

PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 16, 2024

A Regular meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

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

Members Present: Chairman Shane Mize, Co-Chairman Kevin Doupe, Mark Christini, William Kovalcin, Erin Groves, Roger Hatch–via conference call, & Scott Hauser

Members Absent: Diane Siegmund

Citizens to be Heard or Guests: Manager Hotaling participated via conference call.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Mr. Doupe' and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin to approve the Regular meeting minutes for October 17, 2023, with a spelling correction on page 2. Motion passed.

New Business:

The Commission reviewed a letter of interest from 2 residents who would like to be considered for the open Planning Commission seat.

The two interested candidates were Brianna Fischetti and Rachel Stahle.

Chairperson Mize stated that he met both candidates and he was impressed with Ms. Fischetti who he met through mutual friends. He feels she will bring a lot to the table. Also, she has lived in Nashville, TN where downtown revitalization has been big.

Manager Hotaling stated that Ms. Fischetti came to the office and talked to her about different business ideas she had in mind for our downtown area and seemed very excited. Manager Hotaling gave her information to get in touch with the University of Scranton Small Business Development Center. She has attended our events and is very interested in the town and the community.

Mr. Doupe' related that he has a couple of recommendations for Ms. Fischetti. Chairperson Mize stated that she has reached out to him and wants to be part of Porch Fest and she is looking at events in the future for our community, which is now.

Reverand Stahle is interested in contributing to the community where her abilities and interests are the best fit. Reverand Stahle came to a Planning Commission meeting back in the summer of 2022 and spoke to us about her interest back then, which was appreciated.

Mr. Doupe' and Chairperson Mize recommended Ms. Fischetti. Mr. Christini stated that he feels both would be good for the position.

Mrs. Groves made the motion to recommend to Council, Ms. Fischetti to fill the open seat on the Planning Commission. This was seconded by Mr. Doupe, motion passed.

Old Business:

Mr. Christini stated that Solicitor Smith is working on the definitions of "guest" and tightening up grandfathering for non-conforming use.

FUTURE Business:

A. Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan that was last adopted in 2008.

Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan

Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix

Manager Hotaling stated that we currently do have the grant (it will expire this year) and it will involve Towanda Township, North Towanda Township, and Towanda Borough. We need the get their approval. Also, she sent the CD and an email to make sure all the municipalities were on board. Then we will get the RFP in the paper.

- 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 TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.

DCED awarded the Parks Master Plan grant through the Greenways, Trails & Recreation. Stifler-McGraw is the consultant.

Manager Hotaling talked about the following:

- They did a community survey for all three parks but did not get much feedback. It was less than 10 responses. We plan on moving the little league field that is at the YMCA over towards the other little league fields near the pavilion so we will have all three fields right in the same area. Also, in the plan is a new pavilion where the current little league field is, and the survey responders asked for several different pickleball courts. We discussed expanding the YMCA where the old basketball asphalt area is out back, expanding the building to accommodate another gymnasium or different growth opportunities for that building.
- The swimming pool needs to be redone, but unfortunately, we must do a feasibility study according to DCNR. Manager Hotaling has done the master plan, but they are going to require another study before they would release any other type of funding to do those pool improvements.
- The Tom Fairchild Park kind of winds around a back area that is underutilized, and we talked about improvements to the boat launch and soft launch areas.
- Third Ward is a great playground with new playground equipment. It would have a rubber turf and different games to play, security systems, pavilions, plus restrooms. She stated that she did submit a grant this year for around \$560,000 (phase one), and she hopes that it does not require a match. We did have some match funds and we had some additional funding that was given to us from the BC Commissioners.
- DCNR is back open for its different recreational improvement grants. So, we could potentially apply for that which is due in April. In the Parks Master Plan, we only have actual costs for the Third Ward Playground, and that exceeds \$1,000,000 (includes playground equipment). Stifler McGraw's, Chris Foster, the landscape architect is putting the plan together. He should have more updates for us within the next couple of weeks plus finalize the master plans giving us the cost estimates for all these different improvements and laying out phase one, phase two, and phase three of the different parks and how we go about getting the funding.

C. Downtown Revitalization – To date we have received over \$80,000 in funds towards this plan.

Misc:

Mr. Mize asked about how the Quality-of-Life ticketing is working. Mr. Christini stated that it has been going on and Mr. Thrush has sent letters out and a few fines have been issued.

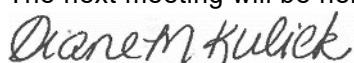
Mr. Thrush is also following the Vacant Store Front Ordinance, but we have found out that two of the vacant stores are vacant. They went to the district magistrate recently and he dismissed the tickets for both properties because the property owners said that they are not vacant because they go in there once a month. Mr. Christini said that we might have to tighten up the definition of vacant. There was a lot of back and forth and they had seven samples and it's not super clear about vacant. He thought some of the ordinances said that you had to have an existing license-recognized business from the state of Pennsylvania, and our current ordinance doesn't say that now.

As far as the arts part of the ordinance, Manager Hotaling has lined up people for the Arts Committee.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Hatch at 7:48 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 7 PM.



Recording Secretary, Planning Commission