

New Hope Borough
Planning Commission
June 19, 2023 / 6:30 PM

The New Hope Borough Planning Commission met on Monday, June 19, 2023 at the Borough Hall community meeting room.

ROLL CALL:

Present: PC Chairman Keith Voss, PC members Lawrence Greenberg, Peter Meyer, Kelly Whitman

Also present: Bucks County Planning Commission (BCPC) members Matthew Walters and David Kimmerly as well as Mary Stover, Interim Zoning Officer, and Lisa Littlefield, Zoning Officer.

CALL TO ORDER:

Keith Voss called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Peter Meyer (PM) was not present at the May 2023 meeting. Lawrence Greenberg (LG) made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Kelly Whitman (KW). The motion passed 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion on Sign Ordinance revisions

Discussion on the revisions to the Sign Ordinance continued. Matthew Walters (MW) discussed placement of illuminated signs with the draft Ordinance and whether reflective signs should be included under the definition. Keith Voss (KV) discussed externally illuminated signs, believe they should remain under "F".

MW brought up sign projections, such signs should be three dimensional.

Definitions: Landmark signs (10): KW brought up historical signs, should that mean signs 60 years or older. It was discussed whether there should be a specific date to latch onto. PM said we should use 60 years as a reference point, with signs installed more than 50 years ago. Recommended changing verbiage in description to "and/or".

KV had questions on (15). Anything that is not commercial doesn't fit into this category, concerned about that. PM brought up that Borough Council discussed temporary banners at their last public meeting. Need to worry about signs that are not just commercial in nature. It was suggested about deleting "commercial" language in definition. Eliminating that it is believed would capture all signs, not just commercial signs. Use "specific" instead

of “commercial” in the definition. KV believes the grammatical nature of the definition is an issue. Rework grammatically, take out “direction” and leave “which”. KV suggested reworking grammatically further, not a unanimous consensus by all members.

LG believes public art should be moved into exempt signs and out of the definition. Lisa Littlefield (LL) brought up exempt signs, asked if they will be included in the sign Ordinance update. These are defined under current ZO. David Kimmerly (DK) said that exempt signs will be added for individual zoning districts in the future.

(20) Size was discussed next. Discussion regarding how sign area is defined. PM suggested using language for smallest possible rectangular. Tied into (16). KV asked if we are discussing sign height. Height is covered in other sections. However, KV believes the language is confusing as “height” could be confused with total height of sign (freestanding with a pole as an example). Are we envisioning the area as the only defining characteristic of the sign. Should we mandate maximum vertical height or maximum horizontal width. Not really clear that this should be mandated as it is unclear what the mandates would be.

Considered blending (16) and (20) together for sign area. Reword sign size to sign area. However, need sign area to include background independent of sign lettering - Wells Fargo bank recently proposed text on a separate red background. Definition should include smallest rectangle enclosing the actual message or copy area and including any background.

BCPC mentioned they will include table of sign types and sizes in the future for easier reference.

LL brought up monument and freestanding sign types. Should we include two different definitions along with different height/width restrictions. Need to define sign width and height for structure of sign specifically.

KV asked about signage for open & closed, BCPC brought up cut-out sign as example.

A member in the public, Jay Freeo (JF), asked about how you use a rectangle to determine. Reaffirmed definition of rectangular sign re: size.

Should the Ordinance consider larger signs that have a greater footprint for rectangle signs. It was discussed that perhaps they should be addressed under creative signs.

Flag discussion - Does that only refer to signs that have messages, or should it include logos, colors, etc. Going back to sign area, should they be included in definition? Is the pride flag or American flag a symbol. The answer is that the Ordinance cannot regulate government flags.

The members discussed not wanting banners under permanent signs. They should only be defined under temporary signs. Should banners be included into sign area definition or are they already addressed. Are pennant flags defined by rectangle area or do they have their own definition. Perhaps expand (16) to include. Sign area may need to include color flags/banners as a combination of flags could constitute a message. KV wants sign

area to encompass all possible signs, wonders if the definition feels all encompassing. May revisit when discussing banners.

(12) Incidental signs will be included under exempt signs. Exempt signage means a permit is not required.

(23) Projecting signs, change to blade signs, confusing otherwise thinking it would be a "projector" sign. All instances of projecting changed to blade signs.

(27) Snipe signs. Could be more than one type of sign (snipe and blade sign, etc.). Rework definition for example to include placed on public property.

D.2 Location of signs. If a banner is placed by a government agency then it could project over the street. Considering reworking definition to make it less harsh and less broad. Excepting permitted banners, defining banners later in a separate section.

D.4 Signs within a right-of-way, except for blade signs for buildings that are within or close to the right-of-way, businesses along Main St as example. If the sign is attached to building, it can be within right-of-way. If the sign is freestanding, it cannot be within right-of-way. Do not want signs within the grass strip between curb and sidewalk. No sign shall be located within a right-of-way. Change No sign shall to No sign may.

Discussion on Comprehensive Plan

PM asked about Borough Council to request the PC to look at comprehensive plan to review. PM said he will ask Council to vote on authorization for PC to move forward with review/consideration of comprehensive plan.

JF (public) asked how the process works. PM responded that consultants will help to write comprehensive plan and guide the committee & PC. PC will have input on the consultant. The Steering Committee will be developed with Borough Council.

Borough Council will discuss who is going to be on committee from the public. KV suggested each PC member should put together a wishlist of items they would like, walkability, streets, etc. JF suggested that items from comprehensive plan in 2011 be implemented.

PM mentioned that to keep in mind when consultants are picked, need to be careful of falling into boiler plate specifications that may not apply to NH.

ADJOURNED at 8:55 PM