

**New Hope Borough Planning Commission**  
**Monday, March 21, 2022**  
**Meeting Minutes**

The New Hope Borough Planning Commission met on March 21, 2022, in the public meeting room. In attendance and voting were Chairman Keith Voss and members Jason Apuzzio, Lawrence Greenberg and Lou Bellafronte. Also in attendance were David Kimmerly and Matthew Walters of the Bucks County Planning Commission (BCPC) and Mary Stover, Interim Zoning Officer.

**Call to Order:** Mr. Voss called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Public Comment:**

Jay Freeo of 186 S. Main Street: Mr. Freeo discussed how he has attended various meetings at the Borough and has heard about a 10-year plan. He stated that the intersection of Bridge St. and Main St. is busy with frequent back-ups. He is concerned that more multi-family units are being constructed which would exacerbate the traffic issues. Mr. Bellafronte indicated that traffic is a challenge since the Borough was not built around traffic/vehicle access. Mr. Voss stated that the Borough is at a point where there is the opportunity to update the Borough's Master Plan. The update of the prior plan is something that the Planning Commission will be starting to address in the near future. Mr. Greenberg indicated that he likes that New Hope is a walkable town. Mr. Freeo stated that since Main St. and Bridge St. are state roads, the Borough may be limited as to what can be done. Mr. Freeo is concerned that the preparation of a 10-year plan could take another 2 years, and, in the meantime, more and more multi-family buildings may be constructed. It was discussed that the Borough should address affordable housing for people that work in New Hope.

**Approval of the February 24, 2022 and March 10, 2022 Minutes:**

Mr. Greenberg made a motion to approve the February 24, 2022 and March 10, 2022 meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Apuzzio. The motion passed 4-0.

**Protection of Historic Resources:** Mr. Kimmerly noted that after seeing the public reaction to the proposed RB-1 & RB-2 Zoning Ordinance amendment, the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment to include restrictions for demolishing historic resources outside of the Historic District may cause additional concern from property owners. There was discussion about providing a way to "opt out" if the property owner objected. It was noted that the ability to "opt out" is not something that is appropriate for a Zoning Ordinance requirement. Mr. Greenberg asked about due process if the property owner did not want to be included. Mr. Kimmerly stated that since the restrictions for demolition would be part of the Zoning Ordinance, a property owner could apply to the Zoning Hearing Board for relief. There was discussion about how to let the public know in advance that these revisions are being considered. The first step is to have the inventory established so the potentially affected property owners could be advised about the proposed ordinance amendment early in the process. Mr. Bellafronte asked Mr. Kimmerly if other communities provided advance notice to residents. Mr. Kimmerly responded that most communities do not provide advance notice.

Mr. Kimmerly asked if the inventory should include things that are not buildings such as sites, objects or other structures. This would include cemeteries, statues, walls, fences, etc. Mr. Greenberg noted that when the Logan Inn was being considered people were concerned about a large spruce tree and a cannon

on the site. Mr. Kimmerly said it may have been possible to preserve the cannon. Mr. Bellafronte asked what types of sites or objects are in the Borough that we would want to protect. Mr. Kimmerly noted that there are 2 historic cemeteries located outside of the Historic District. However, these sites would be protected by other laws. Mr. Greenberg felt that they should just include buildings or structures. Mr. Kimmerly stated that they will have to define what types of structures to consider for the inventory.

Mr. Kimmerly reviewed some of the language changes since the last discussion. He noted that the purpose was to remove all references to the Historic District and allow that District to be regulated by Chapter 10 of the Borough Code. He is concerned about conflicting requirements.

There was discussion regarding how the inventory would be prepared. Ms. Stover noted that the Borough Manager has been advised that the Planning Commission has made a recommendation to Council to put out a Request for Proposal to prepare this inventory. There was a discussion of how this could be performed and what buildings would be included. Mr. Kimmerly stated that any building over 50 years old would be evaluated. Mr. Greenberg asked why 50 years old was the starting point. Mr. Kimmerly noted this is a national standard for when a building could be considered historic. This does not mean that any building over 50 years would be on the inventory. Other factors would be considered such as whether the building or structure was important for its association with an important person or event or was significant for its architecture, workmanship, design or construction technique.

