

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
BELLEFONTE BOROUGH  
MEETING MINUTES**

**April 8, 2019 – 5 p.m.**

**236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823**

**[www.bellefonte.net](http://www.bellefonte.net)**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The April 8, 2019 meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Robert Dannaker, at the Bellefonte Borough Municipal Building at 5:00 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Robert Dannaker, Chair  
James Mills, Secretary  
Dallas Gallo

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Mark Edwards

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Nathaniel Day

**STAFF MEMBERS:** Shannon Wright, Zoning Administrator

**GUESTS:** Liz Lose  
Joanne Tosti-Vasey

---

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

The February 27, 2019 meeting minutes were presented for approval.

**Mr. Gallo moved to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2019 Planning Commission meeting;**  
**Mr. Mills seconded the motion;**  
**Motion carried.**

**LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY:** None.

**PLANNING AND ZONING ISSUES:** None.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

### **Waterfront District Height**

The developers for the waterfront area asked Council if they would consider increasing the height for their development (which may include the entire waterfront district) from 50 feet to 80 feet. Ms. Wright offered that whenever you are looking at the height for a zoning ordinance it is not to the roofline but to the eaves. When you look at an 80-foot height limit, it is likely not going to cap out at 80 feet, but probably 90 to 100 feet depending on the roof type. The height of the Bush House which was in that area prior was 46 feet. The speculation is that the developer is looking for the height increase more for the condominiums than the hotel.

Ms. Wright included in the packet the preliminary site plan of the waterfront development. There are plans for a condo building, a parking deck and the hotel. The condos would be on the side closest to the Gamble Mill.

The developer came before Council and Ms. Tosti-Vasey indicated that they asked if the Borough would partner in with them on parking and they were told that they would consider it if the County would consider it. The parking garage is about 3-4 million dollars to construct. Consideration would only be given if the County was in. The parking would be used for the condo, hotel, County jury duty (if they decide to opt in) and some additional parking would be for the Borough. There would also be electric charging stations installed.

Ms. Wright presented some pictures for a visual. She also included some approximate measurements of the surrounding buildings. The two buildings up from Water Street are between 30 and 40 feet and the two next to where the development would be are only one-story building. Bonfatto's is about 20 feet in height. Gamble Mill is only 35 to the eaves.

Ms. Wright recommended a discussion about this with the developers to explain why they want it at this height. She also suggests architecturally scaled renderings be brought in with the current buildings and the new buildings at the height they are proposing so that everyone can see what that will look like.

Conditional use allowance was discussed. Mr. Dannaker did not want to see Bellefonte become the next State College with all of the high rises. Mr. Gallo offered that with the development, they will be of the mindset that if the Borough wants the waterfront

developed, they are going to have to give a little as well, instead of letting it sit vacant. PC members would like to see drawings.

Mr. Dannaker summarized that in order to make a decision PC needs more information to make a decision on that. Mr. Gallo agreed that the developer needs to come in to the Planning Commission meeting and discuss what they would like to do.

Ms. Wright suggested the possibility of an overlay district instead of changing the height for the entire district. She included information in the packet. The Match Factory was discussed and how the Borough worked with the developer for the good of both sides, per Mr. Gallo.

Ms. Wright noted that height is not an issue for the Fire Chief, but the building materials will need to change to accommodate the height. Mr. Schneider will write a letter, if 80 feet is approved, stating that the materials need to be upgraded to meet upgraded code requirements for the height. Sprinkler systems were discussed.

A meeting will be scheduled with the developer. Ms. Wright suggested that the plans go through HARB preliminarily before Planning Commission as there may be things HARB will be concerned about and want to change. She also suggested a joint meeting with HARB and PC to discuss the development so that everyone is on the same page and the developers are not being told conflicting things by two different commissions. The Planning Commission members preferred to keep each body separate.

The developers are hoping to take advantage of the Borough being in the Qualified Opportunity Zone which gives them access to different types of funding and tax incentives. For them to take advantage of that, they need to break ground this year, per Ms. Wright. The funding could help them break ground on all three elements of the project at a faster rate as they would have more funding available to them.

### **Short-Term Rentals**

Ms. Wright stated that the Airbnb's or short terms rentals are increasingly popular. Any type of rental that she looked at similar were capped at 30 days. There was a concern with the Bed and Breakfast owners that the persons renting their homes were not held to the same standard and they may not be remitting the proper taxes. AirBnB indicated that they will begin collecting the taxes on Centre County properties.

Ms. Wright offered that the Association of Beds and Breakfast had more information that would be helpful and included this in their packets. Mr. Dannaker has seen the rental for football weekends where the homeowners move out and the football fans move in. They may not be rented through AirBnB but other places online that produce the customers. The Borough needs to get a handle on it. There have been complaints from residents, to Ms. Wright and to Council.

