

New Hope Borough Planning Commission
Monday, April 6, 2020, 7:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

As Bucks County is subject to the Governor's "Stay at Home Order," the April 6, 2020 Planning Commission meeting was held via teleconference where members of the public was able to by dialing 1-646- 876-9923 and by entering the Meeting Identification Number of 672 819 059.

___ Jason Apuzzio ___ Paul Atkinson ___ Nick Gialias
___ Peter Meyer ___ Howard Savin ___ Keith Voss, Chair

A. Call to Order: Chair Voss called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM

PC Members present: Jason Apuzzio, Paul Atkinson, Nick Gialias, Peter Meyer, Howard Savin, and Keith Voss.

Staff Liaisons present: Tracy Tackett, Zoning Officer; EJ Lee, Outgoing Borough Manager; Peter Gray, New/Incoming Borough Manager

Members of the public present: Greg Herlan (resident on Old York Rd), Michael Wieners (owner of business), Joe Gimpel (resident on Old York Rd)

Mr. Voss opened the floor up to the residents on the call to give them a chance to bring up the items of concern that brought them to the PC meeting.

Mr. Herlan inquired about the status of the 385 Bridge St. Land Development application that was reviewed at the February PC meeting, to which Ms. Tackett explained that the LD application is scheduled to be reviewed at the May PC meeting. Ms. Lee further commented that the letter that Mr. Herlan submitted on behalf of the residents of Old York Road to voice their concerns about the LD application proposed for 385 Bridge St. will also be shared with the PC members as well as Council during the LD application review process.

Mr. Weiner voiced his concern about the state of affairs of the local businesses and the impact that the COVID shutdown has had. He is frustrated with the limited funding options available and difficulty in obtaining any viable financial relief for businesses. Mr. Meyers responded that he concurs with Mr. Weiner's experience and is working to see what he and Council can do.

Mr. Gimpel voiced the same concerns that Mr. Herlan shared.

B. New Business

1. Draft zoning ordinance to eliminate alternative parking standards

2. Draft zoning ordinance to make 'Inn' use permitted via conditional use rather than special exception

Mr. Voss opened up the floor for discussions related to the two new zoning ordinance amendments with a background of the two ordinance amendments and how they came to be.

Upon Mr. Voss providing a background summary, Mr. Gialias voiced his concern for the long term effects of changing the approval process of the Inn Use from a Special Exception to Conditional Use, to which Mr. Meyer responded that Council's long-term plan is to continue reviewing the entire review process to come up with a more long-term process for further discussion and consideration by the PC in the near future. The two zoning ordinance amendments for consideration now is the short-term solution to some of the issues that the Borough has been dealing with in the last several months with respect to land development.

Mr. Apuzzio asked how these two zoning ordinance amendments affect current and active land development applications that are currently under review, to which Ms. Tackett explained that those applications are grandfathered in, so these two zoning ordinance amendments do not affect any current application – only future applications.

In reviewing each zoning ordinance amendment, Mr. Voss opened up the floor for public comments regarding just the zoning ordinance for amendment to the alternative parking options.

Mr. Weiner commented that it is important for Council to be concerned with not just the guests that new development brings but also the increase in employees and other internal impacts.

Mr. Voss then opened up the floor for discussion on the Inn Use.

Ms. Tackett started off by reminding everyone that the public notification process for a Special Exception application and Conditional use application are the same, so there will be no change to the public notification process with the zoning ordinance amendment.

Mr. Savin asked how Mr. Meyer's role as both a PC member and Council member is affected by the change of review process from Special Exception to Conditional Use, to which Mr. Meyer responded that the MPC allows for a member of Council to serve on the PC, so there would be no change or effect as a result of this use review change.

Upon further discussion, Mr. Voss opened up the floor for a motion and vote on the two zoning ordinance amendments.

Mr. Meyer made a motion to recommend approval of propose zoning ordinance amendment to eliminate alternative parking standards. Mr. Voss seconded that motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5-1 with Mr. Savin voting no.

Mr. Meyer made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed zoning ordinance amendment to make 'Inn' use permitted via conditional use rather than special exception. Mr. Atkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0.

Mr. Voss reminded everyone to please complete and submit their Statement of Financial Interest to the Borough if they have not done so.

C. Adjournment – 8:06 PM