

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES – APRIL 19, 2022**

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, April 19, 2022, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chairman Kayla Saxon at 7:00 PM. Also, Borough Manager Lauren Egleston was present at this meeting

Members Present: Kayla Saxon, Chairman, Kevin Doupe', Erin Groves, Mark Christini, Shane Mize and William Kovalcin

Members Absent: Diane Siegmund, Jim Lacek, and Roger Hatch

Citizens to be Heard or Guests: - None present.

Minutes:

A motion to approve the January 18, 2022, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Christini and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin with 2 minor changes. Motion passed.

New Business:

- Roger Hatch was appointed (behind Jimmy Lacek) as Planning Commission Board Member. This was approved at the April 4th Borough Council meeting. Mr. Hatch could not attend this meeting, as he was out of town. Welcome Roger!

Old Business:

- Concerning the "Vacant Store Front" ordinance, Mr. Christini stated that at the last Borough Council meeting it was reviewed and approved to have Solicitor Smith review it and give us his legal opinion. We should hear something at the May 2nd Council meeting from Solicitor Smith.

FUTURE Business:

Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan 2008 links:

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix](#)

- Manager Egleston reviewed the "PA Municipalities Planning Code" section which gives the elements for preparing a Comprehensive Plan. She also spoke about the grant application for the plan which was sent to DCED. She spoke with an official from DCED last week who said that we put together a strong application. This grant would be at 50% with the other half split between Towanda borough, Towanda township, and North Towanda township. She is waiting to hear from them. Manager Egleston has spoken with a couple of companies that produce Comprehensive Plans for municipalities, and they gave her a couple of estimates.

Site Master Plan

- With the DCED grant approved, Manager Egleston told the Commission that we advertised for proposals for professional services in developing a Site Master Plan that will include the below projects. We only received 2 bids that were \$28,000 difference between them. Manager Egleston stated that we will probably rebid the project.
 1. Tommy Fairchild Memorial Park (formerly Riverfront Park)
 2. Riverside Cemetery
 3. YMCA (SCI) Complex Master Plan (including the Memorial Park playground)
 4. Third Ward Park. (Note: The Pocket Park was taken out for now.)
 5. The TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.

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6. Memorial Park – The Towanda Area School District would like this to be part of the Site Master Plan.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Groves and seconded by Mr. Christini at 8:00 PM.



Recording Secretary
Planning Commission

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES – JUNE 21, 2022**

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chairman Kayla Saxon at 7:05 PM. Also, Borough Manager Lauren Egleston was present at this meeting

Members Present: Kayla Saxon-Chairman, Mark Christini, William Kovalcin, Roger Hatch, Diane Siegmund & Shane Mize

Solicitor Fred Smith was present to review the drafted Vacant Store Front Ordinance.

Members Absent: Kevin Doupe', Jim Lacek & Erin Groves

Citizens to be Heard or Guests: None present.

Minutes (Approval):

A motion to approve the April 19, 2022, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Mize. Motion passed.

New Business: No new business.

Old Business:

- Solicitor Smith discussed the "Vacant Store Front" ordinance and stated that he feels the draft has things in it that are currently in the Towanda Borough ordinances, and it needs to be written to be more suitable to what we want it to cover which is the storefront issue (C2 & C3 on street level).
- The Planning Commission agreed to have him edit it and bring his draft to the next meeting for review.

FUTURE Business:

Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan 2008 links:

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

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- Manager Egleston reviewed with us the DCED grant which will cover up to 50% of costs. In speaking to one company she stated they estimated a cost of around \$38,000. Therefore, if that was the real quote, \$19,000 would be divided into three: Towanda Borough, Towanda Twp., and North Towanda Twp., which would be around \$6,333.33 each. Lauren will contact Towanda Twp., and North Towanda Twp. to get working on an RFP (Request for Proposal) so we can advertise for a consultant. She does not think that will happen until the fall.

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Site Master Plan

- Manager Egleston stated that this project was started when Kyle Lane was still here and he applied for a DCED grant through Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program which would have been only focused on the various parks. When she put the RFP (Request for Proposal) out there, it brought in a lot of solicitation, but we only received two back. One bid at \$75,000, and one at \$47,000. which are big differences. She talked to DCED because we broadened the scope of what we thought originally. She is going to break out the items below and get a separate line item and price because DCED is only going to pay for what was in the original scope of work. Once she does this it will be readvertised.
- Manager Egleston said she will break things down and readvertise.
 1. Tommy Fairchild Memorial Park (formerly Riverfront Park)
 2. Riverside Cemetery (not in the original grant request).
 3. YMCA (SCI) Complex Master Plan (including the Memorial Park playground)
 4. Third Ward Park.
 5. The TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.
 6. Memorial Park – The Towanda Area School District would like this to be part of the Site Master Plan (not in the original grant request).

