Johnstown Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 7, 2026

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 7, 2026

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The following members of Planning Commission were present for roll call:

Chairman Carthew and Commissioners Buday, Shirt, Deater, and Hamacek.

Commissioners White and Grandinetti were absent.

In addition, John Rutledge, Economic Development Director; Art Martynuska, City Manager; Melissa Stiles, Laurel Municipal; and Barry Polster, Executive Director, Johnstown Regional Partnership were in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS): None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Shirt motioned to approve the Minutes of the June 2, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:
Kate Deater - ABSTAIN
Ian Shirt - YES
Mike Hamacek - YES
Donald Buday - YES
James Carthew - Chairman - YES
The motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS: None

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Carthew requested an update on the Pleasant Hills Baptist Church, noting the Planning Commission provided conditional use approval the prior month. Ms. Stiles reported a permit was issued, and the church was acquiring a lot next door for additional parking.

Chairman Carthew noted the City Council recently approved the Comprehensive Plan. He noted there had been discussion regarding the formation of strategic planning groups. He questioned if there were any updates on the groups and if there were any ideas that needed discussed with the Planning Commission. Mr. Rutledge replied he was not present last month, but discussions were still moving forward. Mr. Polster asked what the Planning Commission's role would be in formulating the implementation teams. Chairman Carthew replied the Commission had requested to be involved in the teams, if not spearheading teams. Mr. Polster pointed out the responsibility for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is that of the Planning Commission, so they should be party to all of the teams.

Mr. Buday commented the top three items from the Comprehensive Plan were public safety, blight and sidewalks. Mr. Hamacek also noted redevelopment was a huge part of the plan. Mr. Buday pointed out a number of businesses had closed since the beginning of the year. Mr. Rutledge commented a group could be formed to assist with redevelopment. The Commission discussed opportunities in the city, noting the Keystone Opportunity Zone would be helpful in addition to other city programs.

Chairman Carthew noted the Planning Commission was reviewing the zoning districts and how it could assist in the redevelopment efforts through zoning. Mr. Buday commented there was not a single zone in the city that was entirely R-1. Chairman Carthew stated Mr. Buday's concerns are why the groups were needed, but the City's assistance would also be needed. Mr. Rutledge noted there were still plans to form strategic groups as well as lists being compiled regarding blight. Mr. Hamacek commented on specs regarding demolished properties, noting there were issues with the vacant lots not being torn down far enough to allow for mowing.

Chairman Carthew raised the topic of the Main Street Revitalization project. He asked if the project would be extending to Adams Street. Mr. Martynuska stated the project was planned to stop at Clinton Street, but that change occurred prior to his tenure as City Manager. Mr. Polster commented the scope of the project through the RAISE Grant, now the Build Grant, was always the entire length of Main Street to Adams Street. He questioned the decision to stop at Clinton Street. Mr. Martynuska offered to investigate the concerns raised.

Chairman Carthew next discussed the Mom's House project. He noted the Planning Commission questioned the building permit at the prior meeting. Ms. Stiles stated Laurel Municipal spoke with the engineer for the site, who was making changes to the building plans. Laurel Municipal had not yet received updated plans. No new permits had been issued. Mr. Martynuska noted, when he researched the project, the original permit had lapsed in April and reapplication would be required. In addition, Mr. Martynuska shared the City arranged for the privacy fence that was around Central Park to be used at Mom's House if desired to help alleviate some of the complaints regarding the unsightliness of the site. Chairman Carthew commented, with the open construction site, erosion control also needed to be maintained.

Regarding the former B&L Wine building, Chairman Carthew asked if any building permits had been requested for the site. Ms. Stiles reported there had been permits issued for site renovations, including an Ansul system for a kitchen with additional interior renovations.

Chairman Carthew's last topic for old business was discussion regarding opportunities for the Planning Commission to meet specifically to discuss zoning and how zoning could help with redevelopment. Mr. Polster asked if any of the improvements proposed by the school district at Garfield required Planning Commission review. Chairman Carthew noted the only item of concern could be the retaining wall. Ms. Stiles noted Laurel Municipal currently only had building permits for interior renovations. Chairman Carthew requested Laurel Municipal check with the school district regarding site development work. Mr. Polster questioned if the school district was using the entire site or just the original academic building, noting there had been discussion previously regarding a subdivision of the site. Ms. Stiles stated the interior renovations were for the entire building, but she would double-check.

Mr. Martynuska noted the bid opening for the Public Safety Building would be taking place the next day at 1:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Recognize new Planning Commission Member - Kate Deater

Chairman Carthew welcomed Ms. Deater to the Planning Commission. Ms. Deater thanked him and voiced her appreciation for being a part of the Commission and looked forward to helping move the City forward.

Mr. Polster asked if Ms. Deater had been provided a copy of the state guidelines for Planning Commission Members. It was noted she was provided guidelines, the municipal code, and the zoning ordinance.

2. Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency Discussion

Chairman Carthew noted Ms. Stiles provided a lengthy document to the Planning Commission for their review. He mentioned the Commission appreciated her being present to answer questions throughout the meeting. He welcomed her to attend the zoning district meetings planned for the future.

REPORTS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Aaron Rhoads, 142 Hudson Street, shared concerns regarding zoning, occupancy, and taxing for rental registrations throughout the city. He noted properties being taxed as single-family homes while be rented out as multi-unit conversions. He explained his understanding of the process to split a house into multiple units. He questioned how the Planning Commission and City can discuss planning and zoning if the zoning maps are not accurate. He shared his actions taken with the City and Laurel Municipal since February. He also noted concerns regarding blight near properties he had purchased in Old Conemaugh Borough. He found 16 properties in Johnstown that were being rented out as multi-units while zoned as R-1. He questioned the point of zoning laws if they were not being followed. He hoped, through his right-to-knows and attending meetings, he would reach someone who could help him understand what was happening.

Chairman Carthew thanked Mr. Rhoads for his comments and noted in attending the meeting Mr. Rhoads had seen that the Planning Commission intended to work with the City to modify the current zoning districts.

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.