

VARIANCE REQUEST HEARING

May 5, 2026, 2026

The Variance Request Hearing for 12 Walnut Street Application for Change of Nonconforming Use-Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, May 5, 2026 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, Vice Chair Kevin Doupe, Mark Christini, Kelly Shay, Erin Groves, Roger Hatch, Scott Hauser, William Kovalcin

Absent Members: Carol Westafer

Others: Leigh Vargason Borough Secretary, Fred Smith Solicitor, Barry Thrush Code Officer

Visitors: Damian Rossettie, Joshua Clark, Tar Clark, Steven Greer, Clark Johnson, Donna Johnson, Myrin Walker, Barbara Krauss, Karen Johnson, Chelsea Stroud

Overview

Attuned Counseling's variance request to convert 12 Walnut Street into a behavioral mental health outpatient office. The property, previously used by Dr. Ferenczi, has a certificate of non-conforming use. Attuned Counseling, represented by Tara Clark and Joshua Clark, plans to operate with four therapists initially, serving primarily commercial insurance clients. Concerns were raised about traffic, privacy, and the building's condition. Public comments were mixed, with some supporting the proposal for mental health services and others opposing it due to potential negative impacts on the residential neighborhood. The Planning Commission will recommend the case to the Zoning Hearing Board for further review.

Overview of Variance Request

- Code Officer Barry Thrush provided an overview of the Planning Commission application from Attuned Counseling LLC.
- The request is for a change of use from non-conforming use (Dr. Ferenczi's office) to a behavioral mental health outpatient office.
- The property has a certificate of non-conforming use issued in 2000.

Applicant's Presentation

- Damian Rossetti introduces himself as the lawyer representing Attuned Counseling LLC
- Tara Clark, an owner of Attuned Counseling, explains the nature of the facility and her credentials as a licensed clinical social worker, LCSW.
- The facility offers mental health counseling for individuals, families, and couples.
- Tara stresses the need for service in the Towanda area, and benefits of having a local office.

Discussion on Clientele and Services

- Tara discusses the clientele, primarily commercial insurance clients, and the type of mental health issues they address.
- The facility does not specialize in drug and alcohol treatment, which is handled by other services.

VARIANCE REQUEST HEARING

May 5, 2026, 2026

- Hours of operation was inquired by Kevin, Tara explains they are typically open from 8 am to 4:30 pm, with some clinicians staying longer.
- Erin Groves questions the choice of location; Tara explains the benefits of privacy and parking compared to downtown locations.

Building and Operational Details

- Tara describes the building's layout, including a waiting room, reception area, and four offices.
- The building is well-suited for the proposed with minimal changes needed.
- Kevin asks about the maximum number of therapists, and Tara estimates four initially, with potential growth.
- Erin inquires about the qualifications of the therapists, and Tara confirms they all have masters' degrees, including a nurse practitioner.

Public Concerns and Questions

- Public comments are opened, with concerns raised about traffic, safety, and the impact on property values.
- Clark Johnson questions the condition of the building and suggests alternative locations.
- Myrna Walker supports the proposal, citing the building previous use as a doctor's office
- Steven Greer and other residents' express concerns about the impact on a quiet residential area, the potential of loitering, and the safety of his young daughters.

Applicant's Response to Public Comments

- Tara responds to public concerns, emphasizing the need for privacy and the minimal impact on the neighborhood.
- Tara explains the financial benefits of the proposed location compared to other options.
- Tara acknowledges the need for respecting the residential nature of the area and the importance of maintaining a professional environment.

Discussion on Legal and Zoning Considerations

- Cody Office and Planning Committee members discuss the legal and zoning implications of the variance request
- The buildings previous use as a medical office is considered a factor in degerming non-conforming use.
- The committee considers the continuity of use and the potential for the buildings to be repurposed for other use.

EXECUTIVE SESSION @ 8:12 PM

HEARING RESUMES @ 8:27 PM

Roll Call Vote to Motion to move to Zoning Committee

- Chair Shane Mize calls for a roll call vote, motion made by Kevin Doupe, 2nd Shane Mize
- Planning committee votes 6-2 with not having the Variance Request move to Zoning Committee.

VARIANCE REQUEST HEARING

May 5, 2026, 2026

Chair Shane Mize motions to adjourn hearing, Kevin Doupe 2nds Motion.

Meeting adjourned @ 8:36 Pm

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Lattimer