easier to develop, but either alternative could work. KV asked about how this would apply to properties that are on the edge between two districts. Would comparisons cross zoning districts. MW stated that the way it is written is that it would be applied to the area outside the district. Concern was expressed about the possible applicability of incompatible properties outside the district. It was suggested the PC look at existing buildings that are important to protect and see if these buildings could be used to clarify the applicability of the proposed standards.

D. New Business

E. Public Comment:

1. Stacey Endress- curious about the proposed standard of 500 square feet and how this would apply to existing structures. Curious if subdivision is part of this. Wondering if there is a way to stop subdivisions. TT explained that the zoning ordinance has minimum lot sizes, but that many existing lots are already nonconforming. This leads to an interesting challenge because part of this process is to reduce the nonconformities in the Borough, but this could involve reducing the minimum lot size in certain areas, which could lead to increased density.

KV expressed concern about how average is determined.

2. Alice Ludovici- lives across from Riverwalk. Glad to see the PC is working on this. Asked if these new standards would be applied to the Landing property. Concerned about the potential development on the Landing property and the potential removal of historic structures. Asked how she would find out if new design standards get adopted that impact her property. It was noted that a notice is published in the paper, but individual property notices would not be sent out.

F. Adjournment at 8:45 PM.