

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, July 2, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL:**

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. Chairman Carthew acknowledged the passing of Ed Pawlowski, retired architect, local land developer, and city planner who spent his career in Johnstown and worked on a number of architectural designs for the City of Johnstown.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Chairman Carthew and Commissioners White, Buday, Casals, Grandinetti and Shirt.  
Commissioner Huchel arrived at 5:07 p.m.

In addition, Codes Enforcement Manager Dave Williams, Economic Development Director John Rutledge and City Manager Art Martynuska were present. Barry Polster, Executive Director, Johnstown Regional Partnership, was also in attendance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS) - None**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Shirt motioned to approve the Minutes of the June 4, 2025 Planning Commission meeting.  
The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Ian Shirt- YES

Tomas Casals- ABSTAIN

Michael Grandinetti- ABSTAIN

Donald Buday – YES

James White – YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed. Tomas Casals and Michael Grandinetti abstained from voting on the motion.

**ACTION ITEMS: No Formal Action Items**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**MOM'S HOUSE**

Mr. White inquired as to the type of permit issued for Mom's House. Mr. Williams responded a commercial UCC permit would be issued; however, it had not yet been issued. He added the engineer drawing should be in his office soon. Chairman Carthew confirmed the drawing would reflect the updated site plan approved in June.

Chairman Carthew noted discussion about the ordinance that was adopted and passed through City Council to change the zoning for Mom's House from C1 classification to the R1 classification, which has conditional use. He added there was concern the conditional use still required a public hearing for approval. After reviewing the ordinance provided by R. Dirk Voories, Chairman Carthew made note of a public hearing. He stated the ordinance does follow the guidelines of the Municipal Code.

**PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING**

Chairman Carthew asked Mr. Martynuska for an update on the public safety building. Mr. Martynuska confirmed the City was waiting for funding. Alternative solutions have been considered. The Commerce Center on Broad Street was toured with the possibility of a build out. There have been discussions with the owner and their representative regarding the possible build out, moving the Fairfield Avenue/ Broad Street fire station and putting the public safety building there. There could be indoor parking at the location.

Mr. Grandinetti wished Mr. Martynuska luck and stated it was good to see inroads into a discussion about the facility. Chairman Carthew agreed with Mr. Grandinetti and added it would be great if the City could adaptively reuse and take advantage of the square footage under one roof.

Chairman Carthew requested to see plans made for the current public safety building if the decision was made to move to Broad Street. Mr. Martynuska responded that maintenance was still being conducted on the current public safety building. Chairman Carthew appreciated that the building was continuing to be stabilized to be repurposed in the future.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**CENTRAL PARK RENOVATIONS AND SANDYVALE FOUNTAIN CONCRETE PAD**

Chairman Carthew introduced open discussion about the plans for the Central Park renovations. Mr. Rutledge sent the drawings out and anticipated a representative from CJL to be at the meeting. Chairman Carthew reviewed the drawings and wanted to know if any other Planning Commission Members had done the same and if they had any questions.

Ms. Huchel stated her concerns about the Central Park revisions from the SCAPE design were well documented, so she would not state them again.

Chairman Carthew explained this was an opportunity for Planning Commission Members to understand the drawings and understand the plans. He understood there were a lot of dynamics to the design of the project. He further stated the documents were out for bid, and the project would be moving forward.

Chairman Carthew noted an aspect of the renovations would be moving the Sylvia Pasquerilla fountain to the Sandyvale Cemetery. He stated there are construction details and the scope in the bid package.

## **REPORTS:**

### **DCED REPORT- JOHN RUTLEDGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

Mr. Rutledge reported there had not been much progress on GIS; however, it will resume in July 2025. The documents to work with GIS were being changed, so they would be filled out online instead of printing paperwork out.

He reported, for the comprehensive plan, a steering committee meeting was held. The next meeting will include youth input. Surveys were distributed. Discussions were held with residents who received the survey. They have received close to 600 responses. He attended meetings in the West End and Moxham and distributed paper surveys, which he is inputting upon receipt.

