

PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 21, 2025

A regular meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

Present:

Members: Shane Mize, Chair; Kevin Doupe, Vice-Chair; Mark Christini, Roger Hatch, William Kovalcin, Scott Hauser, and Erin Groves.

Others: Towanda Borough Solicitor Fred Smith; Towanda Borough Manager Stacy Schoonover; Towanda Borough Administrative Assistant Angie Oliver

Absent: Members Diane Siegmund and Brianna Fischetti; Code Enforcement Officer Barry Thrush

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chair, Shane Mize, at 7:03 pm.

Citizens to be Heard/Guests: Tom Bradford from 101 Means Street, Towanda, PA, shared his frustration as a landlord and explained the trials and tribulations of such S. Mize thanked T. Bradford for his comments and time.

Minutes:

The December 17, 2024, regular meeting minutes were reviewed by the board. M. Christini requested Future Business to be edited to say, 'North Towanda township AND Towanda township' in place of 'NOT Wysox township'. Borough Administrator Oliver noted the changes and will correct the minutes. A motion was made by K. Doupe' and seconded by S. Mize to approve the December 17, 2024, minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Brianna Fischetti tendered her resignation from the Planning Commission Board effective January 17, 2025. The Planning Commission Board accepted the resignation and asked Administrative Assistant Oliver to compose and send Ms. Fischetti a letter of appreciation for her time served on the Board. A vacancy notice asking for candidates will be posted on the website by Oliver.

Solicitor Smith briefed the members on an issue of solar panels within the Borough that was brought to his attention by Code Enforcement Officer Barry Thrush. This usually isn't an issue if they are on roof tops, but these are on the ground, which becomes a liability for the homeowner, as well as the Borough. Smith states that there is no ordinance in the Borough code that recognizes this issue, so he suggests that Thrush research and find another municipality that does implement these ordinances and provide an example. Thrush will research the issue and discuss further at the February meeting.

Old Business:

Solicitor Smith reexamined the Non-conforming Use ordinance and provided the board members with an example of an ordinance from a different municipality to give everyone a better understanding. Smith suggested that he can add verbiage that will help broaden the scope of non-conforming use of land and structure. This will ensure to not limit future situations where non-conforming use is at the core of the subject. Solicitor Smith asked the board how they would like to proceed. It was a collective decision that Smith addend the existing ordinance, present to Council, come back at the February meeting to finalize, then hold a public hearing and then zoning. R Hatch made a motion to send the draft to Borough Council for review, S. Mize seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Future Business:

1. *Update Regional Comprehensive Plan*

Still waiting for North Towanda and Towanda townships to respond.

2. *Park Master Plans and Downtown Revitalization*

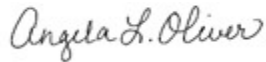
Borough Manager Schoonover had met with Charity Fields of Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers, a non-profit entity who previously worked with the Borough on the Downtown Revitalization plans. Manager Schoonover explained that whatever funds were raised for this project, they have held onto since the idea's inception. After they extract their administrative fee, the total amount can be available for the revitalization of the Towanda Downtown area. Manager Schoonover and Admin Assistant Oliver will be mailing donation letters to area businesses and even farther reaching than the borough limits, into the neighboring townships and beyond.

Adjournment:

K. Doupe made a motion to adjourn at 8:22 pm. E. Groves seconded the motion.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela L. Oliver".

Angela L. Oliver
Towanda Borough Administrative Assistant

PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 18, 2025

A regular meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

Present: Members: Shane Mize, Chair; Kevin Doupe, Vice-Chair; Mark Christini, Roger Hatch, William Kovalcin.

Others: Towanda Borough Solicitor Fred Smith; Towanda Borough Manager Stacy Schoonover; Towanda Borough Administrative Assistant Angie Oliver

Absent: Members Diane Siegmund, Scott Hauser, Erin Groves, Code Enforcement Officer Barry Thrush

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission Chair, Shane Mize, at 7:01 pm.

