

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
BELLEFONTE BOROUGH  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 14, 2019 – 5 p.m.  
236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823  
[www.bellefonte.net](http://www.bellefonte.net)**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The October 14, 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  
Mark Edwards  
Chris Morelli

**EXCUSED:** Dallas Gallo

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

**GUESTS:** Joanne Tosti-Vasey  
Alan Uhler  
Ed Olsen  
Tommy Songer  
Tom Songer  
Frank Savino  
Mark Morath  
Ella Williams

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**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

The minutes were presented for approval.

**Mr. Edwards moved to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2019 Planning Commission meeting.**

**Mr. Morelli seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

## **LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY:**

### **Lot Consolidation Plan for Lands of Kermit L. Tressler**

Alan Uhler presented the lot consolidation plan for the lands of Kermit L. Tressler. Mr. Tressler holds much of the residual of Halfmoon hill. The lots are on the northern end of the hill overlooking the plant. There are about 25 lots remaining. There is a steep hill with lots that were divided out in the original plan in the 1920s mixed with streets and alleys. It is not developable as the lots exist. The purpose of the plan was to consolidate all of the lots and portions of the streets and alleys into one lot.

The intent is that it will be one lot of record for residential purposes and it is worth noting that at the upper left of the plan, the Borough/Spring line is drawn. There is a small area that extends into Spring Township. Spring Township deferred the approval of the plan to Bellefonte Borough.

Public sewer is not available, and the owner has obtained Council approval to construct on-lot sewer on the plot. The testing is being completed and the Component 2 Sewage Module is being completed.

A Component 4(8) is also involved, and this is a series of questions for the Borough to fill out certifying that this is appropriate and meets with Borough guidelines.

Half of the bounding streets will be consolidated based on the premise that when the original subdivision was created in the 1920s the public streets were to be offered as public streets to the Borough. That offer of dedication expired in 21 years. Since the Borough never accepted it and Council stated that they have no interest in these streets, they simply revert back to the property owners on each side half/half. Where the lots are bound on both sides of the streets, the entire street has been incorporated and the edge bound streets have been incorporated at half.

There is a public water line and Brown Avenue. The water line was put in the time that Halfmoon hill was developed with the understanding that that Street would be open. The road was never open. It simply exists only by the fact that it was installed. There is not documented easement. The general note 9 on the plan acknowledges that the line is there and has been there for many years. This is called out as a 15-foot waterline easement on the plan. When Mr. Tressler signs the plan, he will acknowledge the Borough's right to use the easement for the water line.

There are two sites for septic, one primary and one for backup in the event the system ever failed.

The plan will go before the County for review. If there are any additional comments, they will be addressed.

**Mr. Edwards moved to approve the Lot Consolidation Plan for the Lands of Kermit L. Tressler with the condition that the County comments be addressed following review.**

**Mr. Mills seconded the motion.  
Motion carried.**

**PLANNING AND ZONING ISSUES:** None.

**OLD BUSINESS:** (discussed after the Waterfront Presentation)

### **Short Term Rental Draft Verbiage**

Ms. Wright discussed the verbiage on the draft short-term rental ordinance. On B, she took that section word for word out of the Bed and Breakfast requirements of the ordinance. She thought it was important to mirror the requirements of that section.

Ms. Wright would like PC to look at some provision for if anyone is not holding up to their responsibilities as a landlord, that there is way to revoke a permit. Mr. Dannaker referred to College Township's ordinance.

The zoning section of the Centre Region Code permit was discussed. The person requesting the permit will come to Ms. Wright first and Centre Region Code will not issue any permit without Ms. Wright's signature on the application first.

Ms. Wright also suggested a separate application to the Bellefonte Borough with a fee and additional information. The Borough currently does not have a separate permit form or fee for rentals, and she believes this is something that the Borough should begin doing to increase revenue and cover the review time. Ms. Wright stated that she reviews about 3 rental or building permits a week. The Borough gets no compensation for that time spent by staff.

The hotel use tax was discussed. This tax all goes to the County. The state taxes were also discussed, and Mr. Dannaker opined that giving people this information may be helpful.

The Borough is the only municipality under Centre Region Code that does not charge a separate permit fee.

Ms. Wright recommended that all PC members take a look at the draft and prior to the next meeting, and present comments, and additions.

The 30-day allowance for a stay was discussed and this cannot be changed without changing the ordinance that was adopted through Centre Region Code. Each municipality adopts their own individual ordinance with Code and that is why College Township's ordinance reflects a shorter stay. The Borough adopted the definitions that are currently reflected.