Before adjourning the meeting, Chairperson Kayla asked Roger Hatch (our newest Planning Commission member) to talk a little bit about himself which was very interesting. Mr. Hatch stated that he really wants to see the downtown “grow and be well”. Chairman Kayla stated that we are glad to have Roger on board with us.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Christini and seconded by Mr. Mize at 7:45 PM.


Recording Secretary
Planning Commission

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES – JULY 19, 2022**

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chairman Kayla Saxon at 7:00 PM. Also, Borough Manager Lauren Egleston was present at this meeting

Members Present: Kayla Saxon-Chairman, Kevin Doupe'-Vice Chairman, Mark Christini, William Kovalcin, Erin Groves, Roger Hatch, & Shane Mize

Members Absent: Diane Siegmund & Jim Lacey

Citizens to be Heard or Guests: Erica Locke, our summer intern was present to observe our meeting.

Minutes (Approval):

A motion to approve June 21, 2022, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Christini. Motion passed.

New Business:

A. New Ordinance for Parking in Residential Districts – state purpose, distribute samples.

Mr. Christini stated that a resident on William Street was present for 2 meetings explaining how tough it is to park in front of her home. We don't have an ordinance in effect for R-1 parking and Council wanted the Planning Commission to look at possible solutions or at least investigate it to go forward or not. There are samples from Wellsboro and Sayre included and they both have a sticker-based system.

Ms. Egleston stated that it is a tricky area due to the County renting a group home to Allied Services and an eye doctor's office (on the edge of C-2) that needs parking spots. Mrs. Groves stated that if you have 2 commercial businesses that are not being polite to the residents in the area then it would be proper for us (a borough official) to talk to them about the issue and this would be easier than going to the extent of proposing another parking ordinance.

Mr. Mize stated that a direct approach would be the thing to do right now but this (ordinance) may be something we should look into for the future. Mr. Kovalcin stated that a direct approach is a good idea but it doesn't always work. Mrs. Groves stated that when you move into a residence that doesn't have off-street parking or limited parking and you come to the borough because you want a place to park, why does it have to be the borough's problem? Ms. Saxon said that sometimes homeowners cannot have a driveway on their property because of limitations within the property. Mrs. Groves feels that when you purchase a home you know what have. Mr. Doupe' feels that this is not a borough council or planning commission issue. The street in front of a house is public property other than if there was a handicapped parking spot (exception). When you buy a house, you don't buy the street in front of your house.

Mr. Christini stated that this neighborhood is a little different because of the Allied Services home on Mix Avenue. Mr. Doupe' stated that he recalls the use of this business that we (Planning) were told there would be 3 employees with just 1 car on the street. That was one of the reasons it was allowed to function as a group home. If this is not true then we need to address Allied about the employees parking on the street. Mr. Christini stated that there is also the eye doctor where they normally park on North Main Street (where the eye doctor's office is located). Also, he stated that people park at the end of Mix Avenue to walk on the parkway. That makes 3 things causing competition for those residential parking spots in addition to the people who reside there. This makes this area a little sensitive right now, as Mr. Christini sees that when he walks his dog. There is no parking on the right (south) side of Mix Avenue, but there is parking on the left (north) side.

Mr. Christini stated that the position council took is that "we hear you", "we want to show you that we are listening", and "we will give it a serious look." That is why it went to us (Planning). He talked to Sayre borough manager Dave Jarrett where they use residential permit parking stickers and he said it was a good idea in the beginning, but it was difficult to implement. He said the visitor passes are shared illegally and enforcement is difficult, but it has helped as there are open spaces, but it has been painful. They have 6 zones, and therefore fewer complaints. The Planning Commission's consensus was to not get into permitted parking stickers.

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Mr. Doupe' made the motion seconded by Mr. Mize to table proposing an ordinance for parking in the R-1 residential district and return it to Council. Motion passed. Mr. Christini added that we should have Mr. Sluyter revisit the Mix Avenue Allied Services property and send them a letter that they should be following the parking rules that were established for them.

