

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

TO: Planning Commission members

FROM: Darlene L. Heller, Director of Planning and Zoning

RE: Petition to vacate a portion of Filbert Street and Second Avenue

Attached for reference is the formal petition and associated maps for the above-referenced street vacation submitted jointly by the Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority and Peron Armory LP. The street vacation proposal accompanies the adaptive reuse and expansion of the Armory Building at the intersection of Second and Prospect Avenues.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Filbert Street

1. A total of four properties exist on the south side of Filbert Street between 2nd Avenue and Rauch Street. Each of the parcels is owned by Peron Filbert LP, a co-applicant for the street vacation. The north side of this stretch of Filbert Street is equitably owned by the Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority, the other co-applicant for this street vacation. There are no other owners abutting this stretch of Filbert Street.
2. This section of Filbert Street is a dead end street. Because of severe slopes at the dead end no connection could ever feasibly be made to Rauch Street.
3. Filbert Street provides no public purpose and no access to other parcels except the petitioners for the street vacation.
4. If this street vacation is approved a lot consolidation plan will be required. This portion of Filbert Street and the parcels on the south side of Filbert must be incorporated into the Armory parcel and developed as one contiguous development. The lot consolidation will be required at the time of land development review.
5. Since this section of Filbert Street serves no public purpose removal of Filbert from the public street system removes unnecessary maintenance and improvement responsibilities from the City of Bethlehem.

Second Avenue

1. The section of Second Avenue proposed to be vacated is approximately 112 feet wide which is excessively wide for a street right of way in an urban core area. This section includes approximate 24 foot travel lanes and a twelve foot median. For comparison, the section of Second Avenue right of way just north of this, between Prospect Avenue and Market Street, is a more standard width of 70 feet with 14 foot travel lanes. The intersection with Prospect Avenue is offset because of the deviation in right of way widths between these two lengths of Second Avenue.
2. The requested area to be vacated on Second Avenue is 41.8 feet wide, leaving a standard 70 foot right of way of public street, which matches the right of way width of Second Avenue to the

north. Therefore, only the width of Second Avenue that is in excess of the width of the northern section of Second Avenue is requested to be vacated. The remaining portion of Second Avenue will remain open and match the width of Second Avenue north of Prospect Avenue. If the street vacation is approved, Second Avenue will still include full curb and sidewalk, on street parking on both sides of the street and 14 foot travel lanes. However, the median will be removed and the travel lanes will be narrowed.

3. No parcels will be land locked or without public access due to the proposed street vacation.
4. All of the lots to the west of the area to be vacated are owned by either Peron Armory LP or the Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority.
5. The length of the area to be vacated begins at Prospect Avenue and extends approximately 243 feet southward. The remaining length of Second Avenue connecting to Spring Street and abutting other property owners is not proposed to be vacated. Additional public on-street parking will be created in this area.

General

1. This street vacation is proposed in conjunction with a land development proposal for the Floyd Simons Armory. The project also requires some special exception and variance approvals from the Zoning Hearing Board. Therefore, final approval of the Second Avenue street vacation should only occur in conjunction with the final land development approvals.
2. Bethlehem is becoming a more walkable and pedestrian-friendly community all the time. Reducing the width of the street corridor of Second Avenue and narrowing the cartways calms traffic. Reducing intersection widths and slowing traffic improves pedestrian safety. Therefore, the realignment of the 2nd Avenue and Prospect Avenue intersection is a pedestrian and vehicular improvement.

CONCLUSION


Based on the above findings, the Planning Bureau supports a recommendation in favor of both the Filbert Street and Second Avenue street vacations as proposed provided the following conditions are met:

1. All of the Public Works comments shall be met.
2. The lot consolidation and land development plans shall be approved prior to or concurrently with the street vacations.

These street vacations are placed on your October 12, 2017 Planning Commission agenda for vote on a recommendation to City Council.

CC: M. Dorner
E. Healy
A. Karner
Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority
Peron Armory LP

DATE: 10-6-17



Darlene L. Heller, AICP
Director of Planning and Zoning