Citizens to be Heard/Guests: Tom Bradford

Minutes:

The February 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes were reviewed by the board. A motion was made by M. Christini and seconded by W. Kovalcin to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

- **Solar panels**

M. Christini had found a Penn State website with statistics showing out of the 2500 municipalities in PA, 71 of these had conditional use clauses in regards to solar installation. 63 of these were townships and only 8 were boroughs, which would indicate that boroughs aren't ready for solar energy. R. Hatch suggested that boroughs may be ready, but they are only prepared for roof top solar panels, not ground panels like the property in Towanda Borough. K. Doupe noted that industrial areas seem to be more popular with the boroughs that were listed. Christini noted that ordinances touching on accessory structures only being permitted in a side or rear yard which would cover Towanda's codes. He did note that if you do abandon them, you need to remove them within 6 months of discontinuation. If there is an accessory structure ordinance, the property cannot be more than 25% of accessory structures, meaning if you have a pool or sheds, those will be counted as the accessory structure percentage. Also, the solar panels cannot be street side and that is where municipalities run into problems with all the rules. W. Kovalcin made a motion to present the Dublin ordinance example to Council at the March 2025 meeting. S. Mize seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously to present council with the example as a reference point at the next Borough Council meeting.

Old Business:

Solicitor Smith discussed the Non-conforming Use ordinance and how he will need to submit the updated ordinance to Bradford County Planning Committee. After they approve the plans, it will then be re-advertised for a public meeting. The meeting will be scheduled within one month of the public advertisement.

Future Business:**1. Update Regional Comprehensive Plan**

Borough Manager Stacy Schoonover is to reach out to N. Towanda and Towanda townships to see if they would like to work together to develop the Regional Comprehensive plan.

2. Third Ward Park

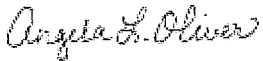
Discussion was made about how to move forward after receiving funding for the playground upgrades. It was also asked if the grant covers the design of the project. S. Schoonover will reach out to Stiffler McGraw about how to proceed about sending the project out for bid and to ask if the grant will cover design.

Adjournment:

M. Christini made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 pm. W. Kovalcin seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Angela L. Oliver
Towanda Borough Administrative Assistant

Planning Commission

June 17, 2025

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda PA.

The meeting was called to order by Kevin Mize at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin Doupe, Mark Christini, Erin Grover, Roger Hatch, Scott Hauser, Willaim Kovalcin

Others: Barry Thrush, Code Enforcement, Stacy Schoonover, Borough Manager

Visitors:

Minutes:

The minutes from the February 18, 2025 meeting were approved by a motion made by Mr. Doupe and seconded by Mr. Hatch, approved.

New Business

Variance Request: Noah & Audrie Learn from 428 State Street spoke on behalf of needing variance for small garage set back of 75 ft required, due to several factors I cannot place it any further back on my lot due to service drop as states in code section 522. The location is on side of my house, not facing anything and wont impact neighbors' privacy or visibility. We purchased this property Sept 2024 trying to make improvements. Learns garage will need 9 ft. This will need to be passed by The Planning Committee has made a motion made by Mr. Doupe and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. The motion passed unanimously.

Camping Ordinance: Borough Manager, Stacy Schoonover under the bridge we had a bad problem with camping, leaving trash behind. Schoonover is asking to have something on the books to prohibit camping on Borough property. Motion to forward to council was made by Mr. Mize and seconded by Mr. Doupe. The motion passed unanimously.

Home Occupation within Borough Limits: Barry Thrush; current home occupancy goes through zoning hearing board and applicant is responsible to pay thousand dollars. Would like to bypass the zoning hearing board with certain criteria and have zoning officer approve. Today a lot of jobs have changed, people work from their home therefore we should review our current occupancy. Planning Commission is in favor, motion was made by Mr. Doupe and seconded by Mrs. Groves. The motion passed unanimously.

Ongoing Business

Non-Conforming use: 325-57 Passed and sent to codified.

Solar Energy: Solicitor Smith to give recommendations.

