

Johnstown Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 5, 2026

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, May 5, 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 Grandinetti, White, and Hamacek.

Commissioners Buday, Shirt, and Casals was absent.

John Rutledge, Economic Development Director; Art Martynuska, City Manager; Dave Williams, Residential Construction Coordinator; Barry Polster, Johnstown Regional Partnership; Kate Tunney, Rothschild Doyno; Nick Rebeck, Rothschild Doyno; and Alyssa Rouser, CJL Engineering, were also in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS): None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. White motioned to approve the Minutes of the April 7, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.
The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamacek. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Mike Hamacek - YES
Michael Grandinetti - ABSTAIN
James White - YES
James Carthew - Chairman - YES
The motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. City of Johnstown Comprehensive Plan

Kate Tunney, Rothschild Doyno, stated it had been a pleasure and honor to work with the City of Johnstown over the past year and a half to draft the comprehensive plan. She noted the plan was provided to the Commission for review as well as public comment. The comments received were incorporated into the document. She provided a brief background of the team involved with creating the plan as well as the phases of the plan development.

Ms. Tunney highlighted the community engagement during the process. Over 600 responses were received from a wide range of events, including in-person events as well as an online survey. Multiple listening sessions and stakeholder interviews took place. Focus groups looked at key aspects of the plan. Of note, feedback was mapped to ensure participation from people who lived across the city in different areas. She added there were a number of studies that preceded the comprehensive plan and helped to inform Rothschild's work. Regarding the online survey, she pointed out the school district helped push out the survey, and as a result, around 60 percent of the feedback received was from youth.

Ms. Tunney shared key pieces of information learned during the community engagement. Residents saw some of the City's strengths to be services, cost of living, and proximity to open spaces. Residents wanted the plan to focus on engagement, road, and sidewalk condition, accessibility, property maintenance, economic development, and code enforcement. When asked to prioritize, people talked about blight, improving infrastructure, supporting local businesses, public safety, and fostering a positive image and mindset.

The comprehensive plan was structured over six areas: Housing, jobs, environment, mobility, community, and services. Each area was structured with goals, recommendations, and strategies. She provided an example from the plan and explained how each section was detailed. She noted the plan was made public and located throughout the city and online in early February 2026. Approximately 70 comments were received, and feedback was incorporated.

Ms. Tunney highlighted key pieces used to summarize Johnstown at the current time. She stated Johnstown is a city of neighborhoods with unique characteristics, which is a huge asset and strength. In addition, the land is unique with hillsides creating a green horizon and a valley with a more urban and industrial character. One of the goals in the plan is to bring more nature into the city. In looking at the current population, she explained there was room to expand and grow. She noted millennials are moving out of Johnstown. She also noted women are moving out of Johnstown at a higher rate than men. However, she shared people are coming into Johnstown with a diverse cultural history and background. They also examined the median income, education, and employment of Johnstown residents. She pointed out around 9,400 people work in Johnstown but live outside of the city, while about 4,700 people live in Johnstown but work outside of the city.

Ms. Tunney explained the graphics presented combined work that was already underway, so they were not spread across a number of different studies. She noted new information was gained in every conversation, so she was certain more initiatives and changes had transpired since the plan was published.

Mr. Grandinetti pointed out the snapshot reflected a statistic that 40 percent of housing units were owner-occupied. He asked whether there was a breakdown of what areas were historically owner-occupied versus rented.

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Ms. Tunney explained Rothschild on the map, owner-occupied houses were shown in orange while rental properties were shown in blue. Rental properties were derived from tax billing information as well as the City's rental registry. She offered to provide a numeric breakdown.

Mr. Grandinetti stated it would be interesting to see numbers of owner-occupied versus rentals in each of the 21 wards.

Chairman Carthew asked if the information was broken down by the 15 neighborhoods in the plan.

Ms. Tunney confirmed there was neighborhood information; however, neighborhoods do not have specific boundaries. She could work with census information to break down the numbers by ward. She noted the number of rental properties in the rental registry was different than the number of properties that show a tax billing address than the mailing address. She mentioned there was a possibility for the city to grow the rental registry program and help ensure quality rental housing in the city.

Mr. Grandinetti commented it was important to protect the integrity of owner-occupied neighborhoods.

Ms. Tunney noted the data could be tracked over a number of years to see how the neighborhoods trended. She added the metrics of home ownership versus rentals would be helpful for the City to continue tracking as strategies are refined over time.

Chairman Carthew noted the studies referred to a need for housing in the downtown central business district. He stated the plan may have come up short on identifying the need.

Ms. Tunney replied his concerns were noted in the plan in the text updates; however, they could be emphasized. She added the Elevate Johnstown study focused on market housing, particularly downtown.

Mr. Hamacek commented it would be interesting to see if any of the vacant downtown buildings were on the list for the Keystone Opportunity Zone project.

