

Johnstown Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 3, 2026

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 3, 2026

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Chairman Carthew and Commissioners Buday, Casals, and Grandinetti.

Commissioners White, Shirt, and Huchel were absent.

In addition, John Rutledge, Economic Development Director; Art Martynuska, City Manager; and Dave Williams, Residential Construction Coordinator were in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS): None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Grandinetti motioned to approve the Minutes of the January 8, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Thomas Casals - ABSTAIN

Michael Grandinetti - YES

Donald Buday – YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS: None.

OLD BUSINESS -

Chairman Carthew requested an update regarding City Council appointing two expired seats on the Planning Commission. He noted there will need to be a reorganizational meeting for 2026.

Art Martynuska, City Manager, explained City Council delayed the seat appointments until it had appointed a new Council Member to allow for a full complement. He noted the appointment would be happening at a special meeting on February 4, 2026, with Board and Committee appointments to occur at the February 11, 2026 City Council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Flood City Youth Fitness Academy plan to demolish the vacant structure at 237-239 Union Street and transform the site into an open-air playground that will be utilized by the academy.

Chairman Carthew stated the Commission was provided information for the proposed Flood City Youth Fitness Academy (FCYFA) project in their packet. He asked if there was anyone present to speak in regards to the project.

Deacon Jeffrey Wilson, Program Director and Oscar Cashaw, Sr., Executive Director offered comments on the project. Deacon Wilson explained there are between 150 to 220 children in their building on a daily basis. He stated the playground was essential as it provide an opportunity for outdoor play with grass and shade for the children. He explained the plans for playground to be installed, noting similarities to the playground at Roxbury Park. He noted he had spoken with City staff about putting a fence on each end of the alley to allow emergency vehicle access. Deacon Wilson mentioned the work being done at FCYFA, including providing over 155,000 meals in two year, increasing reading proficiency, and increasing math proficiency.

Chairman Carthew stated the proposal falls into the C-3 recreational area zoning requirement. He noted the proposal mentioned a nine-foot fence. He opined a six-foot fence would satisfy the needs of the playground and would be the maximum allowed by ordinance.

Mr. Cashaw stated the proposal included a nine-foot fence to prevent basketballs from entering into traffic along Union Street.

Mr. Grandinetti commended FCYFA for their work with the younger generation in the community. He asked what reviews and comments the City staff may have on the project. It was noted staff reviewed the same packet received by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Martynuska commented on investigating International Building Codes (IBC) to see IBC adopts by reference the standard for playgrounds to allow for a higher fence. He added there were other playgrounds in the area with fences taller than six feet.

Randy Cortez noted working with FCYFA as a surveyor. He asked if the two parcels would need to be combined into one even though they were both owned by FCYFA. Mr. Casals stated City staff could give an opinion, but he thought the only issue would be the fencing. He did not see an issue with having a continued, shared perimeter fence.

Mr. Grandinetti motioned to approve the proposed plan from Flood City Youth Fitness Academy with the understanding that City staff would investigate the possibilities of alternative codes or IBC codes that would allow a higher fence. The motion was seconded by Mr. Casals. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Thomas Casals - YES

Michael Grandinetti - YES

Donald Buday – YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed.

2. Quantum Catalyst LLC 423-425 commercial space project

Chairman Carthew explained the packet contained an overview of the project, which mainly consists of interior renovations as well as some structural renovations to modernize the building for occupancy. He added Quantum Catalyst requested a compliance letter from the Planning Commission stating the project meets the needs and understanding of what is being accomplished downtown and referencing the existing comprehensive plan.

Mr. Casals asked for the scope of what exactly was being requested. He questioned if the Commission had the authority to issue a compliance letter. He asked Mr. Martynuska for comments.

