

*Minutes of the Boonton Historic Preservation Commission
Date: March 4, 2020*

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SWEARING IN OF NEW COMMISSION MEMBER

Prior to the roll call, chairman Elliott Ruga swore in new member Ashleigh Tharpe.

ROLL CALL:

Present

Elliott Ruga - *Chair*

Jeff Smith – *Vice Chair*

Patricia Bujtas

Adrienne Eoga

Mike Wade – *Board of Alderman Representative*

Faith Frankel – *Recording Secretary*

Absent:

Tamra Katcher

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of February 5, 2020 minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW

None

DISCUSSION

ER noted there has been proliferation of prohibited signage and other offenses by businesses in the historic district, including a new furniture business, which has hung a large banner and put a mattress out on the sidewalk. With no full-time code officer, enforcement has been sparse or absent. This situation discourages other business owners from undertaking the process of getting approval from the BHPC for their desired signage. Commission members expressed concern that the town's previous code enforcement officer had attended BHPC meetings and Main Street was complying, but there was an incident and he was let go. Because of related litigation, the town cannot hire a full-time replacement.

ER read his letter about this concern to Rich Corcoran and Neil Henry, and Mr. Henry's reply:

ER letter (via email, dated March 4, 2020, 11:25 am):

I am writing to see if there has been any change in status of Boonton having someone to enforce code violations including signage on Main Street. There has been a proliferation of prohibited signage--hand written, oversized signs, a new business at 417 Main st has a fluttering banner that impedes pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk and leans a mattress against the storefront with a hand written sale price, etc.--that I feel for those business owners who have actually complied by appearing before the Commission for approval of their signs.

An update would be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Mr. Henry's reply (via email, dated March 4, 2020, 1:06 pm):

The Town has secured the services of Patrick Laverty as our Interim Property Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Laverty typically works on Wednesdays and Saturdays as he works a full time job in a similar capacity in two other Morris County municipalities.

Furthermore, the Town cannot budget for a second full time person until a personnel matter gets settled, which at this point in time, looks to be late in 2020. With that being said, we have to retain a part timer for the moment. I am sure you agree...having someone very part time is better than not having somebody at all.

Securing a full time Interim Property Code Enforcement Officer to get us through is very difficult as you can imagine the probability of someone giving up a secure full time, permanent position for an full time interim position.

I would request you place your property code issues on our website's "Report a Concern" feature. Once received, Patrick will access that feature from his computer and follow up on the matter.

ER said he understands the town's position but that the Commission needs more attention than "Report a Concern." AE and PB suggested talking with Neil; JS

suggested asking the part-time code officer to read the ordinances and giving him a list of specific BHPC concerns. ER suggested one of the BHPC commissioners should spend time on Main Street with Mr. Lavery to point out our concerns.

Mike Wade, the representative of the Board of Aldermen, came into the meeting at 7:40 pm. ER summarized the discussion for him. MW said he understands the need to keep Main Street historically accurate. He added that the Board is currently developing the town budget, a hard job.

PB suggested that MW review the ordinances regarding historical buildings. She noted that BHPC meetings are simple, including discussions with applicants. The applications are more streamlined and user friendly. ER said eventually there will be more development, renovations, and general interest in businesses on Main Street. There was general discussion of congestion on Main Street and problems posed by large trucks and buses.

With no new business, PB moved to adjourn the meeting, and AE seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.