Mr. Dannaker also stated that College Township limits the short stay rentals to thirty days per year. Purchasing a home for the sole use of renting it out was discussed. If the days are limited, like College Township limits their rentals, it may create a policing problem. Ms. Wright stated that at the last meeting, PC agreed not to get too far into enforcement weeds due to the inability to do so.

The Short-Term rental sessions were discussed briefly. They are informative sessions to the public on what they need to do to rent out their homes as an Airbnb.

Mr. Dannaker requested explaining in the ordinance directions for completing a permit and other requirements/suggestions. Relative to the changes to the ordinance, Ms. Wright opined that sometimes vague is a little better because if some of the standards or regulations change, the ordinance does not have to be changed again and again. Ms. Tosti-Vasey agreed and compared her experience with revising the sidewalk ordinance.

Part of the recommendations could be that the PC members kept the verbiage for the ordinance vague, but they recommended specific direction be put on the website on how to go about getting the permitting, etc. There, things can be specific, because that can be easily changed.

Ms. Wright asked for recommendation on whether the draft was on the right track. It was suggested to limit the days that someone can rent their home. A constant rental change is disruptive to the neighborhood.

Ms. Wright also stated that PC could think about restricting short term rentals in certain zoning districts. R-1 is less dense than R-2 and R-2 has a lot more rentals and is actually where the B&Bs are located. The Borough could restrict short terms in R-1 and allow them in R-2 and other districts.

The calculation of events in the area could be taken into consideration when calculating the number of days allowed to rent the short terms rentals. Ms. Wright will research the other municipalities' numbers.

Ms. Wright also discussed an enforcement component to the ordinance. This could also be added to long term rentals as well.

Ms. Wright would like PC to keep this moving for the next meeting.

Ms. Wright will prepare additional changes for the draft for the next PC meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Nothing presented

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

**Bellefonte Waterfront Update (discussed out of agenda order)**

Tom Songer presented to Planning Commission an update on the project at the waterfront. The vision statement was presented before the meeting. Tom Songer gave an update on the project (with Mike Morath).

The overall plan of the waterfront vision has not changed from the beginning. The boutique hotel, parking structure and commercial/retail and 1-2-bedroom residential condos are planned. The plan presented represented a combination of subdivision plan and land development plan.

The developer will create three individual lots, one for each building. Each lot will be able to be owned separately and be fee simple.

Dunlap Street will extend through and become a 24-foot cart way as proposed within a 34-foot right of way. The Borough will continue to own Dunlap Street. Along the flood wall there is a 10-foot easement that the Borough will retain.

At this time, Mark Morath updated the Planning Commission on the hotel. Morath discussed the hotel plan. The hotel is geared for 85 rooms complimenting the historical architecture of Bellefonte. The balcony on the second floor of the structure has a staircase coming down. That is the banquet facility. The stairway is designed due to the need for egress.

Under the balcony could be outdoor dining as the restaurant is geared to be directly behind the windows shown. The hotel guest entry will be off of Dunlap Street. There will also be an entrance from High Street. The lobby would be on the first floor behind in the lower right elevation.

The restaurant will be upper center and the kitchen would be behind that area.

Six guest rooms are part of the stack that would be on Floor 2 and Floors 3-5 face Talleyrand Park. The other rooms would face creekside with the rest facing Dunlap Street. This would be considered a full-service facility because of all of the amenities include. It will have a national franchise relationship. That is not finalized as of yet. This is a soft brand at this time.

The restaurant is geared to using local products both on the food side and the wineries, and breweries being featured. There is some outdoor seating on the creekside. Morath anticipates that because there will be space available, there may be some seating on the High Street side as well - casual seating, not necessarily specific to food service. There will also be a fitness center with combination of a few rooms to make them more suite-like. There is a small marketplace on the first floor to pick up some snacks, candies, and packaged foods as well.

There will be two elevators and some of the rooms will accommodate ADA accessibility needs.

The parking garage will have a covered bridge to keep guests from the elements. Reserved parking on the second floor of the parking garage will be hotel guests.

Brick paving on the walkway will be pervious which will allow the rain to drain down through them and the stormwater will be collected underneath. Weber Murphy Fox has been retained to design a landscape plan. The plan presents a high walkability factor for town visitors as well as hotel guests.

In the next building, the entire first floor is commercial. The commercial will attract visitors to Bellefonte as a destination. The structure presents a more vertical look with certain elements that reflect that verticality of the Victorian architecture.

