

*Minutes of the Boonton Historic Preservation  
Commission*

*Date: October 7, 2020*

*This meeting was held via GoToMeeting*

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:39 pm.

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:**

*Present*

Elliott Ruga - *Chair*

Jeff Smith – *Vice Chair*

Patricia Bujtas

Tamra Katcher

Mike Wade – *Board of Alderman Representative*

Faith Frankel – *Recording Secretary*

*Absent:*

Adriane Eoga

Ashleigh Tharpe

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes for meetings of July 1, 2020 and September 2, 2020 were approved. There was no meeting in August due to power outage.

**APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW**

PD – SF LLC (State Farm Insurance), 820 Main Street application for signage: Blade sign and

flush mount signage; usage, insurance agency.  
Applicant Philip Dattolo.

The photograph showed a blade sign, red with white background. PD will have the sign custom made with parts to conform to the required size. PD said the distance from the sidewalk to the bottom of the sign is 11.5 feet. It will be centered where the spotlights on the building will shine onto it. The hanging sign is ¾” thick; sign mounted on the building is ½” thick. Signs are made of weatherproof Alupalite and are secure, will not move around. To a question regarding a sign showing hours, PD said he might do that later but not at present.

JS moved to approve the signs as presented. Discussion before motion was approved: TK said the building-mounted sign looks stark, too commercial; doesn't fit into the historic nature of the area, and suggested a frame would make it more esthetically pleasing. ER agreed that a straight sign just slapped on the building looks a little stark. A frame around it would look more pleasing and appropriate – suggested white would work. PD said everything has to conform to State Farm code, and that changing the frame would be a problem with corporate. He could frame it in red to give it a three-dimensional look. PB said even a red frame would be an improvement. TK noted that research shows many State Farm signs with frames of different colors in other locations. JS reworded the motion to include the agreement that a frame will be added to the building-mounted sign. The motion reads: “Approve application conditional on a red border around the entire building-mounted sign, with no changes to the blade sign as presented.” PB seconded. The motion was approved as reworded; 3 voted in favor, 1 against.

## **WELCOME Patrick Lavery, Boonton's new Code Enforcement Officer**

ER cordially welcomed Patrick to the meeting. PL described his background (20 years in the field, formerly worked for Dover.) Appreciates the importance of smart growth while keeping the charm and historic character of a town. He is doing housing, code enforcement, zoning, working with affordable housing, etc. Right now, he is focusing on creating and improving ordinances to give enforcing tools to himself for approval by the board. He is currently focusing on residential, but a lot of issues in a commercial zone you could also find in residential neighborhoods. It's a similar goal with different roads to get there. He is working on prioritizing many of the items that he would like to see changed. Currently has 250 backlog complaints but always makes time for historic needs. He said there will certainly be time for patrolling the downtown area. Boonton is fortunate to have a downtown. We need to bring the right businesses in, attract new commercial ratables but keep the character.

ER asked PL to meet with two commissioners and walk down Main Street so he can see where there are numerous violators so we can all get on the same page. Some people come before us, get approved, then do whatever they want. PL said If we're working in tandem that shouldn't happen. PB asked if he is working primarily on the residential ordinances or commercial ordinances. PL said he is working primarily on the residential portion. He wouldn't feel comfortable right now doing anything in the commercial

district without cooperation from BHPC or any subcommittees from the mayor and board.

PB: I hope you'll have a chance to brush up on the ordinances for Main Street, then take a walk with a couple of us. So much happens without people putting in applications with us. A business opens up and we see violations. Then the people who do abide by the law and come to us, then see these things happening, it's very frustrating to them as well as to us, the commissioners, because we try so hard to help people do the right process. When people blatantly don't adhere to those processes, it's very frustrating. So I understand that you have a lot right now, but I would really appreciate it if you could walk up and down Main Street with us soon, to address concerns that we can see with the naked eye. PL agreed that boots on the ground can accomplish more than reading ordinances, and said he would coordinate with Elliott on a schedule for inspecting businesses on Main Street. PB also noted the importance of following up that businesses do as agreed by BHPC. PL said he would put a reminder note on the business when he can. He said he would join the BHPC meetings when he could. His email is [codeenforcement@boonton.org](mailto:codeenforcement@boonton.org) or extension 632 at town hall.

## **BOARD OF ALDERMAN REPORT**

First, ER noted that the Plane Street property has been purchased, which includes the warehouse and the properties up the hill near the Eston House. There has not yet been any plan proposed to the planning board. Edina Renfro-Michel and

Marie DeVenezia plan to propose that Boonton recognize the Boonton Iron Works Complex historic district as one of our historic districts that requires review by BHPC. Any proposal for that site has to meet the Historic District criteria. The Iron Works now has a certificate of eligibility and we are working to get it listed on the State and National Registry of historic places. As long as that amended ordinance is adopted before an application goes before the planning board it will have to be consistent. But once an application is considered complete and they start hearing it, we can't make any changes. Mike, we may need your help and support in order to get that done.