Comprehensive Plan: Manger Stacy Schoonover; Towanda Township, North Towanda received two proposals: Hailstone & Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan. Today we met over zoom and covered the proposals on zoom. Schoonover reported Hailstone would be the best fit. Mr. Mize and Mr. Doupe are interested joining the committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Planning Commission

June 17, 2025

Other:

Vacancies: Interest candidates: Carolyn & Kelly Shay. Letters of interest will be presented at next month's meeting.

As there was no further business, this meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Schoonover
Borough Manager

Planning Commission

July 15, 2025

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, July 15, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda PA.

The meeting was called to order by Shane Mize at 7:02 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin Doupe, Erin Grover, Shane Mize, Willaim Kovalcin

Others: Stacy Schoonover, Borough Manager, Leigh Vargason Borough Secretary

Visitors: Kelly Shay, Mr Bradford

Minutes:

The minutes from the June 17, 2025 meeting were approved, 1st motion William Kovalcin and 2nd by Kevin Doupe.

New Business

Interest of Carol Ann Westafer and Kelly Shay to fill vacant seats, with a motion 1st K. Doupe, 2nd W. Kovalcin to approve and send to Council.

Ongoing Business

Solar energy and Camping ordinance recommendations pending Fred's input.

E. Groves expresses frustration with the current state of planning and the need for a comprehensive review of existing codes and ordinances, emphasizes the importance of having a thorough understanding of the existing code book and using it to address current issues, rather than constantly creating new regulations

As there was no further business, this meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Next Meeting schedule for August 19, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Vargason
Borough Secretary

Planning Commission

September 16, 2025

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda PA.

The meeting was called to order by Shane Mize at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Chair Shane Mize, Mark Christini, Kelly Shay, Carol Westafer, Scott Hauser

Absent Members: Kevin Doupe, William Kovalcin, Erin Groves, Roger hatch

Others: Leigh Vargason Borough Secretary, Fred Smith Solicitor

Visitors: Mr Bradford, Jenalee Coe NHS Student, Mr. Rounds NHS Teacher

Public Comments:

NHS Student Jenalee Coe introduced the proposal for a community dog park, near the Memorial Park pavilion area.

Highlights:

- The lack of designated off-leash areas in Towanda
- Residents show interest in pet friendly spaces, with limited options currently available.
- Dog park would encourage exercise, social interaction, and family activities for residents.
- For pets it would provide safe play, off leash freedom, and better behavior through activity.
- For the town, it would improve liability, increase community pride, attract visitors, and potentially boost nearby business.

Community Engagement and Funding:

- Community engagement features include book nook, pamphlet holders, donation bins, and a camera for 24 hr. monitoring
- Funding sources include the town budget, state or local grants, and community fundraising events.
- The NHS club would be responsible for routine upkeep and monthly maintenance.
- The borough would handle waste disposal, and the park would follow strict safety and cleanliness rules.

This proposal aims to bring people together, strengthen community pride, and turn unused land into a vibrant hub for residents and pets.

Minutes:

The minutes from the July 15, 2025 meeting were approved, 1st motion M.Christini and 2nd S.Mize

New Business

Regional Comprehensive Plan kick off meeting was held, which involves Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, North Towanda Township, the plan involves various aspects like recreation, mapping, and transportation. The goal is to provide a blueprint for future grants and funding opportunities.

Planning Commission

September 16, 2025

Ongoing Business

Solar energy Solicitor F. Smith spoke on implementing an ordinance to cover Solar Panels installations. We currently do not have specific zoning code for installing solar panels. F. Smith presented a governor's model ordinance, M. Christini motioned that F. Smith updates his suggestions on the governor's model and bring back to the Planning Commission meeting to be chewed on and then be comfortable with it and then make a motion, hopefully to send it to council. S. Mize second motion, all in favor of F. Smith bringing an updated model to the next plan committee to be reviewed.

Welcomed new members Kelly Shay, and Carol Westafer

As there was no further business, this meeting was adjourned at 7:36p.m.

Next Meeting schedule for October 21, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Vargason
Borough Secretary