

 Bethlehem Press

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Front left, architect John Lee Jr., representing the Broadway Social at 217 Broadway, requests approval to completely demolish the building adjacent to the restaurant to allow their expansion project to proceed. Board members Roger Hudak, Arnold Trauptman and Chris Ussler ponder Lee's request. Copyright - © Ed Courier



PRESS PHOTOS BY ED COURRIER Flanked by Philip Roeder (left) and Seth Cornish, Beth Starbuck requests clarification on a project proposal for 321 W. Fourth St. Copyright - © Ed Courier



From left, BHCC members Philip Roeder, Beth Starbuck and Seth Cornish review elevations presented by Tom Gerchk (Hemmler & CHMA YD), Charlie Jefferson and Duane Wagoner (Jefferson-Weiner LLC). The proposal is to convert a former cold storage facility to an apartment building at 321 W. Fourth St. Copyright - © Ed Courier

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Tuesday, October 17, 2017 ^[1] by **Ed Courier Special to the Bethlehem Press** ^[2] in **Local News** ^[3]

The Bethlehem Historic Conservation Commission granted a certificate of appropriateness for an ambitious project to convert the former Lehigh Valley Cold Storage facility at 321 Adams St. into 30 apartments during the Sept. 18 Banana Factory meeting. Lehigh University, which owns the warehouse, was represented by developers Charlie Jefferson and Duane Wagoner from Jefferson-Weiner LLC and architect Tom Gerchk. Named “Brinker Lofts” in tribute to the cold storage company’s founder Adam Brinker, the massive five-story red brick 1890s era structure fills the block between E. Fourth Street and the South Bethlehem Greenway. Architect Joe Phillips filled in as historic officer for Chris Ussler. Phillips pointed out that unique to the building are decorative off-line windows that do not correspond to the floor levels.

Jefferson told the board, “Ninety-eight percent of that façade is to be restored back to what it originally looked like at the turn of the century,” as he referred to a vintage photo of the building in an 1895 edition of an “Ice and Refrigeration” trade journal. The entrance for the apartment building would be located on the Adams Street façade and the adjacent ice house commercial space would be accessed from Fourth Street. A tower in the back is to be demolished and a one-story section will be converted into a fenced courtyard.

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The developers were instructed to return for signage and a rear fence design at a later date.

The board reluctantly granted a revised certificate of appropriateness to Greg Salomoni, owner of the Broadway Social at 217 Broadway, and architect John Lee Jr. for total demolition of the building adjacent to it. Salomoni is expanding his restaurant and nightclub from his renovated 1885 firehouse into the building next door at 215 Broadway. They were previously approved in May 2017 for a partial demolition of the second structure, while still retaining, but altering the façade of the 1920s storefront. 215 Broadway had begun as a house that was later changed into a store. Multiple additions had been tacked onto the structure over the years.

John Lee Jr. reported that he has since found size and other issues with the existing foundation that would compromise the new construction. The revised COA requires salvaging the doomed building’s decorative stonework and bricks so they can be utilized in the rebuilt façade. If the cast stonework cannot be saved, it is to be replicated. While demolition and foundation work is completed, final elevations are to be prepared for review by the board at the next meeting.

Salomoni bemoaned rumors that his restaurant will; be closed during construction. He said emphatically, “We are open for business,” adding “215 Broadway is our new expansion. 217 Broadway is our Broadway Social ,which has continued in operation and will still be continuing in operation during the new construction.”

Christine Ussler resumed her duties as historic officer for this and the rest of the evening's applications. Board member Seth Cornish was the only dissenting vote on 215 Broadway.

Episcopal Ministries of the Diocese of Bethlehem, represented by Diane Elliott, Tina Sargent and architect Russel Pacala, received approval to move an entry door, install an ADA walkway, and decrease the size of a garage door at 321 W. Fourth St. New spouting was also approved for the circa 1890s brick and wood structure. BHCC stipulated that recessed brick infill be used to the side of the new metal roll-up garage door and a nonfunctioning transom above it for the gabled brick section. The doorway made vacant by moving the main door on the wood wall to be infilled with a wood panel to match what is above it.

Jeffrey Gregor's proposal to install a chain link fence with black mesh infill at the front and side of 330 E. Fourth St. "do not meet the district's historic guidelines" according to Ussler, or zoning, added Philip Roeder. The original steel and wrought iron fence sections had been taken down previously to enable the repair of a short retaining wall and were still in the possession of the homeowner. Roeder provided Gregor with the contact information for three welders who could repair and reinstall the original fence. If he chooses to have the fence reinstalled, Gregor will not need to reapply for a COA.

The Bethlehem HCC is charged with the task of determining if new signs or other alterations to a building's exterior would be an appropriate fit for the neighborhood in one of three designated historic districts. Hearings are regularly scheduled on the third Monday of the month.

Obtaining a certificate of appropriateness is only a first step for business owners and residents in a designated historic district who wish to make alterations to a building's exterior. The BHCC's recommendations are later reviewed, then voted on by City Council before any project is allowed to proceed.

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