- B.** New Quality of Life Ordinance – overview, discuss Danville PA presentation (Mark reviewed) Mr. Christini stated that Council has been discussing this for about 3 years and the way it works now is inefficient for things like grass, snow, and/or garbage, Mr. Sluyter writes the property owner a letter. If the person does nothing after 10 days (the snow melts and/or the grass continues to grow higher and the garbage stinks). After contacting the owner, a 2nd time, he eventually will write a citation that goes to the local magistrate. This process takes approximately 2 months. Therefore, the main focus of the QLO is on time-sensitive issues and the existing system isn't timely. Our code enforcement reports every month show half of the complaints are time-sensitive. We looked at other QLOs, particularly Danville's for an example. The city of Scranton has a checklist of violations and Danville has a ticketing type violation tool. A courtesy notice is sent first to the property owner (not to the tenant). It basically says they have 2 days to get the grass mowed and if it isn't mowed, the owner is ticketed for \$25.00. If Mr. Sluyter goes back again and it is not mowed yet, the owner gets a second violation ticket for \$50.00. The way this works is immediate and more efficient.

In the discussion it was asked what the top few issues Mr. Sluyter has to deal with. Manager Egleston stated that they are garbage, rubbish, high grass, and snow & ice. After discussion, ***Mr. Mize made a motion to go forward with working on the Quality of Life Ordinance, 2nd by Mr. Doupe'. Motion passed.***

Old Business:

A. Status of the Vacant Store Front Ordinance

Solicitor Smith could not attend tonight's meeting and is working on the ordinance.

FUTURE Business:

A. Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan 2008 links:

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

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- Manager Egleston stated that there is nothing new and she doesn't anticipate getting an RFP until the fall as we are pretty busy with all our current projects.

B. Site Master Plan

- Manager Egleston stated that she met with an official from DCNR today about the Parks Master Plan and also the YMCA passed the final inspection from the grant we got for the new gym floor and renovations. Therefore, we can get the final payment from the grant now. In addition, she discussed with Lauren how the new RFP will go for the Parks Master Plan and they talked about potentially considering adding the components of the Towanda School District's piece (Memorial Park).

Projects:

1. Tommy Fairchild Memorial Park (formerly Riverfront Park)
2. Riverside Cemetery (not in the original grant request).
3. YMCA (SCI) Complex Master Plan (including the Memorial Park playground)
4. Third Ward Park.
5. The TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.
6. Memorial Park – The Towanda Area School District would like this to be part of the Site Master Plan (not in the original grant request).

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Manager Egleston also spoke with Chris Brown about a Keystone Communities Program Grant and he offered to come to an evening meeting to discuss some strategies and initiatives that Sayre started with and bring some stakeholders together. The date she is looking at is August 4th and she invited the Planning Commission. The meeting place will probably be at the Flying Taco probably between 5:30 and 6:00 PM. She will send out an email. Lauren stated that she would like to focus on a plan for just our central business district. Manager Egleston handed out a copy of Sayre's Master Plan that was put together by Derck & Edson, LLC.

- Below is an explanation of the grant program:


The Keystone Communities Grant program, which encourages partnerships between public and private sectors to support local revitalization initiatives for the growth and stability of the community, is accepting applications **until August 31** for a variety of grant opportunities. These include planning grants, revitalization, public improvements, and more.

Mrs. Kulick informed Planning Commission that Mr. Sluyter told her that Allied Services purchased 712-714 Second Street. They plan on having a 6-person group home. This is in the R-1 One family Residential 7,200 square feet. Therefore, the August 16th Planning Meeting will be a hearing.

Manager Egleston told the Commission that Mark Gannon of Gannon's Insurance will sponsor the "Towanda Believe and Belong" mural that will be painted on the back of the Main Link building on Main Street (the Mural will face the Merrill Parkway).

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Groves and seconded by Mr. Doupe' at 8:01 PM.



Recording Secretary
Planning Commission

PLANNING COMMISSION
Public Hearing & Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 16, 2022

A Public Hearing and Regular meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, August 16, 2022, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chairman Kayla Saxon at 7:01 PM.

Members Present: Chairman Kayla Saxon, Vice-Chairman Kevin Doupe', Mark Christini, Jim Lacek, William Kovalcin, Erin Groves, Roger Hatch, Diane Siegmund & Shane Mize

Members Absent: None.

Citizens to be Heard or Guests: None.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Mrs. Groves and seconded by Mr. Doupe' to approve the previous regular meeting minutes that were held on July 19, 2022, with one correction/change on page one under New Business. A. Motion passed.

