

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, Thomas Rosenberger and Andrew Schlosser. The meeting was attended virtually through Zoom by Commission Member Laurie Reynolds, and Chloe Mohr, Community Planner, Montgomery County Planning Commission. The meeting was also attended by Borough Manager P. Michael Coll, and Borough Councillors Julie Munden, Daryl Littlefield and Donna Rogers.

Chairman Huber asked for consideration of the minutes from the November 4, 2020 Planning Commission meeting. A motion was made by Thomas Rosenberger and seconded by Andrew Schlosser, to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2020 meeting of the Souderton Planning Commission as presented. The motion was approved.

Chairman Huber noted that here are two presentations scheduled for cursory review by the Planning Commission. The first presentation will be from Barbara Smith concerning proposed renovations to a property at 143 N. Main Street.

Barbara Smith, joined by her son Holland Irwin and Architect Constance Lezenby, introduced a project to renovate a mixed use property at 143 N. Main Street, which is adjacent to the municipal parking lot. Souderton Borough designed a connection point from the municipal parking lot into the rear yard of this property to connect and expand parking opportunities for the adjoining businesses.

Architect Constance Lezenby provided some history and photographs of the building. The intent of the project is to restore the building for small business opportunities and to offer an outdoor dining component. The plans seek to restore an original open front porch on the second level of the building and to restore an existing stairway from Main Street. The owners intend to take advantage of the connection point with the adjacent municipal parking lot, both for vehicle access and for pedestrian access from the parking lot. The applicants discussed the potential of phasing the improvements. The connection into the municipal lot will require storm water management improvements and grading of the site. The Planning Commission suggested that phasing can be considered, however, an easement for the connection into the property will need to be provided up front with plan approval.

There is a street level commercial space that is actually located within the basement level of the building. The plans seek to renovate this commercial retail space, which is challenged by a low doorway and a step down into the space. Conceptually the applicant desires to create a ramp within the front sidewalk to provide an appropriate entry into the retail space.

Chloe Mohr commented on the required landscape and amenity requirements under the C-3 Commercial Downtown Core District. The architect felt that they will be able to comply with the point system in the Zoning Ordinance. Chloe Mohr also commented that the C-3 District requires 8 feet wide sidewalks, which may conflict with the suggestion for the ramp within the sidewalk. The Planning Commission discussed a ramp that was constructed in the sidewalk area

for a neighboring commercial building. The Planning Commission suggested that the ramp to the commercial space also include stairs back up to the sidewalk level to satisfy the sidewalk requirements and to provide ADA relief.

Joseph Chairo, accompanied by Harry Boardman, discussed conceptual plans to develop property at 160 N. Main Street. Joseph Chairo purchased this property three years ago with intention to restore the existing mixed use building. Unfortunately the property had significant termite damage which resulted in demolition. He has considered a few alternatives to construct a new commercial building, but construction estimates on top of the original purchase price are approaching \$1 million dollars which is simply not a feasible investment. The property is currently serving as a parking lot for his adjoining property. The Borough acquired a vacant parcel to the rear of this property for purposes of additional municipal parking.

Joseph Chairo and Harry Boardman presented a conceptual plan to construct a “Container Village” on this property. The concept will create a number of small incubator commercial shops surrounding a common courtyard space. The Planning Commission expressed interest in this concept but discussed concern with the infill requirements associated with the C-3 Commercial Downtown District zoning requirements. The Commission discussed certain challenges and flexibility of interpretation. The Planning Commission suggested that he continue to pursue the proposed project and retain consultants to develop plans for further review and discussion.

Borough Manager Michael Coll noted that the Berkeley Court development will be on the January, 2021 agenda. The developer is working on certain punch list items associated with Phase 2A of the development. A homeowners association representative suggested that the developer forego replacement of a number of trees that have not survived, which will ultimately become the responsibility of the homeowners association. The Planning Commission unanimously rejected this suggestion to waive the required plantings.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll,
Recording Secretary