Mr. Grandinetti asked what feedback had been received. Mr. Rutledge replied the main concerns were blight, rehab, and housing. He mentioned daycares, transportation, and codes as concerns as well.

Chairman Carthew suggested adding personnel from Vision 2025, Rob Forcey or Jill Cashdollar, to the steering committee as they are also working on a strategic plan with a focus on housing. Mr. Rutledge stated the goal was develop a draft from the survey results before working with outside entities; however, there was room to bring in more people.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged his appreciation for Mr. Rutledge and his team for their work on getting the surveys out and receiving the responses.

Mr. Grandinetti questioned the timeframe involved with the surveys. Mr. Rutledge explained it took a bit longer than expected to get them printed, so he anticipated finalizing the results at the end of July, instead of mid-July, 2025.

Mr. White asked if the comprehensive plans would discuss housing as part of the plan and where the City fit in with the plan. Mr. Rutledge confirmed housing was a part of the plan. He added the City is also considering the rehab of multiple homes in one area.

The Commission discussed how the information learned from questionnaires would be used and who would have the discussions to determine the comprehensive plan going forward. It was explained that multiple entities would be involved from stakeholders, the public, the consultants, etc. Mr. Martynuska added, from the plan, priorities would be established in order to seek funding for the areas needed. He explained, in relation to housing, areas for new build are being considered, and also the rehab of four or five houses around the build to increase property values and fight blight.

Mr. Grandinetti stated his concerns with the number of houses being demolished in the City. He granted there are properties beyond repair and rehab, but thought 500-600 homes in a five-year period was way too many. Board members agreed it seemed like a lot, and there needed to be a balance between demolition, new builds, and rehabs in order to stabilize the area. Mr. White stated the housing strategic plan should also look at how housing works with the economic development of land and increasing businesses downtown.

Mr. Martynuska shared that a company from Ohio, Munireg, would be meeting with him on July 15, 2025, to potentially help with capturing vacant and rental property registrations, which could help determine what properties could be rehabbed. Mr. Buday added the fire department is also working on surveying properties by drone to find potential issues.

Mr. White asked who was responsible for the network of streets through the housing communities, if it was the City or the Housing Authority, as he had noticed significant potholes in some areas. Mr. Martynuska responded it was a mix. Coopersdale, for example, is all the Housing Authority, while Oakhurst was likely City streets. It depended on whether it was a public street.

### **NEW BUSINESS (CONT.)**

Art Martynuska, City Manager, shared updates from the City. At the last council meeting, there was a demonstration of a new parking system for the City called ParkMobile. The ParkMobile program would consist of solar-powered kiosks throughout the City and would replace parking meters. It would also capture parts of the City not covered by parking meters. If adopted, people would be able to pay using a mobile app or at the kiosk using a credit card. He added a benefit would be advertising on the kiosks for local business and restaurants. One example would be if a restaurant worked with them, perhaps a person could pay through ParkMobile, and then present their receipt at the restaurant for a ten percent discount on lunch. He further added an additional benefit would be the City would no longer have to replace 9-volt batteries in almost 700 parking meters twice a year.

Mr. Martynuska discussed being aggressive in chasing outstanding loans by people for business development. These people did not fulfill the requirements of the loan, which would have turned the loan into a grant. Mr. Williams added that payment agreements were made with all but three of the people. Those three have been turned over to the solicitor for legal action. He also added the new software system will now automatically reflect where people are in the repayment process. He is working on a set of updated guidelines for future loans and will present the guidelines to the loan review committee for comments. In the future, people applying for a loan will receive an informational pamphlet before problems arise.

Mr. White questioned what loans were given out that would turn into grants. Mr. Rutledge explained the loans were small targeted development loans to get businesses to come into the City. The loans had parameters, such as job creation and staying open for a certain length of time. There were also other types of loans for job development, equipment purchases, etc., with different agreement terms. The Commission discussed the guidelines and how people were qualified and selected for various loans.