Mr. Grandinetti noted the housing goals but was concerned about the implementation strategies. He asked if the plan was a five-year plan.

Ms. Tunney replied the plan was for ten years. She recommended the City's focus on forming implementation teams to allow stakeholders, nonprofits, and service providers to work together to develop strategic plans within each of the action areas. The teams would be key to assuring its implementation. Rothschild also recommended the City get support from the neighborhood groups.

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Regarding land use, Ms. Tunney stated there were two steps that would benefit from the Planning Commission. The first would be to determine the best use for tax delinquent land, land without buildings, and vacant properties. Possibilities included housing, park spaces or green infrastructure. She added understanding the pathways for those parcels to get restored back to productive use for the City should be a high priority.

The second step would be to embark on a new zoning code. She noted the zoning code had not been updated for quite a while. In looking at quality life and amenity goals, the number of commercial and manufacturing districts compared to residential districts skews the City towards more industrial and commercial land use. She stated there were recommendations on zoning in the plan that could be beneficial in the near future, because a full zoning code update would be a process. In particular, she recommended focusing on conservation zoning, which currently allows for some industrial uses as well as higher density developments. Making conservation zoning more restrictive and expanding to steeply sloped areas will allow spaces to transition back to open space over time and promote the development of green space.

Chairman Carthew agreed the Planning Commission could definitely work with the work groups on zoning modifications and changes.

Ms. Tunney stated considering the land use section and near-term matters which could be implemented or considered prior to a larger zoning ordinance update would be key. She also recommended exploring commercial and industrial uses that allow for heavy industry at the heart of the City. She stated infrastructure should be set up to consider the development of homes as well as how park spaces are developed or maintained.

Mr. Grandinetti commented on hurdles people experience when developing vacant properties. He stated the zoning ordinances might need to be relaxed to help people develop.

Ms. Tunney agreed the City should make it easier for people to develop properties and consolidate lots for development. She added the zoning ordinance process will help determine where higher or lower density housing is appropriate.

Mr. Grandinetti shared his concern about the room to grow and the exodus of young people, especially women.

Ms. Tunney stated the job section has recommendations that may help explain some of the barriers to employment, such as childcare. She added working with nonprofits would be helpful to understand statistics better.

Mr. White asked if the implementation groups and neighborhood organizations after appointed will be set up to evaluate Mr. Grandinetti's questions.

Ms. Tunney replied the groups and organizations would have a voice in helping to determine the next steps in the future of change in Johnstown.

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Chairman Carthew stated the implementation teams would definitely need partners from neighborhoods, advisory committees, JARI, Community Foundation, and Vision. He added the teams should meet monthly or at least quarterly.

Mr. Grandinetti questioned why people were working in the city but were not willing to live in the city.

Mr. Martynuska replied the reasons were multifaceted. Some of the reasons were the school district, cost of living, taxes, or crime.

Mr. Hamacek commented people with younger kids may be worried about the school district.

Mr. Martynuska added property values and perception are also issues.

Ms. Tunney indicated there was a lot of opportunity in focusing on quality of properties and code enforcement.

Mr. Hamacek commented properties should be geared towards working people and not just people who are on disability or just want to move to Johnstown and get a free ride. He stated people who work take care of their houses and cut their grass.

Ms. Tunney noted increasing the tax base will also give the City additional resources to navigate infrastructure and maintenance in the city.

Mr. Grandinetti mentioned ARPA funding JRA used to assist owners with home repairs. He noted the program went through millions of dollars within months.

Mr. White commented a strategic plan that implements what is in the comprehensive plan is needed. He stated all of the questions being asked would be answered during the strategic planning period. Each category in the plan would need its own strategic plan.

Mr. Hamacek commented the comprehensive plan tells the City what needs to be done, but the strategic plan shows how to accomplish the goals.

Mr. Rutledge noted some of the ideas were already being worked on. He pointed out the housing annual action plan states what is being done going forward with housing based on available money. He stated DCED is talking to neighborhoods to determine needs and what improvements can be made. He explained DCED is looking at demolition strategically to clean up neighborhoods. He agreed, once the comprehensive plan is adopted, a strategic plan needed developed for each section.

Ms. Tunney noted alignment with the comprehensive plan might also make it easier to obtain funding to support action teams and projects.

Chairman Carthew noted receiving correspondence from the County Planning Commission indicating it had reviewed the plan and looked forward to collaborating with the City. He thanked Ms. Tunney and Mr. Rebeck for their time and effort.

Mr. White asked if Ms. Tunney would still be available if questions arose.

Ms. Tunney confirmed she could be contacted. She noted Rothschild is invested in what happens in Johnstown.