Mr. Martynuska stated the City had provided a letter of support for the project in general. He noted there was a concern under the scope of work with regards to the sidewalk stabilization along Main Street/Park Place. He stated the basement of the building extends out eight to 12 feet under the sidewalk and explained concerns from the City standpoint, particularly with regards to the Central Park Project. He explained the City was working with Quantum Catalyst to find a solution or funding for needed work. Mr. Martynuska also explained how the basement work would need completed before the intended work could be completed for the Central Park Project along Park Place.

Mr. Grandinetti asked who had applied for the RAISE grant for the project. Mr. Martynuska confirmed the City applied for the grant. Mr. Grandinetti asked if there were plans for the building to include residential dwelling units. It was noted there was nothing in the scope of work for residential. Mr. Grandinetti asked what oversight and role Codes would play in the project. Mr. Rutledge stated Quantum Catalyst would submit engineer drawings and permits to Laurel Management. Mr. Martynuska added there would also be inspections and a certificate of occupancy would be issued at the very end. Mr. Grandinetti noted there would be multiple business opportunities as part of the building rehab. He noted the project was worthwhile and encouraged the City to continue to support similar initiatives to bring back both residential and commercial use to vacant properties downtown.

Chairman Carthew stated the project falls within the Central Business District zoning ordinances. He agreed with Mr. Grandinetti, echoing his comments regarding the priority of developing downtown businesses. He added the City staff brought the proposal to the Planning Commission for them to provide a letter of recommendation that the project meets city use, city zoning and the existing comprehensive plan in terms of developing.

Mr. Casals motioned to approve the Planning Commission provide the requested compliance letter as requested by the developer. The motion was seconded by Mr. Grandinetti. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Thomas Casals - YES
Michael Grandinetti - YES
Donald Buday – YES
James Carthew – Chairman – YES
The motion passed.

3. Gautier Steel Bar Mill LLC sidewalk rehabilitation project

Chairman Carthew stated Gautier Steel requested a consistency letter regarding a proposed sidewalk renovation along Clinton Street. He noted the Commission had been provided with a scope of work and photographs. He added, upon review, the project fully fits the associative work and maintenance for property in the City of Johnstown, noting the importance of sidewalk upkeep as it relates to safety of property.

Mr. Grandinetti asked City staff to provide comments on their review. Mr. Williams replied staff had reviewed the same package received by the Commission. He added there is a six-foot sidewalk from the building to the road. The project would be replacing the existing sidewalk and the footprint would not be changing. Mr. Rutledge added the deteriorated sidewalk was unsafe for use.

Mr. Martynuska noted the curbing would need to be deeper than a residential sidewalk, and there would be certain requirements due to being along a state route. He also mentioned the project was a multimodal grant. He added the City had provided a letter of support for the project.

Mr. Casals asked if there were any plans for stormwater management. Mr. Martynuska replied he was not sure and did not want to speak for Gautier. He suggested following the engineering recommendations with the grant approval.

Mr. Grandinetti asked if there had been any consideration on coming down Washington Street with another sidewalk. Mr. Martynuska replied he had not heard anything.

Mr. Grandinetti motioned to approve the Gautier Steel Bar Mill sidewalk improvement. Chairman Carthew added to the motion that the Planning Commission would provide a consistency letter stating their support. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buday. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Thomas Casals - YES
Michael Grandinetti - YES

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Donald Buday – YES
James Carthew – Chairman – YES
The motion passed.

4. Amtrak letter

Mr. Martynuska explained Amtrak had been working on much needed repairs at the passenger rail station that were not connected to the RAISE grant. He stated Amtrak requested the Planning Commission provide a letter of concurrence for the project. He noted there was a letter from Amtrak provided in the meeting packet describing the improvements. Among the improvements is new stormwater management by the addition of new pipes that drain into the river. The stormwater management has been approved by Army Corps.

Mr. Martynuska stated the City reviewed Amtrak's improvements and findings related to historic properties. The City has found there would be no adverse effects and have prepared a letter of support for the project. He explained the letters of support would be sent to the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). He also noted part of the stormwater management would be a larger 21-inch pipe being put in to flow into a smaller 18-inch pipe. He reiterated Army Corps was aware and approved the pipes as they would be sufficient to handle predicted outflow.

