

NEW HOPE BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

-Minutes-

June 1, 2020

7:00pm

Virtual Meeting
125 New Street
New Hope, PA 18938

I. 7:00 PM Regular Meeting

Members of the New Hope Borough Planning Commission in attendance included Chairman Keith Voss, Nick Gialias, Howard Savin, Jason Apuzzio, Paul Atkinson, and Peter Meyer.

Borough representatives in attendance include: Zoning Officer Tracy Tackett and Borough Engineer Karen MacNair

Bucks County Planning Commission (BCPC) representative in attendance includes Matthew Walters

Members of the public: Brett Weber

A. Call to Order

Mr. Voss called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

B. Review of Minutes

Mr. Howard moved; seconded by Mr. Meyers, to approve the May 4, 2020 New Hope Borough Planning Commission meeting minutes. MOTION passed 6-0.

C. Old Business

None

D. New Business

- Zoning Ordinance Amendment Review: Alternative Parking Arrangements

BCPC staff provided draft ordinance language for alternative parking standards. Borough staff provided preliminary comments prior to the meeting. Discussion is summarized as follows:

- It was suggested that the buy-out option for parking spaces be tiered, so that a business that only needs to buy out of a few spaces can do so inexpensively, but have the fees increase on a graduated basis up to a maximum buy-out option. Maybe 10 spaces would be the maximum.
- Another suggestion was that maybe the buy-out standards could be in terms of percentages of the overall parking requirement. Concern was expressed that percentages may not be the right approach, because it affects small businesses differently than large businesses.

- Suggested clarification of subsections M (1) and (2) relating to loss of valet lease arrangement and how that would be handled. Suggested some clear alternatives relating to lease changes. Outline timeline to find alternative arrangements.
 - Concern was expressed that small businesses may have a harder time implementing the valet parking option.
 - A question was raised regarding whether the fees are going toward parking capacity.
 - Public Comment- A question was asked about the status of completing Borough-wide traffic studies. Is anything in the works?
 - It was reported that a grant was recently awarded to the Borough for a parking and traffic study. Mr. Weber asked if the Borough anticipated that the study would be completed prior to the adoption of new alternative parking standards. Ms. Tackett stated that it may make sense to have the parking study completed prior to the adoption of new alternative parking standards.
 - It was suggested that any new standards to be adopted should not be subjective, but rather easily quantifiable.
 - It was reported that the Planning Commission recently reviewed the proposed traffic flow of valet traffic associated with the Riverhouse at Odettes.
 - Regarding the annual valet permit requirement, it was suggested that the Borough keep this and implement a permit process. A suggestion was made that maybe the Borough work with businesses to develop a self-reporting system and consider waiving any fees initially until a good database is established.
- Zoning Ordinance Amendment Review: New Use Valet Parking Area
 - PC supports valet parking approval via conditional use rather than special exception.
 - It was asked if there is a threshold for increased requirements when a larger number of spaces are proposed for valet or buy-out. The current draft does not have any thresholds. It was suggested that thresholds be incorporated into the draft so that larger developments proposing significant valet or buy-out of parking be required to conduct a more detailed analysis of the potential impact.
 - It was noted that rather than create a new valet parking area use, it may be better to have this as a subsection to the existing parking area use with specific standards.
 - It was also suggested the draft be revised to incorporate standards for valet parking areas as a primary use and as an accessory use.
 - Suggestion that valet parking be defined.
 - Include hours of operation for valet parking areas, requirements relating to staffing requirements. Hours may differ depending on district.
 - A question was asked about whether valet parking lots would be required to be run by a professional business.

- Suggestion that the Borough needs to conduct the traffic study to understand the current impacts of valet and traffic.
- The Borough needs to keep in mind that valet parking has the potential to be a bigger impact to surrounding properties due to the higher frequency of cars in and out and the late hours of activity.
- It was suggested that the parking study will be helpful in developing the alternative parking standards.
- Staff will define tandem parking and allow parking to be stacked as part of the use.
- Make 8 x 18 parking spaces standard
- It was noted the buffer yards do not differ.
- Joint uses- consider how the buffers would apply in a situation where the site is already developed. Consider some flexibility to buffer requirements as it relates to this alternative.
- Discussion about signage and whether signage should be required at the entrance to an area used for valet parking. Discussion regarding whether a permanent or temporary sign is appropriate. It was suggested that a permanent sign should be required at the entrance to clarify the use of the space for valet parking and the time dedicated to valet uses.

Conclusion: County staff will revise the draft ordinances to reflect the discussion of the Planning Commission.

E. Public Comment/Discussion

- It was suggested that the PC could provide some recommendations to Borough Council regarding opportunities to support the reopening of the commercial core and give businesses a chance get extra exposure. Discussion items included the following.
 - Closing Mechanic Street near Main Street to allow businesses to flow into the street.
 - Possibly close Stockton Avenue to allow businesses to utilize the extra space.
 - Close off street/right-of-way across from DiNapoli's.
 - Waterloo- consider closing to allow expanded uses and may encourage businesses to clean up the back portion.
 - Suggested maybe a mid-week 'event' to encourage shops to expand outward to encourage visitors.
 - Discussed making Stockton one way to support business expansion outdoors.
 - Consider rotating street closures throughout the summer season to allow different areas of the downtown, discussion emphasized North Main potential. Would like to see the businesses on N. Main get more business. It was mentioned that this could be a burden for police and the public works department.
 - Concern was expressed about the potential issues of closing a residential street for commercial uses. Potential conflict was raised.
 - Suggested that opportunities should be pursued and business asked.

- Suggested a motion could be made that Council consider one or more of the proposals discussed. PC would like to see the Borough expand the road closure opportunities where possible.
- It was suggested that Mr. Voss could attend the Borough Council meeting to discuss this topic.
- Suggested that if possible to expand space in the front of the individual businesses by shifting pedestrian traffic to the parking area and temporarily removing parking this would allow business to utilize additional outdoor space in proximity to business. Barriers would be needed. This keeps the commercial uses in the commercial zones and it makes it equitable for the businesses. It could be a rotation. It was noted this does not help the businesses on Bridge Street.
- PC agreed that Chairman Voss would share ideas with Borough Council on behalf of the Planning Commission.

F. Adjournment

Mr. Meyer MOVED; seconded by Mr. Meyers to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:10 PM.