

BELLEFONTE BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 27, 2015

Present: K. Clark, J. Mills, D. Johnson,
Excused: B. Dannaker, C. Dickman,
Staff: Vana Dainty
Guests: Sue Hannegan, CCPCDO; Joanne Tosti-Vasey;

Call to Order

- Mr. Clark called the Bellefonte Borough Planning Commission meeting to order on Monday, March 23, 2015 at 5:00 PM.

Approval of the Minutes

- Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of January March 23, 2015. Mr. Mills seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous to accept the minutes as presented.

Land Development Activities

Information/Discussion Items

Sue Hannegan, from County Planning, Bellefonte Commercial Spaces: Discussion on residential use in back part of store fronts including: Percentage of space for storefront; Parking; Sprinkler system; Building Owner Participation - Sue did some homework for the Planning Commission and that information was in the packets.

The Bellefonte ordinance does provide for a live/work provision; it requires that the resident and the tenant of the commercial space be one and the same. She searched what other cities in the United States are doing. Vana provided information on Lock Haven, PA. Through the National Mainstreet Center list serve Sue found Paragould, AR and West Chester's on the National Mainstreet Center. She gathered information on State College, PA. There are four different ordinances that she has provided and there are three different scenarios in those four different examples. The city of Lock Haven uses a percentage where they require the commercial space to be 51% of the first floor and the residential space be 49% of the first floor. They don't mention if the tenant is one in the same, but it is assumed that it is different. There is no discussion of interconnectivity, which was required in the live/work arrangement in the Bellefonte Borough zoning ordinance. Paragould, AR has a 500 square foot provision. They do not talk about the residential component, but only the storefront at 500 square feet. State College Borough and West Chester, both use a depth figure. In State College it is in the Commercial Incentive District, which is the downtown portions of College Ave. and Beaver Ave. It states that commercial storefront be required to have a depth of at least 25'. In West Chester it was 35'.

She said the last thing you want to do when you make zoning amendments is to create non-conformity because then you are faced with requests from property owners who want to expand a non-conformity and by the provisions of the ordinance there are provisions that stipulate how much they can expand without any questions. Over 50% expansion of a non-conforming use it requires some consideration. She started taking some examples in the Borough and that is the three pages of property lines and building images that were attached to their document. The storefront at 106 North Allegheny Street is only 14' wide by 82' long, so it is not unusual to find narrow storefronts. She looked at the

property on Bishop Street that was in question at the Zoning Hearing Board that property was 23' x 65'. Across the street from that property is the Omar and the stairwell to the second floor, which is only 10' wide. At 117 it is 12' wide by 70' long, which is probably the narrowest commercial space that she found. In the current ordinance there was also the thinking that in the live/work arrangement you would have a 750 square foot residential component because the Public Housing ordinance in the Borough required a minimum housing unit of 750 square feet. When the Borough Ordinance was adopted, they wanted that consistency so they specified that the live/work arrangement residential portion would require 750 square feet. Using that theory is how she began the discussion on the Bush House, the Crider Exchange and West Bishop Street look at the options.

Sue does not recommend using the percentage because she thinks there are such small units in Bellefonte that it would create an almost unusable commercial space. You must retain the 750 square feet requirement for apartments. She feels that perhaps in the Central Business District you could have a provision of a residential unit behind, not beside, the storefront that would only apply to buildings that had at least 1250 square feet on the first floor space. That would leave 500 square feet for the commercial space. Therefore, you would meet both minimums - 750 square feet and 500 square feet. It would then have the option to be occupied by a tenant that is not the storefront tenant.

Sue will post on the National Mainstreet Center site again to see if she gets any responses to see if anybody has used the live/work concept. Vana posted on the Pennsylvania Downtown website and received two responses. One said they didn't have anything like that and the other response she received today and will call her.

Vana said, if this is being considered you would also need to consider parking, sprinkler system and building owner participation. Building owners may not want to participate when they realize what it entails for them. The parking is an issue. She did some research on parking in State College Borough. They do commuter permits where during certain hours of the day you can park longer than two hours on a residential street. The permit is less expensive than being downtown. There is a different permit that is for the evening. She is trying to get more information on this. She is looking at the Pennsylvania Municipal Code to see if there is something in there that says that you cannot do that with residential parking areas. Mr. Clark stated in the Pittsburgh area when they were instituting residential on-street parking permit systems it was a big controversy because people that had parked in front of their house all their life now had to pay for the privilege to do it.

Vana stated you could make the parking spot a mandatory thing that the landlord must provide but you would need to make evening permits available for them. You would need to determine how that would be regulated. It was noted that the CATA bus service is available in downtown Bellefonte and that service continues to improve.

Mr. Clark said, a lot of buildings are landlocked in the back so you would need to incorporate an entrance in the front. Would a common entrance be shared? You would need to be careful about how that would affect historic structures.

You would have to have language in the ordinance stating the minimum size, safe egress and parking available. Mr. Clark feels the code would define the safe egress. Vana stated because Walt lives in Bellefonte and is familiar with Bellefonte, he sits on HARB as the code person and he has been very easy to work with and they are working hard to explain things to the Bellefonte people. She feels he would be very happy to discuss everything. It was suggested that the ordinance says something to the effect that as part of the application process if it is a tenant and not the landlord that the landlord be notified. In HARB if the tenant makes an application for a sign the property owner must sign off on the application. Required parking spaces don't pertain to the current rentals because they were grandfathered in. If the landlord would make changes to the apartments then they could suddenly be required to provide parking spaces. If you change the use of the building you would be required to sprinkle the building. It was requested that Walt be contacted to see what the current codes say about egress.

Old Business

- None.

New Business

- None.

Information Items

- None.

Adjournment

Having no further business Mr. Mills made a motion to adjourn the April 27, 2015 meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Planning Commission at 5:45 PM. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous.