

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, March 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 Grandinetti, Buday, White, Shirt, and Huchel.

Commissioner Casals was absent.

In addition, John Rutledge, Economic Development Director; Art Martynuska, City Manager; Dave Williams, Residential Construction Coordinator; Joshua James, Young & Associates; Gregory Audey, SR & G Construction Company; and Matthew Harnett, Harnett Land Surveying, Inc. were in attendance.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Grandinetti motioned to approve the Minutes of the February 3, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Chairman Carthew. A roll call vote was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Ian Shirt - ABSTAIN  
Michael Grandinetti - YES  
Donald Buday – YES  
James White - YES  
James Carthew – Chairman – YES  
The motion passed.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**1. Planning Commission Reorganization**

Commissioner Shirt motioned to nominate Mr. James Carthew as Chairman of the Greater Johnstown Planning Commission. Commissioner White seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Buday nominated Commissioner James White as Vice-Chairman of the Greater Johnstown Planning Commission. Chairman Carthew seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Huchel entered the meeting at 5:07 p.m.

A roll call vote for Mr. James Carthew for Chairperson of the Planning Commission was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Ian Shirt - YES  
Michael Grandinetti - YES  
Donald Buday – YES  
James White - YES  
James Carthew – Chairman – YES  
The motion passed.

A roll call vote for Commissioner James White for Vice-Chairperson of the Planning Commission was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Ian Shirt - YES  
Michael Grandinetti - YES  
Donald Buday – YES  
James White - YES  
James Carthew – Chairman – YES  
The motion passed.

**2. Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Site Plan**

Chairman Carthew noted the Commission received information from the City and asked staff to review notes regarding the proposal.

Mr. Rutledge explained the property is located in an R-1 zoning district, where a religious institution is permitted, provided that a conditional use approval is granted. The City's position is that the site plan approval should be contingent upon the applicant obtaining the appropriate zoning approval.

Mr. Williams stated the church's conditional use application was completed.

Commissioner Grandinetti questioned why the project would need to be reviewed by the Zoning Hearing Board, asserting that the zoning ordinance indicates a conditional use requires action by City Council, not the Zoning Hearing Board.

Commissioner Huchel noted that the matter is a conditional use matter.

Commissioner White emphasized the zoning classification is not being changed, only a conditional use requested within the existing R-1 district.

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Chairman Carthew confirmed that houses of worship are permitted in R-1 with conditional use approval. The Commission concluded the final procedural determination should be clarified by staff.

Chairman Carthew invited representatives of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church to present on the project.

Mr. Josh James, Young & Associates, serving as the design engineer and architect, described the proposed development. The site is approximately 20,000 square feet, with a 5,400-square-foot church building planned. Utilities, including sewer, water, gas, and power, are located adjacent to the property and will be extended to serve the site. The design includes parking adjacent to the building with ADA accessibility, stormwater management features, and planned landscaping improvements.

Mr. George Audey, SR & G Construction Company, described the building design. The approximately 5,400-square-foot wood-frame structure will include a sanctuary, business/administrative space, and a fellowship area under one roof. The building will feature slab construction, asphalt shingles, vinyl siding with stone or brick on the front façade, and basic interior finishes such as vinyl flooring and suspended ceilings. A small serving kitchen with refrigerators and microwaves is planned. The layout includes approximately 1,500 square feet for fellowship space and 2,300 square feet for the sanctuary.

Commissioner Huchel asked whether the building would include a sprinkler system, to which Mr. Audey responded that sprinklers are not required by code.

Commissioner Grandinetti expressed general support for the project but raised concerns regarding parking and loading requirements under Section 801 of the zoning ordinance. He requested staff review the applicable supplementary provisions and advise the applicant of the procedures required for conditional use approval through City Council.

Mr. James stated the site plan currently includes nine parking spaces, one of which is ADA accessible, with the potential for additional ADA-compliant spaces. He also noted that overflow parking may be available through nearby off-street areas, including property to the south that may be used for additional parking.