Mr. Casals asked if changes would be made going forward to make sure there is oversight for the loan program. Mr. Martynuska assured him there would be changes, and he had an upcoming meeting with the Southern Allegheny's Planning Commission to learn best practices due to their successful program. A point person was being considered for accounts receivable to be in charge of billing. Mr. Rutledge added the new system will also automatically trigger statements, email, late payments, and provide notification of delinquent accounts.

Mr. Buday asked if individuals had been added to the loan committee. Mr. Rutledge responded that financial people like bankers had been added, which prompted the effort to revise guidelines and draft pamphlets for experts to review.

Mr. Casals suggested six-month reviews with people who have loans to keep funding in the front of mind before delinquency becomes an issue. Mr. Rutledge reiterated the new automatic system will assist with the planned education prior to loan approval. Mr. Casals also posed questions about loan guarantees and if the loans are taken out as personal or business loans. Mr. Rutledge replied it varies, but the goal is to get personal guarantees on the loans.

Mr. Shirt asked to circle back around to the issue of parking. He asked if there had been any consideration in the City's plan to have two-hour parking in some areas to encourage economic development, instead of having everything metered.

Mr. Martynuska expressed there have been discussions around the possibility of free parking time. One of the big concerns with free parking is that employees of businesses take advantage of the free parking and then not leave the parking open for customers. He stated ParkMobile would provide opportunities for special events. Like the day before Christmas, they would be able to adjust the parking fees from the dashboard remotely for

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just an area, a zone or the entire city. He added parking generates about \$500,000 a year, \$253,000 of that being just from the meters alone. Mr. Martynuska explained the parking garages do not generate much money compared to the meters. Lincoln Street parking garage has 131 daytime spots. The Conference Center runs the ITC Garage but pays the City money per spot events. The Main Street East garage has structural concerns, which only allows the use of 22 spaces. To repair Main Street East, the cost would be about \$800,000. He added the loss of revenue by establishing free parking would be substantial.

Mr. Shirt stated he could appreciate no one has an interest in the employees of a business camping out in free parking. He has lived in a few different cities prior to moving back to Johnstown, and Johnstown has one of the most restrictive parking areas. He explained most cities have meters on major thoroughfares, and then for the next couple of blocks, it is two-hour parking patrolled by attendants.

Mr. Martynuska replied that was a possibility with the ParkMobile system. He added the system will also eliminate lost revenue from people “piggybacking” the meters. He explained how there are different methods that can be used to verify parking in an area.

Mr. Casals asked if the City had considered a resident parking tag for those people living in the downtown area with the lack of off-street parking. Mr. Martynuska discussed options considered, such as color-coded stickers and turning vacant, City-owned lots into resident parking.

Ms. Huchel wondered why people refuse to use the parking garages. Discussion was held on educating people, particularly business’ employees, on using the garages as opposed to metered parking downtown.

Mr. Grandinetti shared the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority (JRA) is commencing work on the Johnstown Urban Industrial Park Road, which will go up to the top and then down into Minersville. They are looking to develop the property after the infrastructure is in.

Mr. Grandinetti discussed the purchase of a sculpture by the JRA. He asked Ms. Huchel to provide information on the sculpture. She explained the sculpture was created during the ABANA conference a few years ago. During the festival, blacksmiths from across the world helped create a sculpture. In an effort to keep ABANA in Johnstown, Ms. Huchel spoke with the local liaison, Fritz, about JRA purchasing the sculpture. She described the sculpture as a triangle with circle vignettes inside, which represent stories of Johnstown. It will likely be put in the lobby of 416 Main Street.

Mr. Martynuska discussed the property between GapVax and Rite Aid being bought. The Commission questioned who may have bought the property and how much is being demolished.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS: - None**

**RECESS/ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 P.M.