Ms. Wright suggested requiring the same amount of permitting for any rental, to simplify it. But then the Borough would define what a short-term rental is, and emphasize maintaining the residential character of the neighborhood. An ordinance could require additional liability insurance. Code inspections may eliminate a lot of the properties as they could cost thousands of dollars to bring into compliance. Code inspects under the International Building Code, as adopted by Pennsylvania.

Ms. Wright offered that because of the level of Codes that the Borough has adopted, the Borough requires a rental permit for even a one-night stay. Mr. Gallo firmly believed that anyone renting out anything at their home should be permitted.

The definitions need to be added to the zoning ordinance. That was the consensus of PC members. Ms. Tosti-Vasey interjected that the Council committee is going to be updating ordinances this year as well. Any ordinance would have to be able to be enforced with ramifications. The property owner must be held responsible for the actions of the renters. She feels that Code does a good job of enforcement. Valuing the neighborhoods of Bellefonte is essential when regulating these rentals.

Ms. Wright would like to see other definitions added as well, i.e. boarding house. The Jacksonville, PA ordinance was a good start as a model. Ms. Wright would like to see a fee added for the rental permit for the Borough. Code charges a fee but the Borough does not. The fee schedule can be modified by Council, per Ms. Tosti-Vasey. A short term and a rental fee could be instituted made payable to the Borough. The more units the more the fee would be, as suggested by Mr. Gallo.

### **Air Pollution and Environmental Concerns with Crematoriums**

Council discussed this during their air pollution ordinance modification. They are asking PC to see if those uses can be moved to heavy industrial. The state permits the crematoriums but also allows communities to create ordinances that are stricter than the state, per Ms. Tosti-Vasey. She has had at least one person make a complaint to the DEP about this at Wexler's. The concern is that the public would like to have other incinerators or crematoriums moved to heavy industrial and limited to that area to have better control over them in the future. Incinerators are a conditional use in that district, per Ms. Wright.

Ms. Wright stated that definitions would be updated. An incinerator is permitted in heavy industrial but crematoriums are not mentioned. The only mentioned of them are under funeral home definition. The definition is in preparation for. This can be tweaked. The uses can be separated. Ms. Wright questioned that the Nittany Valley Joint Comp Plan allows uses across municipalities, does the Borough need to make provisions for this in our ordinance at all. She can look into this.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS:**

### **NVJPC Comp Plan Update (moved up to first line of business)**

Ms. Lose updated PC on the comprehensive plan. The regional planning body is wrapping up the comp plan to date. It will be five (5) chapters total. They include demographics, future land use, public safety, housing and economic development. She would like to initiate the final review of those documents, get feedback from PC and get a final approval from PC for final presentment to Council.

All the municipalities are on the same track with reviewing the plan. The final approval and adoption process will be discussed at the regional level. They are still working through that process to give a final recommendation to how that public process should proceed. Since it is an update, there are only five chapters. They are unsure if they want to do one public meeting or if the individual municipalities will have their individual public meetings.

Part of the review process will also include providing a copy to the surrounding municipalities, the County Planning Commission and the School District. The timeline and review period for that distribution needs to be taken into consideration as well.

Ms. Lose asked PC if they had any questions or comments at present. Mr. Dannaker found the demographics to be interesting and how it affects the workforce in the area. Land use was also discussed. The rezoned Centre Crest area was still showing as government. Ms. Lose indicated that when the map was put together, some municipalities wanted to highlight what was public and government owned. She indicated that Bellefonte could change that to reflect what the actual zoning or use was there, that would be possible and should be done now. The intent of the map is a planning tool going into the future (2025). Bellefonte is unique as in it is nearly fully built out. There are only a few large tracts of land left to develop and redevelopment would be more common in the future. Ms. Lose offered that planners used land use maps differently than a zoning officer would for zoning – long term versus administration.

Ms. Wright offered that PC and staff could take a look at the mapping and collect some comments. The next Nittany Valley Joint Meeting is May 16, 2019, per Ms. Lose. She would like feedback from PC before then. That would allow final changes to be made from all of the municipalities that weigh in on it and do a final draft of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Dannaker remarked that he could see this being used a planning tool for future development. Right now, the zoning map is what decisions are made on a day to day basis.

Ms. Lose stated that the two chapters that have the most substance are public safety and economic development. Efforts can be concentrated to give feedback on those two chapters, if PC would prefer.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Mr. Mills moved to adjourn the April 8, 2019 Planning Commission Meeting;  
Mr. Gallo seconded the motion;  
Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:32pm. \_\_\_\_\_