

ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW  
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN  
Minutes  
May 7, 2026

1. ROLL CALL

Maria Bruni  
Gef Chumard - absent  
Anna Madden  
Kathleen Rifkin  
Alvaro Garcia  
Also present: Joseph Thompson, Architect; Sixto Martinez, Code enforcer

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:  
April 2, 2026

Motion to approved made by Rifkin; seconded by Madden  
Motion carried 4 -0

3. New Business:

- a. 46-56 East Main Street – Jose Mendoza and Joel representing ***Iglesia Pentecostal Ebenezer church*** requesting to replace monochrome panels from the current church sign and replacing them with color LED panels. The current structure of the sign does not need to be removed. This is needed as the current panels are no longer operational

Maria Bruni opened the public hearing for 46-56 East Main Street.

Motion to open the public hearing made by Madden; seconded by Garcia  
Motion carried 4-0

Maria Bruni stated for the record no members of the public present or submitted comments via email. Maria asked to close the public hearing.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Garcia; seconded by Madden  
Motion carried 4 -0

Discussion: There was discussion to make sure the brightness is controlled and the sign is far off the street. There is no sound to this sign and the panels are just going to be removed and replaced. The electric is existing and will have to make sure a CFI outlet is present.

Motion to approved made by Rifkin; seconded by Madden  
Motion carried 4-0

- b. 44 James Street – Peter Botti representing ***44 James Street LLC*** requesting to replace the two wood front doors with two new doors on the Bond tenant side and the retails space. Doors are the same size and design including color.

Maria Bruni opened the public hearing for 44 James Street.

Motion to open the public hearing made by Rifkin; seconded by Garcia  
Motion carried 4-0

Maria Bruni stated for the record no members of the public present or submitted comments via email. Maria asked to close the public hearing.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Garcia; seconded by Madden  
Motion carried 4-0

Discussion: Mr. Thompson stated to the board that the replacement is custom wood doors with four light patterns with recess at the bottom and personally I wouldn't reject what he is doing and maybe just ask to email a picture of the hardware and ADA compliant and color swatch before final approval.

Motion to approved pending on the specs on the hardware and color swatch  
made by Rifkin; seconded by Garcia  
Motion carried 4-0

- c. 11-31 Fulton Street - Jian Hu representing **Hope Film Studio**, requesting to add HVAC units to the back of their building.

Maria Bruni opened the public hearing for 11-31 Fulton Street.

Motion to open the public hearing made by Garcia; seconded by Madden  
Motion carried 4- 0

Maria Bruni stated for the record no members of the public present or submitted comments via email. Maria asked to close the public hearing.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Garcia; seconded by Rifkin  
Motion carried 4-0

Discussion: Mr. Thompson considered screenings for the units but I don't really see any impact to the public. There were no objections from any neighboring properties. The units will be painted the same color as the primary color of building.

Motion to approved made by Madden; seconded by Rifkin  
Motion carried 4-0

4. Preliminary
  - a. 9-29 Canal Street - Jian Hu representing 9-29 Canal Street requesting to renovate 3 story masonry building to 97 guest rooms, boutique hotel. Remain the existing historic feature, restoration and repair when necessary.

### **Project Description**

Jian Hu presented plans for a three-story adaptive reuse project featuring:

- Commercial space on the first floor
- Hotel use on the second and third floors
- Affiliation with a Hilton hotel product

The roof repair phase has been completed and approved as Phase 1. The team is currently awaiting further approval from State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) before proceeding with the remainder of the rehabilitation work.

### **Historic Preservation & Design Coordination**

Maria Bruni explained:

- The project already received planning approval.
- The property is pursuing state and national historic designation.
- The project may qualify for historic tax credits.
- Continued coordination with SHPO is required before formal approvals can be issued.

### **Building Restoration Plans**

Jian Hu discussed:

- Repairing existing brickwork
- Hiring a consultant for soft power washing
- Seeking SHPO approval for windows to secure the building from weather exposure
- Use of aluminum-clad windows with historic detailing considerations

SHPO provided extensive feedback regarding:

- Wood colors
- Historic detailing
- Window appearance and materials

### **Rear Addition & Curtain Wall Discussion**

Several design concepts for the rear addition were reviewed, including:

1. Wood mesh/tapestry-style construction
2. Masonry with steel and wood framing
3. Concrete structural approach

Ultimately, SHPO approved a curtain wall approach to visually separate the historic masonry portion from the newer addition.

Additional design elements discussed:

- Black metal canopy accents
- White historic-style window framing
- Contrast between old and new construction to distinguish alterations

### **Board & Consultant Comments**

Joe Thompson stated:

- The project is an excellent adaptive reuse effort.
- SHPO's Part II review will likely be highly restrictive.
- Coordination between the board and SHPO is essential.

He also recommended future submissions include:

- Detailed material specifications
- Window, door, curtain wall, and canopy specs
- Brick restoration methods and mortar details
- Cleaning and sealing procedures
- Lighting and signage specifications
- Enlarged elevation drawings for major alterations

Additional comments:

- Rear visibility from South Street has increased due to nearby development.
- Window screens may not be necessary if windows are non-operable.
- Potential code requirements may require windows to remain non-opening.

### **Follow-Up Items**

Jian Hu agreed to:

- Return with window samples after SHPO approval
- Provide detailed specifications and restoration documentation
- Coordinate lighting plans with a lighting consultant
- Remove existing posts and outdated site elements as part of improvements

- b.** 97 East main Street – Athena Bu, ABC Eternity LLC. representing **97 East Main Street** requesting to repair/replace roof as needed (color changed from blue to Benjamin Moore Historic color “New London Burgundy HC-61”; Repair/Replace siding as needed (Color changed from white to Benjamin Moore Historic color “Windham Cream HC-6” repair /replace the exterior as needed.

### **Existing Work & Permit Discussion**

Maria Bruni confirmed that work had already begun on the property.

Athena Bu explained:

- Work permits had been obtained
- The applicant was unaware an additional application was required
- Work was stopped once notified

The roof had already been completed in the burgundy color.

### **Materials & Historic Concerns**

Board discussion focused primarily on siding materials:

- Questions arose regarding whether the roofing material was shingles.
- The board reviewed submitted material samples.

Joe Thompson raised concerns about:

- Use of vinyl siding on a historic structure.
- Historic preservation guidelines discouraging manufactured materials that diminish historic character.
- Fiber cement siding or true wood would be more historically appropriate.
- Existing vinyl siding was already present on the building.
- Board members expressed openness to replacement vinyl siding under the circumstances.

### **Additional Restoration Discussion**

Athena Bu confirmed:

- Existing historic windows will remain and be restored
- Windows will not be enclosed
- The building remains mixed-use with:
  - Offices on the first floor
  - Apartments on the second floor

### **Board Direction / Conditions**

The board indicated:

- No major objection to vinyl siding
- Applicant must return with specifications for the front door
- All new siding must include R-5 insulation

5. Old Business  
 a. None

6. Next Meeting  
 a. June 4, 2026

7. Adjournment

Motion to approved made by Madden; seconded by Garcia  
 Motion carried 4-0