New Business:

- A. Public Hearing** – A Request of Allied Health Care Services asking for Special Exception consideration for a “supported housing residence for 6 individuals with mental needs” at 712 & 714 Second Street (2 separate structures on the same parcel). This property is located in the R-1 One-Family Residential District. Allied has plans to house 4 individuals at 712 Second Street and 2 individuals at 714 Second Street with full-time staff in attendance.

Allied Health Care Services defines The Enhanced Supported Living Program (ESLP) is an apartment-style residence for individuals living with mental illness. Residents receive support including medication management, nutrition education, and service coordination. Residents maintain their own living space with staff support. An ESLP can have up to twenty-four-hour staff supervision. After the clients successfully go through the ESLP, they transition into their own home or apartment and utilize Allied's Supported Living Program and are followed by an SLP Caseworker.

Mr. Sluyter briefed the Planning Commission on the application process used by Allied in applying for the Special Exception use for this property. This property is a non-conforming that is “grandfathered” in for single family residence. The Commission had the packet of information regarding this hearing.

Mr. Robert Ames, Allied Vice-President had a hand out explaining their behavior health continuum of care procedures and he reviewed each step. He stated that they will have 24-hour staff present (2 on first (1 is a manager), 1 on second, and 1 on third shift). There is a driveway for off-street parking and they plan to pave this area which would accommodate 3 and maybe 4 cars, but staff would be using this driveway. The manager who operates the program on 12 Mix Avenue will also manage this property, so she will be sharing time between the two program's locations. There will be 3 individuals in each building and the staff will be housed in the front building. Mr. Ames stated that there are other things that came about from inspecting the property, besides paving that Allied will get done. One being a new sidewalk in front of the main building. When questioned about Allied's purchase of this property before looking at the zoning regulations, Mr. Ames stated that he really thought that it was in an R-2 two-family residential district when they purchased the property.

Mr. Doupe' asked what type of mental disorders these 6 individuals are classified. Kesha, the Program Manager stated that they have serious mental illness that include bipolar, schizophrenia, severe depression, different anxiety disorders, and personality disorders. These are the more significant mental health disorders, which are the same types of illnesses as the clients at Allied's 12 Mix Avenue group home. Mr. Ames stated that the plan is that the clients start at Mix Avenue and then move on to the next phase at this property (at the proposed 712-714 Second Street address). When they graduate from this phase, they will go on into the community independently under a Caseworker's care in the Supported Living Program (SLP).

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Ms. Siegmund stated that there are no psychiatrists within 100 miles of town and Towanda is already fragile in terms of losing businesses. She wondered when you go from Clark Summit, bypass Tunkhannock and other places, and it seems like that Allied is warehousing people that are troubled and need a lot of care. She asked why would they bring them out into a rural area where they don't have psychiatrists. Ms. Siegmund stated that she checked and there is no one close by for treatment in terms of serious mental illnesses with struggling people. She feels that they should have the best kind of care in terms of working with them and finds it very shocking that they bought the place before contacting zoning. She feels like they are taking us for granted and this may not be a good match for the borough or the patients. Kesha stated that there are psychiatrists in Towanda. She stated they transport from the CRR (Community Residential Rehab) and sit-in with Dr. Barnes at Northern Tier Counseling and Dr. Pell from Concern. She stated that they do virtual and face-to-face counseling with Allied's clients.

Mr. Ames stated that the clients are from Bradford County and he then asked Shannon Cahill, Bradford-Sullivan Mental Health Case Management Supervisor to comment. Ms. Cahill reinforced that the Allied residents here are all from Bradford County. She also stated that if a Bradford County person is treated at Clark Summit Hospital, they are required to return them back to their original County if they so desire. Mr. Doupe' asked about the residents' coming and going from the home. Kesha stated that there are "house rules" that they agree to and part of that is a curfew, and they will report someone missing and look for them. They don't automatically evict someone. Someone could be gone for a couple days and they return and get back in the routine again. She stated that they reach out to their case manager. They have peer support through the Main Link and a team of support around these individuals.

Mrs. Groves stated that people feel that Towanda is a rural drop-off point for these types of group homes. Mr. Doupe' talked about parking and Ms. Saxon stated that her concern is "safety" in the event there is a fire, as there is no back access (behind the houses) for emergency response vehicles to respond to an emergency. She says feels that this area is congested with traffic, and part of it is one-way. Mr. Doupe' asked about square footage per 2 people. Mr. Sluyter made a lot of calls and stated that he found an official answer today that the State Code is 100 square feet per 2 people.