The parking garage was discussed. The garage will connect with the hotel as well as the proposed commercial structure. The garage will house approximately 300 cars. The entire ground floor will be sub dividable commercial space. The Engineers developed the parking

garage and it was developed so that it does not roll downhill. All of the parking is at 3% grade or less. The design is a double load corridor and is a very efficient design made of pre-cast concrete. It is very fireproof and almost 8 feet of clearance is available throughout the garage. The spaces are 9 feet by 18 feet with thirty compact car spaces which are a bit shorter in length. There is a stairwell in each corner with an elevator as well.

The dedicated parking for hotel staff and guests was discussed. Mr. Songer acknowledged the increasing popularity of EV chargers. The chargers may also be positioned in the regular parking areas so anyone can charge their EV, not just guests of the hotel.

Different ways of passing through the garage was also being considered e.g. Easy pass system. Songer stated that technology is evolving with the parking garages. Kiosks will still be available for those that may not have the electronic system. Energy efficiency was also discussed throughout all of the proposed structures.

The developer discussed the commercial structure. They are proposing a neighborhood type of grocery store at the third structure.

The resident component of the third structure was discussed. There are 40 proposed units, 32 two bed two bath and 8 one bed one bath. Every unit has an open patio area. There is some flexibility in the count at this time. The counts work out well for the modules. The structure will be framed and may be precast. They are achieved rapidly and solidly. That will be an option for the parking garage and the third structure as well. Each unit will be ADA compliant. The 2 bedrooms range from a little over 1200 square foot not including the patios. The 1 bedrooms are a little over 800 square feet. The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors will have direct access to the parking a garage. The second floor will not have direct access but will have to go up just one floor.

Songer further offered that the sketches do reflect the final plan with much accuracy. The residential component will be a condo form of ownership. It will not be age restrictive.

Songer intends to have meetings in the future to present the plan as it proceeds. There will be a property owners association developed with the structures. That association will take responsibility for maintaining all of the common areas, e.g. sidewalks. The membership will be mandatory for maintenance reasons. Dues will be assessed to each owner.

There will also be an association to maintain the grounds, etc. and there will also be association that maintains the residential units. The condo owners will pay into and some representation into the overall maintenance program. Condominium associations were discussed briefly.

Mr. Dannaker inquired about a storage area for the condominiums (perhaps on the ground floor?) and he inquired about the laundry. Each unit will have its own laundry facilities. Mr. Songer liked the idea of the secured storage area. He will take that into consideration.

All the spaces in the parking garage may also be set up as condominiums to be flexible with the purchase of parking spaces in the future. The parking garage will be open to the public.

The developer would like to see a neighborhood grocery store to take up tenancy in some of the commercial area. With the surface parking, patrons would come and go all day long.

The developer would also like to add a local appeal to the hotel by adding a space for local artists to display their work.

The weddings in Talleyrand were discussed, and the hotel hopes to accommodate weddings done in the park, for the receptions. He hopes to also accommodate visitors to the philatelic museum. They also anticipated an airport shuttle being available at the proposed hotel.

About half of the parking garage will be open for public use and Mr. Songer believes that there is ample parking in the area to support activities that may take place at the hotel and elsewhere. He is working with the Chamber and the Downtown association regarding activities to be held along the promenade. All that needs to be developed in the future. Mr. Dannaker would also like to see a set of stairs from the parcel to the waterfront. This would have to be worked out.

The banquet space will be 3,000 square feet but this can be broken down into smaller groups for smaller events. The price point on the condos will be about \$300,000. They are planned to be high end condos.

The NPDES permitting was discussed. It will need to be updated with what is planned at the waterfront by the developer.

The construction impact was discussed to Lamb and High Streets. Preliminary discussions were held, and they will probably bid the hotel and parking garage out together to a general contractor with the understanding that the cost for each will be segregated due to the state grant for the parking garage. That needs to be built using prevailing wages. They will retain Weber Murphy Fox for this as well to make sure that all costs are tracked so that the state can do the final audit on the project.

The goal for construction is next spring or early summer. It will take about a year to build the hotel. The hotel will be built for summer 2021. Six months into the hotel will when the garage will be started so that both are completed at the same time. Depending on the interest relative to the residential structure, the goal is to not start more than one year after the hotel is completed.

Construction access will be determined, and the route is anticipated to come down Benner Pike. The pre-cast nature of the building was discussed. The facade was also discussed briefly.

Fire access at Dunlap was discussed. Mr. Songer stated that they were told that yes, there needed to be fire access but additionally, all the buildings will be sprinklered. The fire director will review the plans.