Commissioners discussed parking requirements for places of worship, noting the ordinance requires one parking space per four permanent seats. Based on seating estimates of approximately 148 seats, it was calculated that the ordinance could require significantly more parking than currently proposed.

Commissioner White noted the precedent exists for churches utilizing on-street parking to supplement limited on-site parking.

The Commission concluded discussion with further observations regarding building occupancy, restroom capacity, and insurance considerations.

Commissioner Huchel suggested, although sprinklers are not required by code, the applicant may want to consider installing them due to potential insurance requirements.

Commissioner White made a motion to approve the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Site Plan contingent on Council Approval. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Huchel. A roll call vote was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Laura Huchel - YES

Ian Shirt - YES

Michael Grandinetti - NO

Donald Buday – YES

James White - YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed.

**3. D. Farra Land Merger on Maple Avenue**

Chairman Carthew introduced discussion with regard to a land merger of Parcel No. 1 (Tax ID. 81-018-223.000) and Parcel No. 2 (Tax ID. 81-018-224-000), located at the corner of Maple and Graywood Streets in the City's 11th Ward. He asked staff to clarify the nature of the request and whether any development plans had been submitted along with the application.

Mr. Rutledge explained the application is strictly a lot consolidation and the City had not received any accompanying site development plans beyond the survey identifying the parcels. He confirmed the property currently consists of vacant land and both parcels share the same commercial zoning classification.

Commissioner Huchel asked whether the property was entirely vacant and confirmed with staff that both lots fall within the same zoning district, to which Mr. Rutledge reiterated that the parcels are vacant and zoned as commercial. The request simply involves combining the lots into a single lot.

Chairman Carthew asked the surveyor for the property to provide additional details.

Mr. Matthew Harnett, Harnett Land Surveying, Inc., indicated the property currently consists of two equally-sized parcels owned by the same individual, each with its own separate tax identification number. The owner's intent is to merge the two parcels into a single lot with one tax ID, thereby creating one unified property.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged that the site referenced on the plans corresponds to the corner location previously described.

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Chairman Carthew asked whether the property owner had indicated any future development plans for the consolidated parcel, to which Mr. Harnett noted that the owner does not yet have finalized plans, although the owner has some conceptual ideas for potential future development. He noted, because the property is vacant commercial land, it is well positioned for future development once a proposal is prepared, whether by the current owner or another party.

Chairman Carthew remarked that the Planning Commission must remain attentive to future development opportunities, particularly on commercially-zoned land in visible locations such as this parcel.

Commissioner Buday clarified that the matter before the Commission at this time is limited strictly to the lot merger, and potential development plans in the future were not part of the current review.

Chairman Carthew agreed, noting that no motions had yet been made and the discussion was simply to clarify the request before the Commission.

Mr. Harnett raised a question concerning the property's location within a flood hazard zone, similar to the nearby CamTran building. He asked whether the City still requires that structures built in such areas be constructed one foot above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE).

Chairman Carthew stated, to the best of his understanding, the City's standard remains one foot above BFE.

Mr. Harnett requested additional clarification regarding how the elevation requirement is applied, specifically whether the leading edge of the building along the direction of water flow or the finished floor elevation must meet the elevation standard. He noted this distinction could significantly affect how high a building would need to be constructed above grade.

Commissioner Grandinetti advised that those types of technical determinations should be addressed directly with City staff and the appropriate regulatory authorities, rather than through the Planning Commission during the land merger review.

Mr. Harnett agreed, noting that he was primarily seeking general guidance for the owner should future development occur on the property. He reiterated the traditional standard has been one foot above the base flood elevation, and obtaining confirmation of that requirement would help inform any future development considerations once a formal project proposal is submitted to the City.

