

New Hope Borough Planning Commission
Monday, July 18, 2022
Meeting Minutes

The New Hope Borough Planning Commission met on July 18, 2022 in the public meeting room. In attendance and voting were Vice Chairman Jason Apuzzio and members Peter Meyer, Lawrence Greenberg and Lou Bellafronte. Also in attendance were David Kimmerly of the Bucks County Planning Commission (BCPC), and Mary Stover, Interim Zoning Officer.

Call to Order: Mr. Apuzzio called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Public Comment: None.

Minutes: Monday, June 20, 2022 Meeting Minutes; Approval of the minutes was tabled to the next meeting.

Central Commercial:

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft ordinance revisions provided by Bucks County Planning Commission.

Mr. Apuzzio asked Mr. Kimmerly to review the changes made to the Central Commercial ordinance section.

Mr. Kimmerly noted that on page 2 of the document provided to the Planning Commission, definitions for “street-level story” and “main entrance” were added. It was noted that if the streets listed in the definition of “main entrance” were to include designations of East and West, then Bridge Street and Ferry Street should also be listed as having both and an East and West designation. Also, Stockton Street should be included.

Mr. Kimmerly noted that changes were made on page 4 to Section 275-23.C which defines a “mixed-use building”. Subsection C.1.a. lists the uses that are permitted by right within a mixed- use building and Subsection C.1.b. lists the uses that are permitted by right above the street-level story only. The Planning Commission discussed whether the section was clear as to what uses could be provided on various floors. It was determined that it was clear as written.

Subsection C.1.c. was discussed. It was discussed that a restaurant use could occupy more than one floor in a building. Therefore, the phrase “on a street-level story only” should be removed from the text.

Subsection C.3 on page 5 was discussed. This section offers a definition for “building footprint” and states that the building footprint of proposed residential space shall be above the street-level story of a mixed-use building and cannot exceed the building footprint of the non-residential space on the street-level story. Mr. Meyer noted that the use of the word “cantilevers” in the definition of building footprint was confusing since a cantilever would not be part of the footprint. Mr. Kimmerly agreed that the word “cantilever” will be removed from the definition.

Mr. Meyer noted that a comma should be added in the last sentence of Subsection C.4 to state “If the non-residential space cannot be added, the residential space cannot be added.”

Mr. Kimmerly noted that Subsection C.5 was added. It was discussed that the language was unclear. It was suggested that the section be revised to state “If any part of an addition to a non-residential street-level story is below the ceiling of a non-residential street-level story, the addition shall be non-residential.”

Mr. Meyer noted that the Subsection C.8 should be revised to state “any exterior changes” instead of “the exterior changes.”

Mr. Kimmerly asked whether there was a reason for the 10,000 SF limit of floor area for a new mixed-use building in Subsection C.7. After discussion, it was determined that this could be removed.

Subsection C.9 regarding parking requirements was discussed. Mr. Kimmerly noted that they had provided a number of options for parking requirements for mixed-use buildings. The Planning Commission members preferred the Subsections C.9.a, b, and c at the top of page 6. In addition, Subsection C.9.d was discussed. It was decided to eliminate this subsection. Mr. Meyer noted that the traffic study requirement was a burden on the applicant and the administration and tracking of uses would be burdensome on Borough staff.

Subsection C.9.e was discussed. It was determined that parking in the side yard would be permitted, but not in the front yard.

Subsection C.9.f was discussed. It was noted that a Certificate of Occupancy is required for improvements that are visible from the Public Rights-of-Way. This language will be added to the subsection.

There was a discussion of the fact that there is a Zoning District in New Hope Borough called “Mixed Use.” This may be confusing with the proposed term of “mixed-use building.” It was discussed that it would be simpler to change the name of the building rather than changing the name of an existing Zoning District. After discussion, it was determined that the building could be called a “multi-use building.”

Mr. Meyer made a motion to accept the proposed ordinance revisions for the Central Commercial Zoning District subject to the changes and edits discussed during the meeting with review by the Borough Solicitor and the Interim Zoning Officer and, if the amendments are acceptable, to recommend for consideration by Borough Council with the condition that if there are significant changes, the revisions be sent back to the Planning Commission for review.

Mr. Kimmerly noted that the BCPC staff had prepared some slides to illustrate some of the provisions of the ordinance such as “street-level” and the floor area requirements. The slides were presented. It was discussed if it would be helpful to have any of the illustrations in the ordinance. The Planning Commission noted that there are no other illustrations in the Zoning Ordinance, so they did not think these should be included.

Mr. Kimmerly asked if there should be a statement added that there should be no loss of existing non-residential uses in the Central Commercial District. Section 275-31.A on page 1 is the purpose statement. It was suggested that the statement be revised to state “retain non-residential uses” rather than “allow for non-residential uses.”

Mr. Meyer agreed that the additional change should be included in his motion. Mr. Bellafronte seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Discussion:

There were two items brought up for discussion:

1. Short Term Rental Ordinance – Mr. Bellafronte brought up a concern about the Short Term Rental Ordinance. He was concerned that the recommendation of the Planning Commission to have different requirements for Residential vs. Non-Residential Districts was not incorporated into the updated ordinance. Also, it was his understanding that the ordinance would be sent back to the Planning Commission for review after being revised by the Borough Solicitor which was not done. Ms. Stover noted that the proposed ordinance has been advertised for adoption at the August Borough Council meeting.
2. Stormwater Management Ordinance Revisions - Ms. Stover noted that there is a proposed revision to the Stormwater Management Ordinance that she would like to present to Borough Council for consideration at their workshop meeting in August. However, prior to presenting to Council, she wanted to discuss it with the Planning Commission. It was noted that the revisions proposed were required as part of the Borough's Stormwater Permit with the Pennsylvania Department of Protection (PADEP). The Borough is required to update their Stormwater Management Ordinance to be consistent with the PADEP 2022 Model Ordinance. Some of the revisions include adding items for Waivers and Erroneous Permits and updating the list of permitted discharges to make the ordinance consistent with the PADEP Model Ordinance.

The Planning Commission discussed that since the revisions were required, there was not really any input that they could provide, and the ordinance revisions could be presented to Council

Adjournment: Mr. Greenberg made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Bellafronte seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM.