

Lincroft Tavern Coming To Former Site of Lincroft Inn

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A rendering of the Lincroft Tavern, seen here from Route 520 toward Middletown-Lincroft Road. The new restaurant was approved by the Middletown Planning Board April 3. *Courtesy Hesse Companies*

By Chris Rotolo and Philip Sean Curran

MIDDLETOWN – The owner and operator of a new restaurant to replace the historic Lincroft Inn on Newman Springs Road will look to break ground in June and open in 2021, a company executive said April 5.

A proposal for the Lincroft Tavern was approved April 3 by the Middletown Planning Board, at the same site where the Lincroft Inn once sat for more than 300 years before it was demolished in May 2018. The Hesse Cos. intends to build something in its place evocative of an older era.

“We’ve created a building that looks like it could have been a part of the 1800s,” Joe Pandozzi, senior vice president with Hesse, told The Two River Times. “So we’re trying to make it look like it’s harkening back to the 1700 and 1800s. We’re using a lot of wood, a lot of mahogany, clapboard siding, white brick. It’s actually a beautiful building that we’re very proud of. And I think Lincroft is going to actually love it.”

Through the years, additions were made to the Lincroft Inn that would increase its seating to approximately 300.

Pandozzi said the new restaurant, a 12,087-square-foot construction with two adjoining two-story structures, will seat 264, including 88 seats surrounding the main bar.

The second stories will hold two private dining room areas, one of which will seat 60, while the other, smaller room will seat 14.

Pandozzi noted that, while the Lincroft Inn was used for wedding receptions, these rooms would be primarily used for office parties, engagement parties and smaller-sized events.

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Hesse is "looking at between 15 and 18 months to complete the work," Pandozzi said.

The preliminary menu of the Lincroft Tavern will have "anything from hot wings and pizzas to lobster tails and filet mignon and anything in-between," he said. The restaurant will serve alcohol and have a wine room and a private dining room, among other features.

"It's someplace you can go with your kids after soccer practice and have a nice family meal or you can go for high dining," he said.

Some parts of the old Lincroft Inn building, like the stone foundation and 21 beams from the original construction, were preserved and will be incorporated into the new restaurant "in some fashion," Pandozzi said.

When the structure was torn down, no unusual historic artifacts were found.

"We took it apart very systematically because we didn't know what we would find," Pandozzi said. "But the original building was very, very small. It was only about 16 feet deep and 20 feet wide. That was the entire original structure."

Though aspects of the Lincroft Inn will remain, members of the planning board hoped the historical accuracy would not extend to the bathrooms.

Pandozzi described bathrooms on both floors that were designed to code, as well as a third facility located downstairs, but board chair John Deus scoffed at a first-floor restroom that contained just a single urinal.

"If I'm eating or drinking on the first floor, I'm not going up or down stairs. The problem with the old Lincroft Inn was just exactly this. It was a bathroom that was this inept. Quite frankly, this is poor planning," Deus said.

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Ponzozzi said for those who are unable to maneuver up and down stairwells, an elevator will be available to transport them.

Board member Kevin Colangelo asked the developers to consider expanding the size of all lavatories before breaking ground.

“This just feels like a real miss, and beyond the variances and the legalities of the construction, there’s a lot of people you’re going to want to win over. This is something you should look at... Even the original inn had more than one outhouse,” Colangelo said.

The site of the former Lincroft Inn and future Lincroft Tavern is believed to have had an eating and/or lodging establishment on location since 1697.

One of those establishments was the Leedsville Hotel, when Lincroft was known as Leedsville, named after one of Middletown’s earliest settlers William Leeds.

The Leedsville Hotel was a stagecoach stop for travelers venturing from Lakewood to New York City.

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