Mr. Hamacek motioned to approve the Comprehensive Draft Plan as noted and discussed. The motion was seconded by Mr. White. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Mike Hamacek - YES

Michael Grandinetti - YES

James White - YES

James Carthew - Chairman - YES

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Safety Building Land Development Plans

Alyssa Rouser, CJL Engineering, presented site plans and architectural renderings showing the facade of the Public Safety Building. She described the project narrative. A small building was planned for the back corner of the building to house a new ADA accessible elevator with a small public lobby. A new sidewalk would come off of Washington Street through the parking lot with a crosswalk to make a new entrance with landscaping. The entire building was also being renovated.

Chairman Carthew stated the narrative was concise in terms of land development. The three parking spaces being used was all police parking in essentially a private lot. Regarding erosion and sediment control, the project is under 4,000 square feet, so no NPDES permit was required. The plans included some erosion and sedimentation controls and minimal stormwater management.

Mr. Grandinetti asked about the exiting elevators.

Ms. Rouser replied the other elevators would be staying; however, the main point of entrance would be the new elevator and lobby. She added the smaller police elevator would likely be nonoperational.

Chairman Carthew commented the new elevator would serve the public.

Mr. Martynuska confirmed the police elevator would be out-of-service. He added there would be a separate entrance for the sallyport from the garage for the police department as the booking area and holding cells were being moved from the second floor to the first floor. If

prisoners needed to be taken to another floor, there would be a private entrance to the elevator from the sallyport.

Mr. Hamacek commented, when the plans were first presented, the rendering showed the elevator enclosure was all glass while the new plans showed masonry.

Ms. Rouser replied the brick was chosen to match the rest of the facade. Approval was received from the State Historic Preservation Office.

Mr. Martynuska commented all of the drilling for the core sampling was complete.

Ms. Rouser confirmed there would be deep foundations.

Mr. Grandinetti asked if Mr. Martynuska could expand on the planned renovations for the interior of the building.

Mr. Martynuska reviewed the planned renovations. The fifth floor would be cleaned up. The roof had already been finished. On the fourth-floor, the Council Chambers would be reoriented to include additional seating, an entrance for Council with a private meeting room. The dais would be ADA compliant and have a ramp at one end along with permanent seating for staff. There would be a designated platform for media.

The third-floor renovations would increase space for detectives. Modern equipment would be installed including modern ventilation for the blood room. The public would only have access from the ground floor to the fourth-floor. He noted there were thoughts to possibly turn the fifth floor back into a training area in the future.

On the second floor, the old jail cells would no longer be used. The booking area was being moved to the first floor. Planned renovations include making the back areas more user-friendly, replacing some windows, and eliminating some windows. Other building renovations included all new HVAC, new plumbing where needed, and restroom remodels where needed. He noted the lighting had already been upgraded to LED.

When asked by Mr. Grandinetti, Mr. Martynuska confirmed the fire department would be staying in the same area. There were plans to modernize the shower area.

Mr. Martynuska explained the only unexpected issue so far was the basement. A number of options had been considered to render the basement structurally sound with the decision made to add extra columns.

Chairman Carthew asked if CJL was providing a new water service.

Ms. Rouser explained the water service currently comes in under the sidewalk in an open room. The plan was to move the water service to the basement and fill in under the sidewalk so there was not a void.

Mr. Martynuska provided details regarding concrete under the building from prior renovations dating back to the 1977 flood.

Chairman Carthew extended his appreciation to everyone involved in saving the Public Safety Building. One of the goals of the Planning Commission was to keep the historic building alive.

Mr. White asked how many cells there would be.

Mr. Martynuska replied there were currently four cells; however, there would only be three cells with one of them being ADA compliant.

Chairman Carthew asked about the lighting mentioned in the narrative.

Ms. Rouser explained two pole lights were being added along the sidewalk to help light up the parking lot. In addition, two new wall mounted fixtures were being added to the existing building, and two fixtures would be by the doors of the new entrance.

Mr. White motioned to approve the Land Development Plans produced by CJL Engineering. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamacek. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Mike Hamacek - YES

Michael Grandinetti - YES

James White - YES

James Carthew - Chairman - YES

The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Carthew inquired as to the status of the Pleasant Hills Baptist Church and Mom's House. He noted land development plans for both projects were approved last year.

Mr. Rutledge had no update on Mom's House. Regarding the church, he noted a public hearing was planned for June regarding a conditional use approval for religious purposes.

Chairman Carthew appreciated the update. He requested Mr. Rutledge speak to Laurel Municipal and find out if Mom's House had requested a building permit or submitted any plans.

Barry Polster, Johnstown Regional Partnership, asked if the approvals from the Commission were time sensitive. He stated, if there was no activity over a certain period of time, the approval would lapse.

Mr. White suggested reviewing the ordinance.

Chairman Carthew agreed the Commission should review the ordinance. He was developing follow-ups, so the projects do not become stale.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Hamacek commented, last year, prior to being on City Council, he attended meetings regarding a downtown dog park, and he had not heard anything recently regarding the project.