Commissioner Huchel made a motion to approve the land merger at Tax IDs. 81-018-223.000 and 81-018-224-000. Commissioner Grandinetti seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Laura Huchel - YES  
Ian Shirt - YES  
Michael Grandinetti - YES  
Donald Buday – YES  
James White - YES  
James Carthew – Chairman – YES  
The motion passed.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Vacant Property List**

Chairman Carthew noted the vacant property list discussed at earlier meetings. He referenced an Excel spreadsheet compiled by staff listing vacant properties within the City and indicated it had been circulated electronically to Commissioners. He requested that, in the future, materials sent in advance also be printed and included in the meeting packet to ensure all members have the opportunity to review the information during the meeting.

Mr. Rutledge explained the spreadsheet was not printed. It is a very large document with multiple sheets, which is why it had been distributed by email instead.

Commissioner Huchel acknowledged missing the previous council meeting where the request for the list had been discussed and questioned the Planning Commission's intended use for the information.

Commissioner Grandinetti responded the list is primarily intended for informational purposes, helping the Commission identify redevelopment opportunities and plan for future growth or revitalization initiatives. Chairman Carthew added that the list could also serve as a planning tool when considered alongside the City's zoning map.

Mr. Rutledge and Mr. Martynuska clarified the scope of the data in the list. Mr. Martynuska explained the spreadsheet identifies more than 300 vacant properties that still contain structures, although the condition of those structures varies widely. The City has approximately 2,699 vacant lots without structures.

Commissioner White asked whether those lots were entirely without buildings. Mr. Martynuska explained, when a structure is demolished, the address associated with that building is removed from the system since the parcel could potentially be subdivided or redeveloped in the future. As a result, former addresses do not remain associated with the property once the structure is gone.

Chairman Carthew confirmed the overall figures discussed, citing roughly 300 vacant structures and nearly 2,700 vacant lots within the City.

Commissioner Grandinetti raised concerns about maintenance responsibilities for these properties, asking who maintains vacant lots when ownership is absent or unclear.

Mr. Martynuska explained the responsibility depends on ownership status. If the owner cannot be located or fails to maintain the property, the burden may fall on the City or partner agencies assisting with maintenance.

Commissioner Huchel shared her experience as the owner of a vacant structure that had previously been registered with the City. She explained that owners must pay a registration fee, approximately \$500, to register a vacant property, which is intended to cover maintenance costs if the owner fails to properly maintain the property. If the property becomes neglected, the City can draw from that registration fund to pay for maintenance such as mowing.

Commissioner Grandinetti expressed concern, despite such measures, maintenance costs still fall heavily on the City and taxpayers. He noted, with thousands of vacant properties, even maintaining a portion of them places a significant burden on municipal resources. He suggested the City consider a more aggressive use of mechanics liens or similar mechanisms to recover the costs of mowing or maintaining neglected properties. Under such a system, the City could track labor and maintenance expenses and place liens on properties, so if the property is eventually sold, the City could recover those costs.

Mr. Martynuska responded that current City code already allows for such enforcement measures, including notifying property owners of violations and, if necessary, having the City perform maintenance and place a lien on the property to recover costs. He acknowledged that implementation has been limited in practice, partly due to the scale of the problem and the resources required to track and enforce liens across thousands of parcels.

Commissioner Grandinetti reiterated the issue remains troubling, because the City has limited manpower and funding, and taxpayers ultimately bear the cost of maintaining privately owned vacant land.

Mr. Martynuska added context by explaining the logistical challenges involved. Even if only half of the approximately 2,700 vacant lots required maintenance, the City's Public Works staff, roughly 20 to 24 employees, would be consumed almost entirely by mowing and property upkeep, leaving little capacity for essential services, such as street repairs or infrastructure work.

Commissioner Grandinetti acknowledged that residents sometimes criticize the City's code enforcement efforts, but emphasized that the sheer number of properties makes enforcement extremely difficult.

Mr. Martynuska noted the City has been exploring alternative approaches, including discussions with organizations, such as the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority (JRA). One concept being considered is the use of technology or specialized equipment, such as agricultural

drones capable of applying herbicides or controlling vegetation in hard-to-maintain areas. He emphasized that vacant property management involves more than mowing. Issues such as trash removal, pest control, and structural hazards must also be addressed.

Commissioner White asked about the relationship between demolition projects and property liens.

Mr. Martynuska confirmed, when the city demolishes a structure, a lien is automatically placed on the property to recover demolition costs. Commissioner White asked whether the City could add maintenance costs to those liens, allowing the City to recover both demolition and upkeep expenses when the property is eventually sold.

Chairman Carthew suggested, if the City hires third-party contractors to maintain properties, those costs could potentially be incorporated into such liens as well.

Commissioner Huchel cautioned, if properties accumulate too many liens, they may become unattractive to buyers at tax sales, making it even more difficult to return the property to productive use.

Chairman Carthew asked whether the land bank could help address the issue.

Mr. Martynuska explained, under the City's current arrangement, if a property is transferred to the land bank, the City remains responsible for maintaining it, which limits the effectiveness of that approach for addressing maintenance burdens.

Commissioner Grandinetti summarized the issue as a major and growing challenge, warning that the number of vacant properties will likely increase over time. Mr. Martynuska stated, although funding is occasionally available for demolition programs, the scale of deterioration remains significant. As an example, he described an informal survey conducted in Old Conemaugh Borough, where he counted approximately 40 structures that likely need to be demolished.

Commissioner Buday added recent fire incidents have created additional vacant or severely damaged properties, citing examples on C Street and Daniel Street, where structures were destroyed or severely damaged. He noted, in some cases, the ownership status is unclear, making enforcement or cleanup difficult.

Mr. Martynuska explained that ownership situations vary widely. Some owners appear and attempt to address the situation; while others are deceased or represented by out-of-state LLCs, which complicates enforcement and communication.

Commissioner Buday also described conditions on New Street near Prospect, where he observed multiple properties with collapsed roofs and severely deteriorated structures, estimating that as many as nine or ten houses on that street alone may need to be removed. He emphasized,

in many cases, there are no surviving family members or clear heirs, leaving properties effectively abandoned.

Chairman Carthew reflected on the broader revitalization challenge, noting that while vacant land presents opportunities for redevelopment, progress is difficult without cooperation from property owners. He observed that assembling parcels or implementing redevelopment plans often becomes complicated when ownership is fragmented or unknown.

Commissioner White asked whether the City had consulted other municipalities facing similar problems to learn how they address widespread vacancy.

Mr. Martynuska replied that many cities face similar challenges, though some have developed programs to acquire properties, rehabilitate them, and return them to productive use. He indicated that local officials are exploring similar strategies where feasible.

Mr. Rutledge explained the City is currently developing a housing plan that could incorporate strategies for acquiring distressed properties, stabilizing them, bringing them up to code, and reselling them to reinvest proceeds into additional redevelopment projects. The goal would be to create a revolving program where funds from property sales support continued revitalization efforts rather than relying solely on new funding each year.

Commissioner Huchel noted this approach closely resembles the function of a land bank, citing Youngstown, Ohio, where a nonprofit organization manages property acquisition, rehabilitation, and resale using state grant funding.

Chairman Carthew noted touring similar programs to observe how nonprofit land banks can manage redevelopment initiatives.

Mr. Rutledge acknowledged, while the concept aligns with land bank strategies, implementing such a program involves many legal and logistical steps, including property acquisition processes, compliance requirements, and financing mechanisms.

Commissioner Huchel encouraged coordination with the existing land bank leadership, suggesting that staff ensure they are working collaboratively rather than duplicating efforts as redevelopment planning moves forward.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Chairman Carthew formally recognized Commissioner Huchel, who had submitted her resignation from the Planning Commission. Chairman Carthew thanked her for more than ten years of service to the Commission and acknowledged her extensive civic involvement.

He noted, because Commissioner Huchel is also leaving City Council, her resignation from the Planning Commission would help facilitate the appointment of another council member to serve in that role. Chairman Carthew expressed his appreciation for her contributions and stated it had been a pleasure serving alongside her.

