

**HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE REVIEW BOARD
BELLEFONTE BOROUGH
MEETING MINUTES**

**September 10, 2019 - 8:30 a.m.
236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823
www.bellefonte.net**

CALL TO ORDER:

The September 10, 2019 regular meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Historical Architecture Review Board (HARB) was called to order by Mr. McGinley at the Bellefonte Borough Municipal Building at 8:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sam McGinley
Megan Tooker
Robert Wagner
Gay Dunne
Pat Long
Maria Day

EXCUSED: Walt Schneider
Robert Lingenfelter

STAFF MEMBERS: Shannon Wright, HARB Administrator

GUESTS: Joanne Tosti-Vasey, Chair, Borough Council

ADDITIONS /CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:

None.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

None.

DECLARATION OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATION:

None.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

Ms. Long moved to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2019 meeting, as amended.

Ms. Day seconded the motion;

Motion carried.

PROJECT REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:

317-319 E. Curtin Street – Demolition and Reconstruction of Rear Porches

The property owner wishes to demo and reconstruct the rear porches of the structure. The back porch of the 319 side has some carpenter ants – the posts are hollow. The one post did come down on the other side. Owner would like to remove the posts and reconstruct the steps. The railing will not meet current code standards. The railing may need to be removed as well. They would like to use solid posts and decking would be 5/8 wood.

The porch will be treated lumber and the stairs will have the code-required risers. The porch will be painted gray. Square posts were used prior and they will be replaced with square posts. Everything will be replaced in-kind and up to code. Everything will be painted to match what was already existing.

The guardrail was discussed briefly. If it is strong, Mr. Wagner stated that the dimension that they would be looking for is 30 inches to grade. If it is less than 30 inches, the guardrail would not be required. He advised not to be over 30 inches anywhere then it would have to be 36 inches high and something would need to be done to raise it up.

Ms. Tooker moved to approve the project as presented

Ms. Long seconded the motion.

Mr. McGinley recapped – the owner will salvage the porch railing and raise the railing up and put something below to keep anyone from falling under. The materials to fill below will be metal or wood. Once the wood weathers, it will be painted gray.

Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS:

101 N. Allegheny Street – (Rear Deck/Egress)

Ms. Wright explained that the rear deck on this property will be replaced in-kind. She is working with the property owner to make it look nicer. The plan is still under works.

101 N. Allegheny Street – (Signs)

The property owner is moving his office to the main level of the building and wants to reinstall the signs. They were already previously approved and installed so Ms. Wright administratively approved this.

102 E. High Street (Courthouse) – (Boiler Vent)

The courthouse needed to install a boiler vent. The vent will be painted the same color as the building so it will blend in.

378 E. Curtin Street (Porch Roof)

This porch roof is leaking. Eventually the entire roof will be replaced. Ms. Wright approved the color and brand. The property owner plans future work on the house. The color is a darker brown/black.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Nothing presented.

OLD BUSINESS:

Downtown Maintenance Ordinance

Ms. Wright does not have any additional information on this ordinance but wanted to keep it on the agenda for future discussion.

Weeds around the trees in the downtown area were discussed.

Mr. Wagner recapped the prior discussion on the proposed maintenance ordinance and the existing property maintenance code.

Recap: Work Session

Ms. Tooker stated that the work session went well. She offered that she would have liked the discussion to turn to the economic benefits of a historic district because so many of the Borough Council members do not live in the historic district and do not understand that there are consistent real estate values. She stated that each time Council votes against a HARB recommendation, it makes it appear like a slap in the face for the people that take care of their homes.

Mr. McGinley stated that there are several Council members that are interested in preservation and in keeping what the Borough has for future generations. The others may just need to be educated more. He would like to see the property owners and HARB be more on the same page and the property owner walk out happy.

Ms. Dunne offered that more education sessions are needed and face to face sessions with Borough Council. Ms. Tooker stated that Ms. Dunne was very optimistic, and she opined that

some members will never change their minds and are adamant about someone telling someone what to do with their property.

Mr. Wagner stated that when the property owners purchased their homes, they did not realize that they would need to preserve their homes in accordance with the Borough's regulations. He opined that when persons purchase a home, they need to know how to take care of it. When homes are purchased in the district, they have made a decision to participate in living in Bellefonte and trying to preserve what has been here and has been kept. This is what the Borough has decided before the present members of Council got on Council.

Ms. Tooker interjected that the people are buying the homes in the district because of the way they look. There is plenty of real estate for sale NOT in the historic district. If you are purchasing a home here, the rules need to be followed.

Ms. Long stated that if a buyer does not know what it means to have the home in the historic district, they need to ask before they purchase the home. Ms. Long and Ms. Wright stated that agreements of sale are required to notify buyers that the property is located in a historic district.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey offered that if the background work is done, when revising the ordinance, before it comes before Council, there may be more votes in support of preservation. She also spoke about educating homeowners, i.e. C-NET video, brochures, move-in welcome brochures. Due diligence is important to demonstrate as well, when projects come before Council. Documentation of hardship cases is desired for back up information.

Ms. Wright stated that she believed the hardship cases being proven will be beneficial for HARB to be able to consider, especially regarding the metal roofs. The property owners want the metal roof and HARB turns them down, requesting that the roof be standing seam. As a board, Ms. Wright stated that the members need to get better at tabling projects and request significantly more information when those types of projects come through. Anytime the property owners are switching materials, and they do not want to go to the historically appropriate materials, the project should be tabled, and more information needs to be requested for back up, i.e. estimates for in-kind replacement – shingles in terms of roofs, estimates for the traditional standing seam and the roof that they want. The costs can be reviewed. That can be the determining factor. She also stated that HARB members are lacking in the information they are presenting to Borough Council when they need to make decisions. If all the information is not there when the project comes through, the project needs to be tabled and HARB needs to have that information before the project goes to Council.

Ms. Tooker stated that the roof would work in HARB's favor. She brought up all vinyl windows versus wood windows and variables with estimates for the windows. That puts HARB in a situation where no one may believe the result and the decision on the project. Ms. Wright stated that the back up may not be requested for all projects brought to HARB but perhaps more of a supplemental documentation. There are other factors when evaluating windows and she opined that HARB needs to do more in getting more information to Council because every situation is different.

Discussion was held on the longevity and maintenance issues of shingle versus metal roofs. This should also be outlined to Council. The tools are there but Ms. Wright stated that they need to be better applied to the projects that are more controversial. Tabling the project and appropriateness in doing so was discussed. If they do not bring the appropriate materials or documents, HARB needs to table the project, per Mr. McGinley.

Mr. Wagner stated that the difference today is the different qualities of the metal roofs and vinyl windows – different grades of quality last for different lengths of times. Discussion was held on allowing plant growth to invade the exterior of the home and how damaging it can be to the roof, gutters, and walls.

Ms. Tooker suggested having home ownership seminars in the district offering a discounted attendance cost to anyone in the district. Preservations Briefs can be linked to the website as well. The HARB section of the website was discussed briefly and updates that may be needed. The CLG grant was discussed in this capacity. (*talking amongst members*).

Mr. Wagner discussed a personal representative to new residents of the district to make the transition easier for the homeowner and less intimidating.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gold Parking Meter Color

Ms. Wright pulled some proposed colors for the meters.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no other business to come before HARB,

Ms. Dunne moved to adjourn.
Ms. Tooker seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9: 45 a.m.