Mr. Grandinetti responded JRA had purchased the lot where the old funeral home was located. A group of individuals through the Gunford Group was receiving funding for the park. The land would remain in JRA's ownership while the group initiated the renovations. He added, if things go bad with the dog park plans, then JRA will maintain the lot.

Chairman Carthew asked if there were any updates on the Main Street revitalization project.

Ms. Rouser stated the project was waiting on funding.

Chairman Carthew expressed concerns regarding the attendance of Mr. Casals. He asked if the Commission should take action.

Mr. Grandinetti indicated City Council appoints people to the Commission, so it would have to act on the situation.

Mr. White stated the Commission could submit an official memo to City Council stating what was happening and asking for guidance.

Mr. Polster commented, after the memo was submitted, City Council would have to inform Mr. Casals 15 days in advance of any action. It was noted the notice was part of the municipal code.

Commission members discussed Chairman Carthew's concerns with the meeting attendance.

Mr. Polster pointed out on a nine-member board, six members must be from the community but three members could be from City Council. At the current time, Mr. Hamacek was the only City Council member on the Commission, so two more people could be appointed from City Council.

Mr. Grandinetti had seen Mr. Hamacek's concerns about the City's parking garage in the prior meeting minutes. He asked if his concerns had been answered.

Mr. Hamacek knew his concerns were being investigated but did not know the repairs status. He emphasized the importance of the repairs being completed prior to First Summit moving downtown.

Mr. Grandinetti raised concerns regarding the old Penelec building on Broad Street. He stated the building is along a major gateway into town, and nothing is being done to care for the property causing it to turn into blight.

The Commission discussed the property, noting they would need to pay attention to the property.

REPORTS:

1. DCED REPORT- JOHN RUTLEDGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

John Rutledge, Economic Development Director, reported the GIS was completed and was turned over to Codes, who was looking to integrate their admin software which helps with the financial side of codes. He noted future efforts would include using the GIS in other aspects such as tracking vacant properties, demolitions, and rehabilitations.

Regarding the comprehensive plan, a public hearing is scheduled prior to the City Council meeting on May 13, 2026.

Mr. Hamacek commented Mr. Rutledge's plan to buy properties, renovate, and then find an owner was a good idea.

Mr. Rutledge stated the annual action plan did include old home money to do acquisition work with JRA, use the land bank, acquire houses, fund rehab, and assist with down payments. The plans would help get people into owner-occupied homes. He explained various programs that would help bring houses up to code.

Mr. White asked if DCED had a one-pager or brochure on what DCED does for the Johnstown.

Mr. Rutledge replied all of the information will be on the new website. He stated DCED was working on pamphlets on all of the programs. In addition, there were plans to have someone at the Farmers Market to discuss available resources with residents. He also hands out information at community meetings.

Mr. White asked how a new person visiting Johnstown would know what programs are available.

Mr. Rutledge replied the information would be listed on the website, which was almost finished. He explained information that still needed to be added to the website before it went live. One of the items were the forms for code complaints and events.

Mr. White asked if anything was being done regarding dumping in the city. Mr. Rutledge stated Mike Capriotti was working with Codes on people dumping items. Discussion ensued on what was considered dumping versus littering and what the fines were. Mr. Rutledge emphasized he could not speak for the Codes Department. Mr. Capriotti was in charge of codes, and Dave Williams is the residential officer and no longer works with codes.

Mr. Grandinetti asked who was the zoning officer. Mr. White replied there was not a zoning officer. The Commission discussed what Laurel Municipal does with regards to codes and zoning.

Mr. Grandinetti stressed the importance of having a zoning officer with the City embarking on a ten-year comprehensive plan that is a roadmap for the City.

Mr. Rutledge has been looking at the need for a zoning officer and has it listed as one of the goals in DCED's summer report.

Mr. White stated the implementation team should include a recommendation for a zoning officer. He noted a need for an officer who can respond to questions within a day.

Mr. Hamacek shared a recent experience he had with a person who was looking to open a restaurant who was trying to figure out what she needed to do to open.

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Mr. Polster commented many times in the comprehensive plan the creation of implementation teams is mentioned. He stated members of the Planning Commission should be on all of the teams. He also noted the people who were on the advisory committee for the plan should also be members of the implementation teams. He added the big question was if the City had the capacity from a body standpoint to execute the strategic plans developed by the implementation teams.

Mr. White responded to Mr. Polster. He stated the City does not have the staff, so the implementation teams should ask what the Council wants. If it wanted to be a marketing group to get investors in the City, then it needed have the staff needed to get things done. He noted the Commission does not have a staff, so it can just make recommendations.

Mr. Rutledge commented there are many different people doing a lot of good things.

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.