

**BELLEFONTE BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
March 23, 2015

**Present:** B. Dannaker, J. Mills, K. Clark, D. Johnson,

**Excused:** C. Dickman,

**Staff:** Vana Dainty

**Guests:** Walter Schneider, Centre Region Codes;

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**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of the Minutes**

- Mr. Clark made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of January 26, 2015. Mr. Mills seconded the motion. Page one of the minutes on the fifth line from the bottom at the end should say Mr. Franson, the Storm "Water" Engineer; the second paragraph on page two it should say "NPDES" permit and on the next line "E&S" approval. A voice vote was unanimous to accept the minutes as corrected.

**Land Development Activities**

- None

**Planning and Zoning Issues:**

- None.

**Old Business**

- None.

**New Business**

- None.

**Information/Discussion Items**

- The Nittany Valley Joint Planning Commission meeting was held on March 18th. Ms. Dainty reported they updated the under-utilized properties in the Borough and throughout Nittany Valley. She stated people don't realize since 2012 half the properties came off the list because they are either being renovated or about ready to be used or have something in them. Three of them are going under major renovations. The one that used to be the old hardware store is having a major overhaul and renovation on it. West Bishop Street has not had the attentions in the past; however, Joe Jovinelly purchased another property across from the Waffle Shop and is renovating it. He has a tenant that will have a Christmas Shop and a Drama Studio. Across the street where Rider Insurance was located the girl that owns Shear Spirits Beauty Salon on High Street purchased the building to renovate and move her salon in, which will be switching a business from one place to another. Adam Seidell is looking for the facade grant to do some things to his building.

Properties were to the list added one is where the former National Guard, reserve property is located.

The County has the utilization list and they share it with the CBICC so if anybody is coming to the area looking to bring a business in or start a business they can flip through...it is a marketing tool.

Ms. Dainty will provide the Planning Commission members the updated list she sent to the County.

- Zoning Hearing Board Decision: A perspective buyer on a property on West Bishop Street asked for a variance for a first floor apartment in the Central Business District. The Zoning Hearing Board denied the request but asked planning to look at Lock Haven's Ordinance on the issue to possibly allow this. Lock Haven has passed an ordinance that allows this to happen.

Mr. Schneider was at the meeting to inform the Planning Commission what is permitted. Mr. Schneider stated this was discussed a little in a sideline discussion with a few Council members a while ago when he served on Council because some of the Central Business district spaces are very, very large compared to what interest there is in those spaces. He also had a discussion with Dallas a few years ago to see what type of businesses were looking downtown to relocate here and what kind of square footage they are looking for. When you look at the Heilig Meyer store there is a phenomenal amount of space compared to what people really want.

From the code standpoint Lock Haven has basically the same codes in place that Bellefonte does. They have the International Code Series, but they don't have the property and maintenance the same way. The International Code Series are very straight forward in the fact that realize the one thing that will go along with this when they make the conversion the building will be sprinkled. When the move from anything to "R" it will require sprinkling the building, which is not a bad thing in the Central Business District. It's a change in use of occupancy. For the most part they don't do limited area systems. A limited area sprinkler system is a goofy situation in the code. If you are going to change it over it kicks in the entire building. If you have a space that is not residential and you are creating residential it starts triggering in. Walt doesn't know of any place where it would allow you to get you out of sprinkling it when you change it to a "R" use.

The question is how you would address entry ways and exits. Walt said an example is if you used any one of the buildings downtown you can come up with two means of egress out of the rear of the building. It doesn't always have to be the front and the rear.

Some of the properties are landlocked what would you do when you can get out the back but you can't get out the yard. Walt said they may need to create a hallway to the front. You have to decide if this will work in absolutely every case.

The question was raised if you would still need two exits for any residential on the first floor. Walt said it depends on the configuration and all the pieces of the puzzle - building construction type; configuration of the unit, etc.

