

The regular meeting of the Souderton Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm on the above date by Chairman Edward Huber. Other Commission members present included Jeffrey Gross, Calvin Munden and Andrew Schlosser. The meeting was attended by Borough Manager P. Michael Coll and Danielle Baer, AICP, Montgomery County Planning Commission. The meeting was also attended by Borough Councillors Daryl Littlefield and Donna Rogers.

Chairman Huber noted that the minutes from the July 6, 2022 and August 3, 2022 have been prepared for review. A motion was made by Jeffrey Gross and seconded by Andrew Schlosser, to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2022 and the August 3, 2022 meetings of the Planning Commission as presented. The motion was approved.

Chairman Huber next recognized Nate Clemmer, recent owner of 30 W. Chestnut Street and his engineer Brad Bissinger of Renew to provide a cursory review of renovation plans for the former automotive repair garage. This property was previously purchased by Kyle Hoff who presented a renovation plan to convert this property, but decided to sell to Nate Clemmer.

Nate Clemmer discussed his interest in Souderton Borough and the revitalization of the Borough's downtown business district. He familiarized himself with the needs and revitalization goals and priorities. Nate Clemmer and his engineer presented a conceptual plan to renovate the former automotive garage into a taproom and café use. The site is fully paved. He proposes to remove the paving to create a courtyard space with pavers, landscaping and outdoor furnishings. The space can be open to a number of venues or it can support neighboring venues or local events. It will primarily be an evening and weekend venue operated by Branch Creek Brewing Company.

Nate Clemmer is working on a shared parking agreement either with neighboring Univest or possibly Emmanuel Lutheran Church at the end of the block. The grade surrounding the property presents some challenge. A retaining wall is contemplated around the property. A rather small addition is planned for the building to create an appropriate kitchen space. A pergola structure will be added to the front of the building. A food truck may also service the property with both interior and exterior seating. Trash to be handled through totes. Danielle Baer commented that the food truck staging area may be confused as a driveway for motorists. The development should consider placement of bicycle racks.

Planning Commission members expressed support for the proposed redevelopment project. Nate Clemmer will continue to refine the plans and work on finalizing a shared parking agreement.

John Kennedy of Kennedy Associates, along with representatives of the Souderton Charter School, requested time to discuss future plans for property at 27 S. Front Street. The Charter School recently demolished the building at 27 S. Front Street. The Charter school purchased this property in March of 2019 with an intention to integrate the use of the building into the school operations. The Souderton Zoning Hearing Board granted a variance request to

use this building for administrative purposes. Funding became a major concern to restore the building, with the ultimate decision to demolish the structure. The demolition created some significant criticism over social media platforms, along with some members of the Souderton-Telford Historic Commission.

John Kennedy noted that the Charter School has no immediate plans to redevelop the property. The Charter School would like to request the continued use of the six stoned parking spaces that originally supported the building. Planning Commission members expressed concern that parking is not a permitted principal use of a property and, by demolishing the building, the Charter School has technically created a zoning issue. The Borough Zoning Officer Michael Coll did concede to the continued use of the six existing stone parking spaces, but there cannot be any further expansion. The Planning Commission suggested that the Charter School may consider a playground use on this lot to free up parking space in the Noble Street parking lot which is used for outdoor play and recess activities. The Planning Commission further suggested that the Zoning Officer document the use of this property and the setting of time lines for continued use.

Danielle Baer, AICP, further discussed recommendations concerning the sign ordinance. She circulated a memorandum dated September 1, 2022 which addresses types of box signs. The Planning Commission discussed permitting box signs with an opaque background with only the commercial messaging illuminated. Planning Commission members would like to make the entire sign ordinance easier to navigate. Danielle Baer reviewed a prior document that was created that provided signage design guidelines as a way to educate how to use and navigate through the sign regulations. The Planning Commission discussed certain modifications to the document.

The Planning Commission further discussed murals. The definition of murals will be changed. Lighting provisions for other sign types should also apply to murals. Planning Commission members discussed smaller sized murals on the front of a building, with larger sized murals on the sides and rear. There may be certain conflicts with commercial signage on the front of a building along with a mural. The size may be determined by a certain percentage that will further be explored. The ordinance requires an application review by either the zoning officer, commission or possibly Souderton Connects as an advisory review board.

Danielle Baer provided a brief update on the progress of the Souderton Borough Revitalization and Economic Development Plan.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll
Recording Secretary