Commissioner White then asked whether the City has a resolution or ordinance requiring that a member of City Council hold a seat on the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Huchel stated at least one council member must serve on the Commission, although she was unsure exactly where the requirement is documented. She suggested it may be contained within the foundational documents establishing the Planning Commission, possibly specifying that the Commission consist of a certain number of members with one designated as a council representative.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged the comment and stated the Commission would look into the governing documentation to confirm the requirement.

Chairman Carthew noted, with Commissioner Huchel's resignation, the Commission will now have a vacancy. In order to maintain the required quorum and membership structure, he proposed that the Planning Commission formally recommend that City Council appoint a council member to fill the vacancy on the Commission. He indicated this recommendation would ensure continued coordination between the Planning Commission and City Council and maintain the Commission's ability to conduct business effectively.

Chairman Carthew made a motion to formally recommend that the Johnstown City Council appoint a member to fill the vacant position on the Johnstown Planning Commission. Commissioner Shirt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

**Planning Commission:**

Laura Huchel - YES

Ian Shirt - YES

Michael Grandinetti - YES

Donald Buday – YES

James White - YES

James Carthew – Chairman – YES

The motion passed.

Chairman Carthew noted the draft Comprehensive Plan prepared by Rothschild Doyno Collaborative (RDC). He explained the draft plan was released for public review and comment, and the current timeline provides approximately the month of March 2026 for final feedback and edits. After this review period, the plan will move forward as a final draft to both the Planning Commission and City Council for approval. Chairman Carthew encouraged commission members to take this time to carefully review the document and consider areas where the Commission may wish to strengthen the plan with clear, actionable priorities. He noted issues, discussed by the Commission over the past year,

such as vacant lot management, stabilization of existing housing stock, neighborhood revitalization, and zoning considerations, could potentially be emphasized as core, implementable strategies within the plan if the City was willing to prioritize them.

Commissioner White asked whether Chairman Carthew was suggesting that the Commission hold a special meeting dedicated to reviewing the comprehensive plan, noting that the review and comment period concludes by the end of March 2026. Chairman Carthew responded that such a meeting could be beneficial and suggested the possibility of inviting members of the plan's steering committee to participate as well. He asked Mr. Rutledge whether coordinating such a meeting would be feasible.

Mr. Rutledge explained the draft plan had been distributed electronically to stakeholders, along with a link for submitting comments, so feedback could be compiled efficiently.

Chairman Carthew asked whether the response from reviewers had been substantial.

Mr. Rutledge could not recount the overall level of feedback, but he acknowledged that the initial response had been relatively limited, despite follow-up reminder emails. He scheduled a meeting with the consultants, which should provide additional information about the status of the review process and the comments received thus far.

Chairman Carthew stated it might still be worthwhile for the Commission to schedule a focused discussion or meeting before the end of the comment period in order to consolidate the Planning Commission's feedback on the comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Huchel raised two items of concern. First, regarding a traffic safety issue at the location where Roosevelt Boulevard transitions into Broad Street, noting that motorists frequently use the area as an informal exit ramp, creating dangerous conditions for pedestrians. She questioned whether any further research had been conducted regarding possible safety improvements.

Mr. Martynuska responded that the City investigated the issue and considered several potential solutions. One option discussed was the installation of Jersey barriers along the sidewalk area to prevent vehicles from cutting through the pedestrian space; however, this approach raised ADA accessibility concerns, since additional concrete sidewalk work would be required to maintain accessible pedestrian routes. Another complication involves the right-of-way controlled by PennDOT, which limits what the City can install or modify without state approval. As the roadway falls within PennDOT jurisdiction, simply placing barriers without additional roadway changes would likely not be permitted. The City considered installing flashing warning signals or pedestrian signage, though those solutions would also require coordination with PennDOT.

Commissioner Huchel clarified, while the section along State Route 403 involves PennDOT oversight, the Commission previously discussed modifying traffic flow on Power Street,

potentially by making the block one-way to discourage vehicles from using it as an exit ramp.