MW said he had brought it up with Neil and will bring it up again. Very good idea that you try to control what goes there. Does that property include the recycling center?

ER said no, it's currently private. In the last month of the previous administration, they realized that the DPW property was improperly listed on the town's Recreation and Open Space inventory, which means that property is encumbered by Green Acres Open Space regulations and that it is public open space. That is incorrect and is contrary to state regulations. The town appealed to get the DPW area off the Recreation and Open Space inventory so the town can control it and not be encumbered by Green Acres regulations. But when they did that, they also included the portion of land adjacent to that corrugated warehouse where we currently have a trail. The Boonton Trails Committee went to the Board of Alderman meeting and opposed that, because if the developer wanted to use the

land that we currently have as a trail, if it didn't have Green Acres-encumbered regulations, it's much easier for them to do what they want. However, with the change of the administration, Neil told us that request to remove it from the Recreation and Open Space inventory has not been pursued, and hopefully it will wither on the vine. Because if that gets off the Recreation and Open Space inventory, particularly where the trail is, that would hurt us in the long run. If the developer's business requires access, they can sue to have it removed from our public use if it's not protected by Green Acres regulations.

MW agrees the trail should be protected. He said he'd done a walking tour of the area and was impressed at how big and how beautiful it is. Edina and the Grant Committee are putting grants together for the Arch Bridge and the train trestle etc. We're waiting for the second part of the Arch Bridge grant so it won't cost the town anything. Like everything, it takes time.

JS said it's a shame the town has ignored that spot, which is one of the most beautiful spots in North Jersey, just as beautiful as Ken Lockwood Gorge, has fishing opportunities, has historic significance attached to it, and is in a town. It's like our Central Park that we're dumping our garbage on. If the town can't get funding to make scenic overlooks etc., we should give it to the county or someone who can.

MW said he brought it up to Neil and will bring it up again. Good idea you're able to control what goes there. We should hear about the grant from the Arch Bridge in November.

ER said we first had to get the historic eligibility for the Boonton Iron Works complex; once we got that we're eligible for State and County funding to develop a trail and historic resources. The 3 panels installed in GL Park at the head of the Boonton Heritage trail were designed and paid for by the Canal Society of NJ. The implementers of the Morris Canal Greenway plan – 100 miles – had plenty of communities that are willing to develop their portion of the trail but the Canal Society chose Boonton. So, with the town applying for grants, the Canal Society providing some money and direction, the Boonton Trails committee trying to coordinate all these different moving parts, I think we're all doing the right thing. We have the mayor's commitment to move these plans forward and to get behind them. The mayor wants to keep many of his plans close to his chest because he doesn't want the negativity to destroy good ideas, which he's seen happen in the past. I think he's supporting what Jeff would like to see, what all of us would like to see.

MW: I agree. He always sees the glass half full; most people see it half empty or there's no glass. You need to begin to look forward six months, a year or two years, when we're out of this virus issue. Sometimes that means not saying too much about it in the beginning. He's got some good ideas.

ER: it was a very bold move to contract to purchase the Darress Theatre – we have some control now. They want to lease it to a for-profit company that wants to make it an entertainment venue. They issued themselves a liquor license too.

MW: Everyone agrees on the board that we don't know how to run a theater. If that takes off that will bring people into town; turn Main Street into an attraction to people and businesses. That would spark ideas for the parking issue. The theater is a really good shot. One of the mayor's ideas for the theater is to put outdoor seating on the roof.

ER: With a liquor license you could serve drinks up there. You have a reason to solve the parking situation. Then it makes sense to put money into solving the parking issue.

MW: Morristown did that. Their parking deck is in walking distance of everything.

ER: Anything else to report from the Board of Alderman?

MW: At the meeting Monday night the Board voted to pursue a Public resolution to pursue a separation agreement between the town and the police chief.

JS: Any updates with the grant we got to do the sidewalks, parking etc. downtown?

MW: I will reach out to Edina to see what's going on. I think there was a time limit to the grant. We do have the money sitting there. Other towns do the sidewalks and roads all at once.

TK: that was the design grant. The design was being worked on. Not the implementation.

ER: There were going to be bumpouts where the yellow stripes are, which could increase the sidewalks in those places. Restaurants could use that for outdoor seating.

### **New Topic**

TK noted some façade renovation on Plane Street. Scaffolding going up on the building uphill of Lower Plane St. (flatiron building) – very historically significant building with fine craftsmanship. ER said if there were any permits pulled for façade changes that would have to come to BBHPC. ER will ask Marianne if any permits were pulled and will ask Patrick to investigate.

ER asked FF (Recording Secretary) to forward all approved minutes to Neil for posting on the town web site.

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.