



JENKINTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
April 22nd, 2019
7:00pm-8:30pm
325 Highland Avenue, Jenkintown Pennsylvania

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance

Members Present: Gabriel Lerman – Chairperson, Phil Zimmerman, Joe Hentz, Lucinda Bartley
Members Absent: Jon McCandlish, Glen Morris
Others Present: George Locke – Borough Manager, Deborah Sines-Pancoe, Kieran Farrell

Reports

Meeting minutes from March were approved.

New Business

Review and Update of the Community Local Historic Resource Inventory

Following Planning Commission (PC) recommendation of updates to the existing Borough Historic Resource Inventory and subsequent public notice of affected properties, several concerned property owners (or representatives of property owners) were present to voice concern and contest the addition of specific properties listed.

A representative of a proposed listed property located at 467 Old York Road, the former Helweg's Funeral Home, presented a statement concerning a lack of clarity regarding the language used to define a historic structure within the Borough's zoning code as it relates to the Community Historic Registry.

The owners/representative requested that the property be removed from the proposed list due to the arbitrary nature of the historical category under which the property was included.

Representatives of property owners for a listed property located at 821 Homestead Road, the current Church of Our Savior building, were also in attendance. They also expressed concern with the vagueness of the Borough code's historical categorization language, and further expressed apprehension in their property's inclusion on the list for fear that this would limit the owners' options for building repair, alteration, sale or limit future use or value of the property.

The PC discussed the definitions of historical structure categories; Landmark, Historic and Contributing. They reiterated their understanding of the nuanced differences between the three designations and explained the process by which various properties were recommend to be included in the updated Historical Resource Inventory.

The PC discussed with Borough solicitor what options might be available for bringing more clarity to the definitions through revisions to language in the code. The PC was advised that this would likely be a lengthy process that would involve further review and approval by Borough Council.

The PC considered various options for action regarding the proposed updates to the Historic Resource Inventory in light of arguments made by property owners in attendance; including proceeding with recommendation of the full list for Borough Council (BC) approval, recommending an adjusted list for BC approval with the two complainant properties removed, and tabling of any recommendation pending further review of proposed properties and code language.

The PC decided to table the recommendation pending further discussion.

441/443 Leedom Street: Zoning Hearing Board Request

The PC reviewed a proposed development located at 441/443 Leedom St, with the applicant requesting minor zoning relief to two existing twin units and to add a new structure to a rear yard consisting of a storage garage with apartment above. In addition, the property owner was requesting that the current single property be subdivided into three separate properties to accommodate both twin units as well as the proposed rear garage.

The PC inquired about access to the rear property, and the owner confirmed that access would be maintained via an exiting driveway and access easement.

The owner clarified that proposed new paving consisted of parking behind the twins, and parking behind the new garage structure. They furthermore confirmed the proposal's compliance with Borough code required pervious surface requirements.

The PC expressed concern over the perceived small size of the proposed twin unit parking, as well as access from the driveway to that parking and associated turning radiuses/driving clearances. The owner stated that although the proposed configuration was tight, it did comply with Borough required parking dimensions and would function effectively as parking for the twin units.

The PC stated their reluctance in recommending an approved design that subdivided the current single lot into three lots, one of which would contain a non-residential use. The property owner stated that there was precedent for this type of use previously on the property due to an existing rear structure formerly used as a business. The PC reiterated their concern and inquired about how future uses of the rear property might have unforeseen or unintentional negative ramifications. PC apprehension was joined by the concern of several community and BC members present at the meeting.

The PC indicated that they would not recommend the current plan for BC approval, and present BC members stated their doubts that an approval would be granted regardless based upon the current proposal. The property owner asked what concessions might be made so that the project would be approved, and the PC asked that the single property be only subdivided into two properties and that the proposed rear yard subdivision and garage structure be omitted from the proposal. The property owner agreed and asked that the PC consider immediate recommendation for approval based on that condition with the understanding that the revised proposal be presented to the PC in a subsequent meeting. The PC agreed.

A motion was made for PC recommendation for BC approval. The motion was seconded and granted with all in favor.