

Council sends a bad message (4)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 306 S. New St., Serious Issues December 31, 2018

(4th in a series of posts on 306 S. New St.)

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Gadfly: I attended the November 2019 HCC meeting. Neither the owner of the building or restaurant owner attended. It was the contractor who was sent, who knew nothing about anything, other than that the work had started. Nobody representing the City attended either to speak to the City's error in issuing a building permit. At least two HCC members commented to me prior to the meeting that they were not pleased at all with work advancing prior to HCC review.

Needless to say, members of the HCC were not happy about this at all, given the Certificate of Appropriateness conditions issued for the structure to be built, which included the terrace setback to minimize the impact of the approved 6 story height. In fact one member called for a "stop work" order to be issued by the City immediately, although that was not part of the motion to deny.

In my opinion, the building owner and possibly the restaurant owner had to know about the earlier conditions placed in the COA. The City certainly had to know as well. Oops, is not an acceptable response.

Council's action made a travesty of the South Bethlehem Conservation District Ordinance, violated said ordinance, and undermined the citizen-filled Historic Conservation Commission, especially given the terrace setback condition of the original COA that had been worked out between the HCC and developer and that had been approved by City Council.

Even worse is the message that was sent, that of if you ignore City ordinances and processes to gain approval for a project, a majority of City Council has

your back. That speaks to an aura of corruption at work when it comes to development projects in Bethlehem.

Historic District Ordinances in Bethlehem need to be applied equally to a homeowner, a small business, and a large developer, but they aren't. If that isn't corrupt, nothing is!

Dana