The Conditional Use requirements and criteria were discussed. Mr. Kimmerly stated that he would work on possible incentives to property owners to preserve buildings and potential uses that could be permitted to encourage preservation. Mr. Greenberg asked how “economic feasibility” or “reasonable rate of return” would be determined to determine if preservation was feasible. There would need to be a benefit to the property owner. Mr. Bellafronte asked about allowing construction around the historic structure. Mr. Kimmerly noted that proposed amendment would not restrict new construction. Council could potentially address any new construction as part of the Conditional Use approval.

Mr. Greenberg noted that the reference to “single lens reflex camera” in Section G.6 should be revised to simply state professional grade photographs. Mr. Apuzzio stated that in Section F, “h” and “j” were the same. It was discussed that “h” should be removed.

Mr. Kimmerly said he was considering the removal of Section I. There was discussion that a different section of the ordinance could include the appropriate restrictions that would remain for properties in the Historic District that would not apply to properties identified on the inventory.

Mr. Kimmerly will prepare revisions to the ordinance section for the next Planning Commission meeting.

**CC - Central Commercial District:** The last time this section was discussed, it was noted that the current Zoning Ordinance does not allow for two principal uses on a lot. Ms. Stover noted that she reviewed Zoning Ordinances from various Boroughs in Pennsylvania with walkable downtown areas. Many of these ordinances allow for a permitted use that was identified as a “Mixed Use” which would allow for multiple uses in one building. If this use were added as a permitted use in the CC District, then a new “Use” would need to be added to the ordinance for a “Mixed Use”. In the use definition, the types of multiple uses permitted could be defined so that retail or commercial uses would be required at street level and other uses such as apartments or offices would be permitted on other floors.

Mr. Greenberg felt that there should not be a parking requirement for apartments in the Mixed Use. Mr. Kimmerly noted that sometimes parking would be required for the most intense use in the building and not a combination of all uses. There was a discussion about whether more than one apartment would be permitted. Currently, the permitted uses in the CC District only allow one apartment in combination with a business. Mr. Voss noted if more apartments were permitted this would be an expansion of residential uses. Ms. Stover noted that some of the ordinances for other Boroughs required minimum square footage for apartments, sometimes based on the number of bedrooms, to limit multiple small apartments. Mr. Greenberg noted that any apartment should be required to have a full bath and kitchen as a minimum.

There was a discussion that there is a "Mixed Use" Zoning District in the Borough. Mr. Kimmerly looked up the permitted uses in the Mixed-Use District and noted that that a combination of residential and office use was permitted. If a new "Mixed Use" was defined, the Borough may want to rename this Zoning District to avoid confusion.

Mr. Walters stated that they could revise the ordinance based on the discussions this evening.

**Discussion:** Mr. Freeo made a suggestion that when the agenda is posted, it would be helpful if the items were more descriptive. He came this evening because he saw "Protection of Historic Resources" but did not know what this would include. He also suggested if it was a "hot button" issue maybe they would want to put an advertisement in the newspaper.

Mr. Freeo asked about the proposed inventory and regulations for historic resources. He asked if a consultant or the Borough would prepare the inventory. It was noted that a consultant would be hired for the inventory. There was further discussion regarding what would be included in an inventory of historic resources.

Mr. Bellafronte asked about a potential survey of business owners in the Borough regarding the proposed revisions to the CC District. Mr. Kimmerly noted that Bucks County is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan and as part of this process, the County had conducted surveys in the County. He stated some of this information was available on the County website. Mr. Voss advised the Planning Commission that they would be asked to help with updating the Borough's Comprehensive Plan in the near future and they may want to start thinking about what this Plan should include.

**Adjournment:** Mr. Bellafronte made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Apuzzio seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.