Mr. Ames stated that they didn't change anything on the property. Allied will make the property safe with fire alarms and they have fire drills on all the shifts every month. Allied has a partnership with the County Mental Health Office. The County came to Allied saying they needed more beds to serve individuals with behavioral health issues, and they could not find the perfect spot. He also stated that he has been working for a year and a half with Mr. Sluyter to find a property for this program step.

Mr. Sluyter stated that Allied is asking if they can have this supported living program home in an R-1 (One Family) District. The question is does it meet R-1 requirements?" Is it a single-family use or is it a group home? Or, is this a rooming house? Mr. Sluyter feels this is what the discussion needs to be about. This property is a non-conforming grandfathered use and it's a 2-family property. He stated on Page 11 the Enhanced Supported Living Program (ESLP) is defined as "offers permanent group home or apartment style residence etc. If it is a group home then maybe it doesn't belong in an R-1, and if it's a rooming house maybe it doesn't belong in an R-1. Sluyter also mentioned if the tenants are able to pick to be in your program in this location? Mr. Sluyter pointed out numerous articles in Zoning Chapter 325 that would bring about questioning Allied's requested type of use for this property.

Ms. Cahill stated that this project was started years ago with many meetings, and they have been looking for a place for a long time. Mr. Ames stated they have a great partnership with the County. Also, they have to use the available state funding for this by December 31, 2022 or they lose it. He stated there is no plan B.

Mr. Hatch stated that this should be steered back to the "Special Exceptions", does it actually fit? He does not see where it fits. Solicitor Smith stated that we have an ordinance and there has been great appeals for this property which would help the individuals have a better life and so forth. He would not dispute that but he has an ordinance that he, Council and the Planning Commission has to work with. This application could have been done one of two ways. One, since we have a grandfathered property with 2 residences, it would arguably fit the definition of single-family dwelling. Two, was the approach Allied has taken. They didn't meet those criteria, therefore, they want a Special Exception".

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Special Exceptions uses have to be met, the criteria has been alluded to and there are questions that have to be met before we can grant exception. It is unlike a variance where you are saying I can't comply with the property or I can't make use of my property, I need a break from you because I have some unique condition to my property that I need leniency. This is not what we are dealing with here, so when these ordinances are drafted you will have uses that are permitted by right and usually will have something like this that may have a use that arguably could fit within the general purpose of the district. There has to be some precautions taken and some conditions attached. That is what a special use is all about. In the R-1 district, single family detached dwellings is about the only permitted use that Allied would fall under. So, the other permitted uses like churches and parish houses, essential services (like utility services), playgrounds, schools etc. Solicitor Smith stated that use as Allied describes it does not fall within any of the special exceptions as enumerated in §325-12 through §325-19 and does not comply with §325-42 requirements. He stated that this type of use in R-1 does not fit, and is not compatible to the character of the neighborhood. His recommendation is a "no".

The Planning Commission took a roll call vote and all board member were present and unanimously voted to not recommend Allied's request for "Special Exception" for 712 & 714 Second Street.

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission began at 8:11 PM.

- B. Quality of Life Ticketing Ordinance** – There were samples passed out on Scranton's QOL workflow process, and the Borough of Danville, Union City, and Blawnox QOL Ticketing ordinances. Also, there was a general sample QOL ticketing ordinance provided for the Commission. This ordinance will be directed toward things like high grass, snow & ice, rubbish and garbage. Solicitor Smith will work on putting a draft together.

Old Business:

- A. Status of the Vacant Store Front Ordinance** – Solicitor Smith is working on this.

FUTURE Business (at a Later Date):

- A.** Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan as adopted in 2008 – links below:

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix](#)

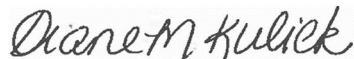
- B.** DCED Grant Approved – Point committee for bundled projects:

1. Tommy Fairchild Memorial Park (formerly Riverfront Park)
2. YMCA (SCI) Complex Master Plan (including the Memorial Park playground)
3. Third Ward Park
4. The Pocket Park
5. The TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.
6. Memorial Park – The Towanda Area School District requests this to be part of the Site Master Plan.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Doupe' and seconded by Mr. Mize at 8:24 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 20th at 7 PM.



Recording Secretary
Planning Commission