The Lock Haven Ordinance states "Residential uses may be developed on the first floor, rear, but not to exceed 49% of the total floor area. No residential development will be permitted along commercially zoned street frontage. Walt said you may want to add another caveat to it that a minimum square footage that will be maintained so you don't have a building that 49% left you with 1,000 square foot in the front and you wanted 1,500 square foot for the storefront.

The Lock Haven Ordinance is permitting an apartment. What Bellefonte has states the resident must be the operator of the store front. Mr. Mills stated the downfall is that most proprietors don't want to live at their store. That model probably went away post-WWII.

Walt feels you need to decide what the magic number is for a minimum size for commercial space to keep a viable downtown.

Ms. Dainty stated there isn't a square foot minimum for residential and feels that is something that would need to be examined also. She found one that said it must be 400 square feet minimum. Walt said some of that is market style. In State College in the property maintenance code it states what they are allowed and not allowed to rent. From an International Building Code standpoint they size the apartment on 200 square foot per person minimum size and a bedroom minimum size is 70 square feet. The International Code doesn't care how many people you fit into a 70 square foot bedroom.

Walt said the caveat is it is a way of saying we hear what your problem is and we're willing to come to the table.

Mr. Dannaker stated when Confer's went into their second shop they had a change of use and they were kind of unaware of what it was going to cost them to do that change. He wondered if the

building owners are doing the conversions. Walt stated they would require a design specialist be involved. When you start getting into egress and structure state code requires that a design specialist become involved. He feels it is money very well spent because most owners don't know how to make it through the code side of things and they don't understand what all is involved. Mr. Clark stated his experience is when you meet with a landlord in town they will tell you absolutely nothing. They will open the door and say here is the space and don't say you have to hire an architect to do the work. After the people sign a lease they find out what needs to be done.

There are sprinkler systems designed for facilities like the APS that don't want water on the stamps, although they are expensive. It will take a smoke detector and a heat detector going off in the same zone, which puts water in the system and then you must have the head discharge.

For tall structures there are two demarcation lines that happen in a building. The first one is 75' from the lowest point of fire department access. Once the highest occupy able floor exceeds that number it is considered a high-rise. When you hit high-rise there are certain things that are involved. You get into redundant supplies for fire pumps and some other things that are all required. Long before you got there you have a sprinkler based on square footage. Once you hit the height of a high-rise you have to put a fire department command center in them, which is a room that has communications, the alarm systems and those type of things so if there is an incident in the building the fire chief could come in, open the room, start laying stuff out and run the incident from there. The second trigger is at 120'. When that mark is hit additional requirements kick in such as the elevator lobbies have to have a fire department access elevator lobby. The lobby has to be connected directly to the elevator system and a stair tower. It only has to be one of them so the fire department can come up in the elevator to the floor below the fire, get access to the stair tower and make access to the fire floor. There are other things with respect to fire department communications in all the buildings.

Walt encourages the Planning Commission is to review the downtown zoning piece to come up with some things that make sense in this day and age. He is willing to help.

The new truck will be in service soon. The apparatus was delivered in December and had to go back down for tool mounting. They haven't been able to do pump testing on it because of the very cold weather. They are in the process of getting drivers qualified on it. He said it drives different. It is a little heavier but it sits higher. The weight distribution is a little different. It responded on its first call last week. They were on their way to Clearfield to a funeral when they were dispatched for a chimney fire.

Ms. Dainty stated one of the things that needs to be considered with this is parking. Mr. Clark would be willing to consider this just for the rest of the structure. He feels it won't happen because the landlords are not willing to participate. Ms. Dainty stated Council is not in favor of this. Mr. Clark questioned whether this would improve anything in town or rather provide a low rent apartment that adds to the issues that are viewed as negative downtown. What does this do to the fabric of the downtown?

The discussion of residential on the first floor of commercial buildings in the Downtown Business District is a subject for further discussion.

- The next Planning Commission meeting will be Monday, April 27, 2015.

### **Adjournment**

Having no further business Mr. Clark made a motion to adjourn the March 23, 2015 meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Planning Commission at 5:55 PM. Mr. Mills seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous.