

LITITZ BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of Meeting Held December 5, 2023

The December 5, 2023 meeting of the Lititz Borough Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Stauffer with members Smith, Weibel, and Dickinson (Alternate). Members Meyer and Piazza were excused, Stoudt was absent. Chairman Stauffer requested Dickinson to serve as a full member, and there were no objections from those in attendance. Others in attendance included Elijah Yearick, Hamzah Dawood (Greco's), Jim Hoffer (Lititz Shirt Factory), Bill McMahon (Savory Gourmet), Joe Desimone (Olio), Elizabeth Roberts (Appierances Salon), Jennell Hoover (Purple Turtle Boutique), Diane Bell (Renewal Kombucha), Maria Elliott (Venture Lititz), and Pricilla Stoner (Lititz Historical Area Advisory Committee). The August 1, 2023 minutes were approved on a motion by Weibel, seconded by Dickinson.

COMMISSIONERS FORUM
A-Frame Signage Request

Dickinson provided the Commission with an overview of A-frame signs in Downtown. During COVID, A-frame signs were allowed, but as business went back to normal, the Zoning Officer resumed enforcement against them. Dickinson shared a request from the Merchants' Association to update the Zoning Ordinance to allow A-frame signs in town. He continued by noting that the Association believes there is the ability to accommodate some signs in downtown, and that any regulations would ensure they signs are ADA compliant, only displayed during business hours, and that they would have a size and weight that makes them resistant to wind while still being able to be moved.

Yearick reviewed that the purpose of discussion was to determine if the Commission is supportive of changing the ordinance to allow A-Frame signs. At Stauffer's inquiry, Weibel reviewed that during her time on Council and the Planning Commission that A-Frame signs have been requested three times now. She stated that trip hazards and liability issues were reasons the discussion did not progress previously. She also stated that she would like the Historic Area Advisory Committee (HAAC) and Venture Lititz (VL) to be involved in the discussion. Yearick responded that Dickinson had been before the HAAC in November to review a prototype sign, but the HAAC felt it was premature. Yearick mentioned that a representative from VL was in attendance, as well as several merchants. The Commission then discussed the recent enforcement, the mobility of A-frame signs, alternatives to A-Frame signs, the rarity of Lititz not allowing these sorts of signs, that A-frame signs will not work for all properties, liability, and enforcement. At the conclusion of discussion, Chairman Stauffer opened public comment.

Bill McMahon, The Savory Gourmet, stated that A-frame signage helps draw customers into his business and believes the regulations should be changed for the betterment of downtown. He continued to share that in his opinion, a A-frame sign taken in at night would not detract from town.

Jim Hoffer, Lititz Shirt Factory, asked how many lawsuits were incurred due to A-frame signs during COVID. He stated that many great cities allow this sort of signs, and that his own business saw a decrease of 20 – 30% drop in attendance when his sign was forced to be removed. He requested that the Borough assist merchants by allowing these signs, and supports uniformity in the signage.

Diane Bell, Renewal Kombucha, stated that she is an artist and shared her own art on her a-frame sign. She shared that she did not feel her art was "tacky" and often spends four to five hours on a new design. Bell stated that she noticed a 30% drop in revenue when forced to take her sign in, and that her product is not one that is widely known so her signage helps draw people into her shop.

Jenelle Hoover, Purple Turtle Boutique, shared that she has worked at the Boutique for eight years and has owned it for four. Since the Boutique is on E. Kleine, it is regularly missed by visitors who are not familiar with Lititz. Hoover stated that she had numerous customers tell her they found out about the Boutique from

her A-frame sign when it was out. She stated she's seen a significant decrease in walk-ins since the sign was removed, particularly during event days when a lot of out-of-towners visit. She stated that while other types of signage might be beneficial, she did not feel they allowed the creative marketing that can be expressed by an A-frame sign. She concluded by stating she believed there is a way to safely allow these signs, and that their allowance is important to the merchants, particularly those off the beaten path.

Elizabeth Roberts, apPIERances Salon, stated that she put an A-frame sign out during COVID and noticed a 30% decrease in foot traffic once it was removed. She continued by stating she was not aware of any legal issues or trip hazards with the sign, and that many of her customers utilize wheelchairs and they did not have any issues accessing her business when the sign was out. She requested the Borough consider changing the requirements, and that it would be helpful to the small businesses in town.

Maria Elliott, President of Venture Lititz, reviewed VL's activities noting that their focus is to support the economic and social vibrancy of Lititz. A large portion of this focus is supporting the Borough's small businesses. Elliott stated that there is a quaintness to A-Frame signs and their nature allowed them to be creative, attractive, or funny. She conceded that multi-tenant signs are a possibility, but that she feels they fit better in a shopping center than Lititz. A-frame signs help draw people to businesses that might be off the beaten path. Elliott discussed VL's app, noting that it does not work for every visitor. She shared that she is a Real Estate Attorney and understands Weibel's concerns about liability, but believed there would be a way to develop an ordinance amendment sensitive with it. She stated she felt the Borough could begin reaching out to insurance providers, other municipalities, and signage companies to evaluate the liability. Elliott concluded by stating that she and Venture Lititz believe that A-frame signage offers a unique marketing opportunity, and that the Borough should begin investigating how an amendment can be drafted to address both liability concerns while allowing retailers access to these signs.

Stauffer provided his assessment of the request, noting that he believed it could be accommodated in the Borough's Zoning Ordinance. Elliott offered that the Borough could consider asking to be indemnified if any issues arise with A-frame signs. Smith read an email from Dickinson that A-frame signs add character and a sense of activity to downtown, which otherwise can feel sterile. Smith stated he agreed with Dickinson, and that he trusts the merchant's statements that the a-frame signs help draw customers to their establishments. He continued by stating that the success of Lititz and the merchants depend on one another. He concluded by stating that he believed it's okay to change the ordinance, the change can always be reverted if it proves problematic, and that the Commission should begin looking into an amendment.

At the conclusion of discussion Weibel moved, Smith seconded to recommend to Council that a change to the signage regulations may be appropriate for downtown merchants and requesting Council's support for drafting an amendment. Motion passed unanimously.

Downtown Parking/Mill Building Sale

Yearick reported that LGH/Penn Medicine has shared that the Mill Building and associated parcels is expected to be listed for sale within a month. With a future owner being unknown, Yearick stated that it would be reasonable to consider that the parking that is generally used by downtown businesses could be going away in the future. The Commission discussed the current use, redevelopment opportunities, floodplain impacts, and the suitability of using the site for a parking garage. The Commission agreed to review the Lititz Run Revitalization District uses considering this sale. Smith then asked VL and the merchants whether they felt whether downtown had a parking problem. The Mill Building's parking and use for Fire & Ice, the forthcoming redevelopment of the Toy Soldier, the hiring of an intern to count parking, and the potential impact of residents off North Broad were discussed. Dickinson stated that from his perspective parking is not currently a major issue. Most days, and most times, parking can be found, but it is not always in front of the desired destination.

TAIT Building

Weibel shared her concerns for TAIT moving from West Lincoln to the Rock Lititz Campus. Smith stated that while TAIT is shown on the Rock Lititz Master Plan, there are no current plans to relocation. The Commission agreed to review uses of the Industrial District.

Whiff Roasters ZHB Request

Yearick reviewed a forthcoming Zoning request from Whiff to create a new entry point off of E. Main Street on the side of Sturgis Pretzels. Overall, the addition is small, but is close to the neighboring property. Overall, the Commission had no concern with the addition, but encouraged the applicant to formalize the access with the neighbor.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Update

Yearick reported that he had reviewed a first draft of the comprehensive plan and is working with staff to update the future land use map. He stated that he expected a draft to be provided to the Steering Committee members later in December with adoption in Spring 2024.

ADJOURNEMENT

There being no further business Smith made the motion, seconded Weibel to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elijah Yearick
Secretary