

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

**October 22, 2019 - 8:30 a.m.**  
**236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823**  
[www.bellefonte.net](http://www.bellefonte.net)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The October 22, 2019 regular meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Historical Architecture Review Board (HARB) was called to order by Ms. Tooker at the Bellefonte Borough Municipal Building at 8:38 a.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Megan Tooker  
Pat Long  
Sam McGinley (late arrival)  
Robert Wagner  
Gay Dunne  
Pat Long  
Robert Lingenfelter

**EXCUSED:** Maria Day

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

**GUESTS:** Randy Brachbill  
Joanne Tosti-Vasey  
Thomas Wilson  
Douglas Johnson  
Tom Songer  
Tommy Songer  
Gina Thompson  
Debbie Cleeton

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**ADDITIONS /CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

None.

**DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Mr. Lingenfelter recused himself from recommendations and voting on the Waterfront Project.

**DECLARATION OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATION:**

Mr. Lingenfelter reported ex parte communication about the Waterfront Project.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

**Ms. Dunne moved to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2019 meeting.**

**Ms. Long seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

**PROJECT REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Tom Songer presented the waterfront project to HARB members. Context photos of site were also shown.

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 developer will create three individual lots, one for each building. Each lot will be able to be owned separately and be fee simple. The hotel will be at the corner of High and Dunlap Streets.

Dunlap Street will extend through and become a 24-foot cart way as proposed within the 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.

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 from a banquet facility.

The middle portion of the hotel roof will be a flat so nothing can be seen when walking around the streets of historic Bellefonte. Solar energy is being considered. If this is done, the panels will not be visible from the ground.

Under the balcony could be outdoor dining as the restaurant is designed 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 Floors 2-5 and 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, but will be soft branded. That is not finalized as of yet.

The restaurant will use local products both on the food side and the wineries, and breweries being featured. There is some outdoor seating on the creekside. The developer 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. He compared the hotel to the Choice Hotel in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Their goal is to develop relationships with local farmers and craft brewer, cideries, wineries and spirits purveyors in helping them market their products at the restaurant.

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

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

Brick paving on the walkway will be pervious to 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. 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 first level will be a masonry texture, maybe limestone, but it has not been decided as of yet, per Mr. Songer. The building will be pre-cast.

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. It will be brick faced building blending in with the historic character of the area.

The resident component of the third structure was discussed. There are 40 proposed units, 32 2 bed 2 bath and 8 1 bed 1 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 two bedrooms range from a little over 1,200 square foot not including the patios. The one bedroom 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. Floorplans were included in the HARB packets. Ed Olsen, a local architect will be working on this part of the project. He could not be in attendance.

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.

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. He compared it to The Arts Hotel in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

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.

He is working with the Chamber and the Downtown Bellefonte, Inc. regarding activities to be held along the promenade. All that needs to be developed in the future.

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 exterior will be brick and a material similar to stucco. The elevations will be changed up to make it appear as not one big long line and allow for some variance.

The developer 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 cost 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.

Mr. McGinley offered that he liked the idea of bringing in a grocery store for downtown. Mr. Songer was excited to explore this possibility. They have been in discussions with a few at this juncture.

Mr. Songer confirmed that the buildings will be energy efficient, but not LEED certified. With the new updates to the Pa. Building Code, the construction will be close to LEED certification, but not at that point.

HARB members spoke about the buildings. Mr. McGinley held public comment until the HARB board was done with discussions.

The conceptual approval phase reviews the basic architectural design of the structure – form, general materials, etc. The height, scale and mass of the building are also discussed in this juncture in context of both the site and the historic district, per Ms. Wright. This would be a conceptual approval of the general direction the project is going, and it would move from there into each phase based on the recommendation of the board. Each phase gets more detailed. By the time the final approval is ready, it will be all of the materials, the colors, so the approval will be final at a later stage.

**Mr. Wagner moved to approve the conceptual plan with the developer will return at another HARB meeting with more information.**

**Ms. Dunne seconded the motion.**

Ms. Dunne inquired about the hotel height and the garage. She wanted to know how it compared with some of the older buildings like the Bush Arcade, and the building across the street and the Gamble Mill which was not shown in the context sketches. Ms. Wright stated that all of those buildings are between 40-50 feet, not including the eaves and the roof. Mr. Wagner asked about zoning impacts. Ms. Wright stated that the developer is requesting an increase in building height to 65 feet.

Mr. Songer stated that the highest ceiling on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor is 56 feet 8 inches. It is a little higher than 50 feet. The garage floor of the fourth floor is 52 feet and the commercial residential building fourth floor residential ceiling is 51 feet. The waterfront is the lowest area of the downtown business district.

Ms. Long discussed the roof and the architecture looking like a gateway. There was concern that the buildings were too large and we taking up much of the site. Ms. Wright stated that the area was historically was extremely built up prior to Talleyrand Park and the Waterfront development. It looked like uptown. Ms. Tooker opined that the old structure was far enough away from the Gamble Mill that it did not look odd but now three big buildings are proposed next to the Gamble Mill which is dwarfed.

Ms. Tooker stated that the Secretary of the Interior states “each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development such as adding conjectural features or other elements from other buildings shall not be taken.” She offered that there needs to be compatibility with new construction and existing construction. The compatibility is with size, massing, set back and scale and sometimes there needs to be a compatibility of window size, or other aspect. Ms. Tooker inquired how the developer chose to honor that.

