

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 18, 2020

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, August 18, 2020, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Karen Johnson at 7:05 PM.

Members Present: Karen Johnson-Vice-Chairman; Mark Christini; Kevin Doupe', Diane Siegmund

Members Absent: Jim Lacek-Chairman; Erin Groves, Jimmy Lacek, Kayla Saxon

Others: None present

Visitors: None present

Minutes:

A motion was made by Mark Christini and seconded by Kevin Doupe' to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2020 meeting. Motion passed.

New Business:

Concerning the establishment of an ordinance for Vacant Property, Kevin set up a Google Doc link to transcribe located at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10Ewr9TGcsmdUMju18rOKL798PBUpyHLWcJQ383YdKeE/edit>

The Commission previously worked on Purpose, Intent & Scope work items. The following was worked on in this meeting: Definitions of – Vacant, Abandoned & Blighted Property, Structures, Real Property, Improved Property, and Occupied Property.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a vacant/abandoned/blighted property registration and enforcement program as a mechanism to identify, assess, regulate, limit and reduce the number of vacant/abandoned/blighted and unsafe property located in the borough.

Intent

The intent is to require a registration of all vacant/abandoned/blighted structures and properties in the Borough in order to address and hold those responsible who would contribute to the deterioration and blight in the Borough. In doing so, through regular inspections, monitoring, and imposing of fees; an enforcement program will be instituted that protects, preserves and promotes the public health, safety, welfare and commerce of this Borough.

Scope

The provisions of this chapter shall apply to all existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures and properties. This chapter does not relieve those responsible from compliance with all other Borough ordinances, codes, rules, regulations and state and federal laws.

Definitions

Vacant

Vacant as applied to a building or structures to the provisions of this Ordinance means no person or persons actually, currently conduct a lawfully licensed business, or lawfully reside or live in any part of the building as the legal or equitable owner(s) or tenants, occupants, or owner-occupants, or tenants on a permanent non-transient basis at which substantially all lawful construction operations or occupancy has ceased, and which is in such condition that it cannot legally be reoccupied repair or rehabilitation, including but not limited to any property meeting the definition of abandoned property.

Abandoned

Any property that has not been legally occupied for a period of six months and which meets any one of the following additional criteria may be deemed to be abandoned property upon a determination by the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) or other public official:
(1) The property is in need of rehabilitation and no rehabilitation has taken place during that six-month period;
(2) Construction was initiated on the property and was discontinued prior to completion, leaving the building unsuitable for occupancy, and no construction has taken place for at least six months; or

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- (3) At least one installment of property tax remains unpaid and delinquent on that property; or
- (4) The property has been determined to be a nuisance by Towanda Borough.

Blighted Property

A blighted property can be any or all of the following:

- A. Properties that have broken or severely damaged windows, doors, walls, or roofs which create hazardous conditions and encourage trespassing; or
- B. Properties whose maintenance is not in conformance with the maintenance of other neighboring properties causing a decrease in value of the neighborhood properties; or
- C. Properties cited for a public nuisance pursuant to the applicable codes; or
- D. Properties that endanger the public's health, safety, or welfare because the properties are vacant and abandoned or improvements thereon are dilapidated, deteriorated, or violate minimum health and safety standards or lack maintenance as required by the applicable codes.

Structures - Article XI - Terminology - ss325-81 - Definitions

Anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires location on the ground or attachment to something having a fixed location on the ground. Among other things, "structure" includes buildings, mobile homes, walls, fences and billboards.

Real Property

The term "real property" means the land plus anything growing on it, attached to it or erected on it, including man-made objects, such as buildings, structures, roads, sewers, and fences, but excluding anything that may be removed from the land without injury to the land.

Improved Property - Article II - Privies - ss239-15 - Definitions

Any property within the Borough upon which there is erected a structure intended for continuous or periodic habitation, occupancy or use by human beings or animals and from which structure sewage shall or may be discharged.

Occupied

Occupied as applied to a building or structure subject to the provisions of this section means where one or more persons actually conducts a lawful business or resides in all or any part of the building as the licensed business-occupant, or as the legal or equitable owner/occupant(s) or tenant(s) on a permanent, non-transient basis, or any combination of the same. For purposes of this section, evidence offered to prove that a building is so occupied may include, but shall not be limited to, the regular receipt of delivery of regular mail through the U.S. Postal Service; proof of continual telephone, electric, gas, heating, water and sewer services; a valid City business license, or the most recent, federal, state, or City income tax statements indicating that the subject property is the official business or residence address of the person or business claiming occupancy; or proof of tenant occupied property license inspection.

Other New Business: None reported.

FUTURE Business (on hold for now):

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

This will have to wait until after the CENSUS is complete, Manager Lane to apply for DCED grant money.

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix](#)

- 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.

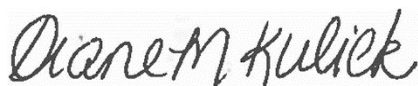
This money is on hold for now – includes the "Trail" project.

- C. Pocket Park on Park Street (see attached) – Gazebo idea on hold due to financial for now.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by Diane Siegmund and seconded by Mark Christini to adjourn at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 15th at 7 PM.



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Recording Secretary
Planning Commission