

AGENDA

AMBLER BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

I. CALL TO ORDER

April 26, 2022 (7:00 PM)

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF: March 22, 2022 Minutes

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Input requested to create a conceptual plan incorporating identified community needs and improvements for each park in the Borough to be used as part of a larger Master Park Plan.
2. Input requested on the draft Historic Building Demolition Ordinance

V. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Input requested on Borough Sign Ordinance amendment regarding architectural elements and other inconsistencies.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

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ORDINANCE NO. _____ AMBLER BOROUGH, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING PREREQUISITES TO THE DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS DEEMED HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT; PROVIDING CRITERIA FOR HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE; PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION.

An ordinance providing for the protection and preservation of Historic Buildings within the Borough of Ambler by discouraging their demolition. This ordinance defines which buildings may be considered historic by the Borough, and creates a review and documentation process for those buildings prior to demolition.

When an application is submitted for a demolition permit for buildings considered Historic, this ordinance requires the Codes Department to notify the Planning Commission so that it may review the proposal. The Codes Department is hereby required to withhold issuing a demolition permit until a 90-day waiting period has passed since the date of the first Planning Commission meeting after the submittal of the application for a demolition permit.

During the 90-day waiting period for demolition of Historic Buildings, alternatives to demolition and recommendations for possible reuse of the Historic Building may be suggested to the applicant by the Planning Commission and/or Ambler Borough Council. If after the 90-day period the Codes Department approves the demolition of the Historic Building, demolition of the Historic Building shall not commence until the building has been documented in conformance with standards defined in this ordinance.

§27-202. Definition of Terms

The following definitions shall be added to this section:

Demolition – The razing or destruction of at least 50 percent of the exterior of a building, or the razing or destruction of at least 75 percent of the front façade of a building. Demolition includes the removal of a building from its original foundation.

Historic Building - A building designated by the Borough of Ambler as historic.

Public Way - Any street, alley, sidewalk or similar place essentially unobstructed from the ground to the sky to which the general public is typically allowed access, including private streets and alleys.

Article 1. Legal Authorization

Pursuant to authority contained in the Act of 1968, Public Law 805, No. 247, as enacted and amended, known as the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (sections 603, 604, and 605), the Borough of Ambler shall hereby create an ordinance in order to

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promote, protect, and facilitate the preservation of areas of historic significance and to preserve the historic values in the environment.

Article 2. Purpose and Intent

1. Pursuant to Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution which states that: "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment." It is the purpose and intent of the Borough of Ambler to preserve and protect buildings of historic value that exist within the Borough. The Borough of Ambler has many Historic Buildings worthy of preservation from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Preservation of these Historic Buildings is in the best interest of the health, prosperity and welfare of the people of the Borough of Ambler by enhancing property values, improving aesthetics of the built and natural environment, and creating the potential for heritage tourism.
1. The purpose of implementing a waiting period before a demolition permit is issued is to allow time to formulate options for reuse of the structure or alternatives to its demolition, which can be suggested to the building owner as a way of preserving the historic building(s).
2. The goal of documenting Historic Buildings in the Borough of Ambler is to provide architects, engineers, scholars, preservationists, and interested members of the public with information on the historical, architectural, technological, or cultural significance of a building. Placed on permanent deposit with the Codes Department, the historic documentation will serve as a permanent record of the growth and development of the Borough's built environment.
3. With this ordinance, the Borough wishes to recognize that The Keasbey and Mattison Company was integral to the development of the Borough of Ambler both by constructing buildings and by participating in the initial incorporation of the Borough. The Keasbey and Mattison Company left a historical and architectural legacy the Borough wishes to preserve. Keasbey and Mattison Company was active in the Borough of Ambler until 1934.

Article 3. Applicability.

1. The Demolition Delay provisions of this section shall apply to all Historic Buildings in the Borough of Ambler meeting all of the following criteria:
 - a. Buildings that can be seen from the Public Way.
 - b. Be the Principal Buildings on a lot. Accessory Building shall not be considered Historic Buildings.
 - c. The buildings were initially constructed prior to 1935

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Article 4. Procedure for Review of Application for Permit to Demolish a Historic Building

A. Duties of Codes Department –

- 1) Upon receipt of a complete application to demolish a Historic Building, the Codes Department shall inform the Planning Commission such a permit has been requested, and shall specify the address and the location on lot of the building proposed for demolition. The Codes Department shall also inform Borough Council of the request for demolition. Council may choose to review the permit if it desires.
- 2) The Codes Department shall follow all of the same requirements for public notification as are required by Zoning Hearing Board applications. (See Chapter 27: Zoning, Part 23: Zoning Hearing Board.)
- 3) The Codes Department shall not issue a demolition permit until
 - a) 90 days have passed after the first planning commission meeting after the demolition permit application was submitted and
 - b) **Article 5: Documentation of Historic Buildings** has been followed by the applicant.

B. Duties of Planning Commission - Upon receipt of notice from the Codes Department that a demolition application has been received for a specific Historic Building, the Planning Commission shall take the following actions:

1. Review the proposed demolition. At a duly advertised Public Meeting, the Planning Commission shall review the application for demolition as submitted to the Borough. At the meeting, the Planning Commission may verbally suggest alternatives for demolition and recommendations for possible reuse of the building to the applicant. These suggestions shall not be binding.
2. The Planning Commission may recommend that Borough Council also review the application for demolition.

Article 5. Documentation of Historic Buildings

- A. In cases where the applicant still desires a demolition permit for a Historic Building after the public meeting is held with the Planning Commission, the applicant or a party retained by the applicant shall document the Historic Building in conformance with the standards specified below.
 - a. Photograph(s) - The applicant shall provide photographic images of the exterior and interior views of the Historic Building, or shall arrange for the Borough Code Enforcement Officer (or Officer's designee) to take the photographs. The photographs shall be taken in such a way as to provide a general sense of perspective. This can be accomplished by taking photographs from various angles and by

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taking photographs of all sides of the building. Photographs shall be provided in an electronic format that is acceptable to the Borough.

- b. Sketch Plan – The applicant shall provide a floor or site plan. This plan does not have to be to exact scale, but features shall be shown in proper relation and proportion to one another.
- c. Short Historical Report and Copy of Deed – The applicant shall provide a short narrative report explaining any historical features that did not appear in the submitted photographs. A copy of the deed or other documentation of the building's age, if available, shall be provided.

Article 6. Enforcement

- A. No Historic Building shall be demolished, moved, removed, or razed, in a manner inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance.
- B. The Codes Department may issue stop work orders for activities proceeding in violation of this ordinance. Such order may remain in effect until such time as the property owner or responsible party has properly obtained an appropriate demolition permit and submitted proper documentation in accordance with this ordinance.
- C. Any and all other permits and approvals issued for the property may also be suspended until the applicant is in compliance with this ordinance.
- D. If a Historic Building is demolished without a permit as described by this ordinance, a fine of \$_____ shall be levied by the Borough of Ambler, plus any other costs and attorneys' fees incurred by the Borough.
- E. No zoning or building permits shall be issued for the property for a period of one year following the date of a demolition that was not in compliance with this ordinance.