Mr. Casals expressed concerns regarding the potential for groundwater runoff from a 200-year-old train yard. He noted PA DEP, EPA, or NSDS may need to be involved.

Mr. Martynuska offered to assist with a template letter with the needed verbiage.

Mr. Casals motioned to recommend a letter of concurrence be provided by the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Grandinetti. A roll call vote was taken:

Planning Commission:

Thomas Casals - YES
Michael Grandinetti - YES
Donald Buday – YES
James Carthew – Chairman – YES
The motion passed.

5. Zoning Map concerns

Mr. Grandinetti raised concerns with the lack of a zoning map. He asked for a zoning map in August and was given a deadline of December. Mr. Rutledge replied the zoning map lays within the GIS map, which is not active yet. He explained the codes portion of the GIS map was still being drafted, and there was still training to be completed.

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Mr. Grandinetti asked when Mr. Rutledge thought the City would have an interactive zoning map to assist developers, local residents, and people interested in Johnstown. Mr. Rutledge could not provide a date. He stated, once training was complete, the map could be active online but would not be adding it until the new website was up. He hoped for a March date.

Mr. Casals stated his understanding was that the zoning map was in the GIS but the platform was not live. He recommended, if the planning portion was not finished in about 30 days, the GIS be made live with the zoning map with the codes to be added later. Mr. Rutledge and Mr. Casals discussed the licensing involved with the GIS map.

Mr. Rutledge will work on providing a bar chart and schedule related to the map.

Mr. Grandinetti expressed frustration at how long he has been asking for a zoning map. He asked if City staff could provide a list of vacant properties and provide a ballpark number of vacant properties. Mr. Williams did not have a number but thought there was over 500.

Mr. Grandinetti asked what determines a vacant property. Mr. Williams stated the most common way would be if the property was uninhabited with no utilities. Mr. Casals noted it was likely easier to determine vacancy with residential properties as some commercial properties do not need utility service to be functional.

Mr. Martynuska stated Cambria County's GIS model could also be used. He noted, if a structure is removed from a property, the address is also removed and it becomes a parcel number.

Mr. Grandinetti asked how many properties were scheduled for demolition in Johnstown in 2026. Mr. Martynuska stated there were currently three scheduled as the City is still waiting to see how much funding is coming in. He explained issues the City was running into with properties they were looking at for demolition.

Mr. Martynuska also explained how the code violations were being used and offered to bring a list of code violations to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Grandinetti was interested in having a vacant properties list.

Mr. Buday stated the fire department was doing a good job with codes, which helps determine vacant houses, but stated it would still take a long time.

Mr. Martynuska stated the City would also be inspecting the 412 Section 8 residential properties. Mr. Casals asked what the objective in inspecting the properties would be. Mr. Martynuska stated the objective is code compliance. He stated the City wanted people to at least create a plan for bringing properties up to code. He added the City would also be able to assist people in finding funding streams and other assistance to complete repairs.

Mr. Martynuska also reported the entire fire department was recently put through a building code class in an effort to be more effective and efficient.

REPORTS:

DCED REPORT- JOHN RUTLEDGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Mr. Rutledge stated the Planning Commission had been sent the comprehensive plan for review. He noted he would need their comments back by February 6, 2026.

Regarding demolitions, he noted FY24 had finished late due to delayed funding. He noted DCED is beginning to work on demolition lists for 2026 but need to coordinate the lists with the comprehensive plan before actually beginning demolition.

Chairman Carthew noted housing and land use were the two categories in the comprehensive plan that related to the Planning Commission. He encouraged Commission members to review the plan to see what was being proposed and to determine if there was some kind of implementable plan.

Mr. Casals asked what the next steps were after the Commission provided their comments. Mr. Rutledge noted the plan would go back to the steering committee to implement suggestions. He added at some point in March the plan would go out for public comments for 45 days.

PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS: - None

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 P.M.