The hotel was discussed briefly. The number of rooms were discussed and the difference between adding a few more rooms. Mr. Songer stated that staff would need to be increased, and some of the secondary facilities would need to be increased. There is no pool proposed. The bar area will be the traditional restaurant style bar area. The roof of the hotel will be a flat roof so

nothing can be seen when walking around the streets of historic Bellefonte. Solar energy is being considered.

Ms. Wright discussed proposed amendments to the waterfront district ordinance. The developer would like the ordinance amended to accommodate the construction. She stated that PC must make a recommendation to approve these amendments to Council.

Mr. Songer would like the grocery store/pharmacy added as an allowable use.

Mr. Songer would like to ask that the maximum impervious coverage be 90%. With the pavers being pervious it makes a big difference in the total coverage but Songer stated that lot 2 has the parking a garage. That is the most impervious structure at this point. If the pavers are considered pervious it would be about 75%. Overall, if the pavers were not considered to be pervious, the total coverage would be around 90%. Dunlap Street would not be included.

Ms. Wright stated that instead of changing the maximum pervious coverage from 75 to 90%, the definition for impervious could be clarified, stating that pervious pavers or sidewalk materials would not count toward the impervious coverage percentage. It was clarified that if the pervious pavers are excluded, the project would be below the 75% requirement.

The stormwater system was discussed briefly. The developer will be required to submit a stormwater management plan to the Borough for review.

Maximum building height was discussed. Songer requested that this be revised from 50 feet to 65 feet for the residential structure, being only five feet more than what is currently in the ordinance. This would be applied to all of the buildings. The developer is looking into developing the renderings of how the structures will appear in the downtown area. This may be considered as a conditional use. The Bush House hotel was 46 feet. The first two floors ceilings will be a little higher there by increasing the height of the proposed hotel.

Conditional use criteria was discussed for public and private parking structures. The maximum width of a building current is allowed at 250 feet. In order to construct the parking structure, Songer stated that 275 feet is needed. The developer is asking that the max width be extended to 275 feet rather than 250. In order to do the design as proposed the changes to the ordinance are needed. Proof of need must be established. This will allow for the parking spaces and the slope to be accommodated.

Parking spaces were discussed, and the developer would like to reduce the parking space requirement from 9 feet six inches wide to 9 feet. The main reason is because it is a sufficient number based on experience and it would give the garage 24 more spaces in the garage. The current ordinance applies to the entire Borough. The EV chargers were discussed briefly and those spaces may need to be a little wide, per Ms. Tosti-Vasey.

*(talking amongst members).*

Off-street parking and loading was discussed. Songer stated that trucks will need to load and unload on the streets of Bellefonte. He suggested having trucks offloading onto the pavers



simply to offload. There will always still be at least five feet of walkway between the pull off and the walkable walkway. The developer stated that this too may be a conditional use. They propose to slope the pavers down to allow loading and unloading there, leaving room for pedestrian traffic at all times. This style is popular in Europe. The pavers will be designed to be able to withstand truck traffic. Delineation of where the trucks would be parking was discussed and the developer suggested planters or landscaping.

Ms. Wright stated that her interpretation of the ordinance references the loading and unloading areas, and not to an area where a truck would stop to and deliver things. She stated that this situation does not appear to fall under the width of the current ordinance. A loading area can be defined, and it may meet the regulations with that.

Overall, the developer feels that they are in good shape with the changes requested. The goal is to get the plans in as soon the end of October. They would like to keep the ball rolling to get a conditional type of approval before the end of the year.

The plan will be presented to HARB next Tuesday.

Greenspace and pervious areas and suggestions were discussed amongst PC members. The landscaping plan will be reviewed and the lighting plan.

Mr. Dannaker asked that the Borough engineer take a good look at the stormwater plan. Water will no longer run under the Gamble Mill structure.

Market research on filling the commercial area was discussed. The study done by the Borough a few years back was discussed. Delta Development Group did the study. The lack of a variety of tenants in the Phoenix Avenue commercial building was discussed. The only tenant is the boot company who is now expanding into more space there. Ms. Tosti-Vasey discussed the PennDOT study on the intersection at Phoenix Avenue.

**Nittany Valley Comp Plan Update Public Hearing scheduled for October 17, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.**

Each Council/Board of Supervisors will vote on the comp plan at this meeting. PC is encouraged but not required to attend.

**Short Term Rental Sessions: October 18 noon, October 23 6:30 p.m., October 26 10 a.m., and November 7 at 10 a.m.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Mr. Edwards moved to adjourn the October 14, 2019 Planning Commission Meeting.**

**Mr. Morelli seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm. \_\_\_\_\_