

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 21, 2020

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, January 21, 2020, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Lacek at 7:00 PM.

Members Present: Jim Lacek-Chairman, Mark Christini, Kevin Doupe, Erin Groves, Karen Johnson-Vice-Chairman, Jimmy Lacek

Members Absent: Keith Long & Diane Siegmund

Others: None present

Visitors: None present

Minutes:

A motion was made by Erin Groves and seconded by Karen Johnson to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2019 meeting. Motion passed.

New Business: Potential Code Revisions to Towanda Borough Code as sent down from Council at Jan 6, 2020 meeting.

A. Discussion of definition of “family” (Ch 221, 325).

It was discussed if the Planning Commission would make a recommendation reducing the number of unrelated persons under Towanda Borough Code Sections §221-2 and §325-81 “definition of family”. Data was shared showing that some other municipalities limit the number of unrelated persons to 2-4. The existing definition is:

FAMILY - An individual or two or more persons related by blood or marriage or a group of not more than five persons, excluding servants, who are not related by blood or marriage, living together as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling unit.

In 2018, Council amended Chapter 325, §325-81, Definitions of “Dwelling Structure” and “Single Housekeeping Unit”. (This was due to an issue at the 104 York Avenue (R-4 district) which was being used as step housing for county probationers. The persons staying there were not related but shared a space and were not bound together by choice to form a “single housekeeping unit”.)

Also, there was discussion by the Planning Commission concerning the square footage areas for 2 family and multi-family dwellings, including apartments; and if the rental inspections included the Towanda Borough Code (Chapter 325) square footage requirements.

In addition, Mr. Christini stated in the 2010 Census, 42% of housing in the Borough was renter-occupied housing units. Data collected in 2015 by the Borough showed that (52) single family homes were being rented out as rental units in Single Family R1 and R4 districts. Council feels the need to encourage and promote families in order to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Towanda Borough. It was also noted that the presence of families (as opposed to a temporary-transient population) results in a more stable, vibrant and engaged community.

At this time, a motion was made by Karen Johnson and seconded by Jimmy Lacek to make a recommendation to Borough Council to amend Code §221-2 Definition of Family as: An individual or two (2) or more persons related by blood or marriage, or a group of not more than **THREE (3) persons, *excluding servants (??)*, who are not related by blood or marriage, living together as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling unit. Motion passed.**

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It was also discussed that the existing Towanda Borough Code does not currently have a definition for “servants” as mentioned in the definition of family.

B. Discussion of Special Exceptions in R1 & R4 Residential Districts (Ch 325).

§325-13 R-1 One-Family Residential District. C. Special Exceptions. (7) Two-family and multi-family dwellings, including apartments....

Plus;

§325-16 R-4 Special One-Family Residential District. C. Special Exceptions. (1) Two-family and multi-family dwellings, including apartments....

It was agreed among the Planning Commission members present to take no action at this time on the Special Exceptions in R1 & R4 Residential Districts (Ch 325).

Other New Business:

Old Business:

A. Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan 2007 links:

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix](#)

Towanda Township is on board, but we haven’t heard from North Towanda Township yet. As stated last month, Manager Lane will be applying for DCED grant money for funding which could take 8 to 9 months.

B. Update SCI Master Plan – As stated last month, the plan is to incorporate the YMCA with the trail project that is in the planning process.

C. Pocket Park on Park Street (see attached) – Everyone was asked to think about ideas to utilize this space.

Adjournment:

Motion was made by Karen Johnson and seconded by Jimmy Lacek to adjourn at 8:30 PM. Motion passed.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 18th at 7 PM.


Recording Secretary
Planning Commission