Mr. Songer stated that they have gone through a lot of different iterations. He suggested that the architects will be at the next HARB meeting and they will be able to answer those questions. Ms. Wright will summarize the concerns and they will be passed on to the architect.

Ms. Tooker was concerned with the stucco-like substance that will be used on the exterior. She wondered if the introduction of another material would work within the district. The board would like to see a good mix of new materials while still having elements that tie the buildings to the district.

Mr. Wagner talked about The Garman wherein the developer showed HARB the architectural features that were brought from other buildings downtown into their building. That may be helpful to do in this case as well.

It was encouraged that because of its prominence on High Street and the entrance to town, that the hotel building be the most distinct of the three.

Mr. Tommy Songer stated that some focus groups suggested not focusing as much on historic, but rather add a “hip” feel while respecting the architecture in the neighborhood and also not replicate downtown Bellefonte so that the younger generations and persons looking for a more active environmental may not be swayed away. The area will create areas for visitor and residents to hang out and shop, and open-air eating.

*(members speaking amongst themselves)*

Comparison to the Brockeroff Building and other large anchor buildings in town like the Crider Exchange and Bush Arcade was discussed. The hotel and other structures being constructed on one of the lowest points in Bellefonte will not appear as massive as they would be one block up.

It was opined that these three new buildings and the reestablishment of Dunlap Street are essentially creating a new streetscape. It needs to be determined what that new streetscape should look like.

Public comments were taken and asked to be kept to a few minutes each.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey commented on the elevations from Spring Creek and High Street sides. People do walk down Dunlap Street. She would like to see elevations from that street.

**Motion carried with Mr. Lingenfelter recusing.**

**Landscaping**

Robert Lingenfelter discussed the landscape portion of the project. He discussed the history of Bellefonte being built on the water resource. Other cultural resources were also discussed, like the railroad and the philatelic museum, as well as the Victorian architecture.

Bellefonte is the perfect dovetail for the waterfront project. He gave a brief history of the existing structures in the area and incorporating their stories in the bigger picture of the proposed waterfront project. Mr. Lingenfelter spoke about the railroad, the silk mill, Edison's company, and other landmarks and their rich history in the area and those being firsts in the Borough. The canal was discussed. When the canal was built Spring Creek was declared a public highway. Mr. Lingenfelter discussed how the canal played into the historical beginning of Bellefonte. He would like to bring the history into the project and produce a positive user experience for people walking the waterfront, adding something more there, and becoming a destination in its own right for people coming into town.

He stated that the entire district is linked to the waterfront project.

**Ms. Tooker moved to conceptually approve the interpretive elements of the site plan.**

**Mr. Wagner seconded the motion.**

Discussion was held on the lighting and trees. The promenade will be open to the public. Mr. Songer hopes to have a lot of events scheduled on the waterfront area.

There was a break in the history of Bellefonte that a member of the audience inquired about what occurred after Edison. Mr. Lingenfelter suggested getting information from the community. Ms. Dunne discussed Talleyrand Park which was gradually developed into its current form and this can be referenced in the landscape plan. This has been going on for many years. Mr. Lingenfelter offered that there is the history of the site itself and the history of the Borough of Bellefonte.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey suggested that perhaps the turbine sitting under the Gamble Mill (which the new owners do not want to use) can be used as an interpretative landscaping idea.

Thomas Wilson spoke about the history of the area. He stated that while it is an asset, a lot of time is spent looking back but maybe not enough time is spent looking to the future. Bellefonte needs to find the sweet spot where people are not tripping over each other and not taking up a lot of time worrying about the past. He understood that historic preservation is important, but he thinks the community gets too wrapped up in the historic presentation of the town and does not spend enough time looking to the future of how the Borough can move ahead with some of the things that will be important to the younger generation

Randy Brachbill stated that he liked the what he saw with the vision of the development. He also stated that the history is important as it tells a story. He hopes that when this plan goes through the process that lines are not drawn in the sand and that HARB provides options to the developer.

**Motion carried with Mr. Lingenfelter recusing.**

The developer will come to the next HARB meeting to further discuss the project.

**ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL:** Nothing presented.

**INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:** Nothing presented.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Ms. Tosti-Vasey asked if HARB had a timeline for the Downtown Maintenance Ordinance and the HARB ordinance updates. Ms. Wright stated that she does not have a timeline as the development at the waterfront sidelined the other items.

**Trash Cans near The Faith Centre**

Ms. Long talked about the garbage containers near The Faith Center. The wooden containers need to be removed if they have not been removed yet.

Mr. Johnson opined that he could not believe that the wooden containers were approved by HARB as they do not look nice at all. He agreed that the cans being open to view should not be there but the area for the cans should have been designed by a professional. The wooden barriers have not been kept up and the trash cans are viewable behind it.

Mr. McGinley stated that Council would have approved the wooden container, and HARB would have just recommended the approval. Mr. Johnson would be willing to use taxpayer money to help design something that looks much better than is there now.

Ms. Wright discussed how this situation may apply in the proposed Downtown Maintenance ordinance that goes beyond what is in place now. Part of the problem is that while the covering was approved, there is no means to enforce its upkeep.

The property maintenance code was discussed, and Mr. Wagner stated that it is revised on a regular basis. Ms. Dunne stated she thought that periodically Council would look at it and make necessary changes that would be needed.

Mr. McGinley stated that the Housing Authority knows it is an issue and they are working with State Burger to resolve this. Mr. McGinley will approach them again to try to gain some closure on this issue.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Nothing presented.

**ADJOURNMENT:**



With no other business to come before HARB,

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.