

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, December 3, 2025

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Chairman Carthew and Commissioners Buday, Huchel, and Shirt. Commissioner White entered the meeting during Old Business.

In addition, Residential Construction Coordinator Dave Williams, and Economic Development Director John Rutledge were in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS) - None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Huchel motioned to approve the Minutes of the November 5, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Laura Huchel- YES

Ian Shirt- YES

Donald Buday – YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS: - None

OLD BUSINESS -

Chairman Carthew asked if City staff had received any updates with regard to site plan development for the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church property. Mr. Williams stated there were no developments.

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Ms. Huchel stated Deacon Jeff Wilson was at the last City Council meeting regarding a Flood City Fitness Academy Lot Merger and asked if there was any information. Mr. Williams confirmed the City had not received any information regarding the lot merger.

Chairman Carthew asked if there was any progress regarding correspondence from Brad Clemenson at the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy regarding permits. Mr. Rutledge confirmed Mr. Martynuska had the information. He will follow up with Mr. Martynuska to confirm completion.

Ms. Huchel raised concerns about the intersection at Roosevelt Boulevard and Broad Street. She noted people tend to speed onto the section where Roosevelt veers to the right, treating it as an exit ramp. Commission members agreed with her concerns. It was noted the issue had been brought up in the past with no resolution. Possible solutions discussed included a speed bump, a jersey barrier, or other calming mechanism with a flashing light near the footbridge as a warning. It was also noted, when PennDOT did their latest renovation work with curb cuts and tactical pads, the intersection was redone to make all exiting traffic go west.

Ms. Huchel also raised concerns regarding the Gautier tank. She noted the tank has been rusty for at least 15 years. She wondered if it was possible to cite them for the tank's condition or help them find grant money to address the condition. Chairman Carthew noted there had been discussion at public art meetings that the tank was a possible canvas for public art.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Carthew stated he had heard Dr. Joel Bezek had possibly acquired some buildings on Vine and Walnut Streets. He noted there might be possible new development for upper level apartments, which are a need in the downtown area. He extended appreciation for Dr. Bezek's efforts. He asked if the Planning Commission would need to see anything in the future regarding construction plans.

The Commission discussed what plans would be necessary for its review. General concerns were raised regarding construction permits in the City. Mr. Williams pointed out plans should be submitted through Laurel who then will provide the plans to the City. Discussion was held regarding fines and ordinances related to construction permits. Mr. White commented it seemed like some contractors asked for forgiveness and not permission. Chairman Carthew suggested a member from Laurel could start attending Planning Commission meetings.

Commission members discussed what duties fall under the City Codes Enforcement versus Laurel Management. Ms. Huchel noted City Council had been told Laurel would do everything if the Codes Department was dismantled, but now they were being told not everything would be sent to Laurel as a cost-saving measure. Concerns were raised regarding codes enforcement in general. Ms. Huchel will share the Commissions concerns in her final reports to the City Council.

Ms. Huchel shared a historic biopic film about Milton Hershey was recently produced, largely filmed in Brownsville, south of Pittsburgh. As part of the filming process, a number of vacant storefronts were opened up and the area was turned into a 19th century village town square. After filming, a YouTube influencer and artist, who had moved to the area, decorated the storefronts for the Christmas season. Ms. Huchel stated, with the number of abandoned storefronts, she wondered if a similar effort could be made in Johnstown throughout the year when there are visitors to the area. In particular, she wondered about Main Street. She added the minimum would be cleaning the windows and putting up paper, and she noted artists who were willing to help decorate.

Mr. Rutledge pointed out some of the buildings might not meet maintenance codes, so perhaps the City needs to be looking at the buildings. It was noted Vision 2025 may be able to help with grant opportunities. Ms. Huchel suggested Taylor Clark's downtown business group might also be interested in participating. It was suggested a new program could be created separately from the facade program already in place.

REPORTS:

DCED REPORT- JOHN RUTLEDGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

John Rutledge, Economic Development Director, provided an update on the GIS mapping. He provided an example of the zoning map layer and what it would look like on a tablet in the field when a code violation is being filled out.

Ms. Huchel asked if he was confident on the zoning map. Mr. Rutledge responded the information came from the county.

Mr. Rutledge explained how the map would work with regards to different violation types and different layers. He noted for code violations, there will be a drop-down menu which will help generate the letter received by residents.

Ms. Huchel inquired if the zoning map can be put on the City's website but not the individual violations. Mr. Rutledge confirmed he intended to add the map to the website after the new website is finished.

Chairman Carthew asked for confirmation of the next steering committee meeting. Mr. Rutledge stated it was on December 12th or 15th. Chairman Carthew confirmed the meeting would be solidifying the data to be distributed to the other municipalities. Mr. Rutledge noted public engagement would still be needed and additional meetings would occur after the holidays.

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Ms. Huchel noted she had two additional items to discuss. She asked Mr. Rutledge if there were any updates to the side-lot program that needed to be discussed with the Commission. He stated he was updating verbiage for the next City Council meeting.

Ms. Huchel asked, if a person demolishes a residential building that has a sidewalk and they plan on using the now vacant space as green space, does the person need to replace the sidewalk if torn up. Mr. Williams stated the sidewalk would need put back as it is owned by the City and maintained by the property owner. Commission members debated the question before agreeing with Mr. Williams.

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:43 P.M.