Mr. Martynuska explained previous discussions revealed logistical problems with that idea, including the possibility that vehicles exiting the street would be restricted to making only a right turn that could complicate traffic circulation.

Chairman Carthew elaborated on the issue, explaining that the problem stems largely from PennDOT's previous reconfiguration of the Roosevelt-to-Broad connection, which allows vehicles traveling at higher speeds, often around 40 miles per hour to enter residential streets where the speed limit is closer to 20–25 miles per hour. He indicated this suggestion is potentially restricting Power Street to one-way eastbound traffic toward downtown, preventing vehicles from exiting Roosevelt onto Power Street traveling west.

Commissioner Huchel confirmed this was her intent, emphasizing the concern is not local residents using Power Street but rather drivers exiting Roosevelt at high speeds, creating a hazard for pedestrians.

Mr. Martynuska noted, before any such change could be implemented, the City would need to consider the possibility of creating access issues for emergency response vehicles, particularly if police, fire, or ambulance units could no longer travel straight through the area.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged that emergency vehicles might need to reroute through nearby intersections, such as Second Street or Power Street. Mr. Martynuska offered to revisit the issue and review the traffic configuration to determine whether adjustments could be feasible.

Commissioner Huchel noted a correction to the Minutes of the February 3, 2026, meeting.

Mr. Martynuska provided an update related to the Bayer Building, noting City representatives recently met with Mr. Casals regarding the property. Although no final outcome resulted from the meeting, he explained the conversation helped open a line of communication with the building's ownership, which could support future efforts to address the structure before its condition deteriorates further.

Chairman Carthew expressed appreciation for that outreach, emphasizing that the immediate priority is to keep the building stabilized. He noted, while there may not be immediate redevelopment plans, preserving the structure from further deterioration is essential if it is to remain viable for future use.

Mr. Martynuska added, during the meeting with Mr. Casals, several urgent maintenance issues were discussed, including the condition of the roof, which is not fully compromised but is allowing water intrusion. The need to repair broken windows and address other exterior deficiencies was also discussed. He described the meeting as a productive initial

conversation with the owner's representative and indicated the City hopes to continue the collaboration to address the building's stabilization needs before the damage becomes irreversible.

Chairman Carthew prepared and circulated to members for review a draft report summarizing the Commission's activities from the previous year. He acknowledged that the document still required additional editing and updates. He requested commissioners review the draft and provide comments or suggested revisions.

Chairman Carthew further noted, given Commissioner Huchel's resignation, it would be appropriate to finalize the report soon so that it could be formally submitted to City Council. Chairman Carthew indicated, following feedback from commission members and incorporating any necessary revisions, he intended to present the finalized report to Council on behalf of the Planning Commission.

## **REPORTS:**

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

Mr. Rutledge reported on distributing a link to the GIS zoning map created by the City's consultant. The interactive version of the GIS zoning map was added to the old municipal website, with plans to add it to the new website as well. He encouraged suggestions for additional features or improvements to include in the system.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged the update and thanked Mr. Rutledge for sharing the map. He also observed a change related to vacant lots, specifically that the address information appeared to be removed from the listing.

Mr. Rutledge explained further developments are underway with the code enforcement software. He noted Mr. Williams attended a training session and would be working with City staff to demonstrate the use of the system going forward. He explained the system includes a listing of vacant properties and will allow the city to create a dashboard layer instead of maintaining large spreadsheets. With this system, reports can be generated directly rather than attempting to print extensive spreadsheets.

Chairman Carthew expressed appreciation for the improvement, noting the change will be helpful for the Commission's work.

Mr. Rutledge agreed. He had attempted to print the existing spreadsheet but found it far too large to manage. He added the same approach could eventually be used for other categories, such as demolition properties, and over time, additional items could be incorporated into the GIS system. Currently, those lists are still maintained as spreadsheets, but the goal is to transition them into the mapping platform.

Chairman Carthew commented that progress toward implementing the GIS system was one of the items highlighted while preparing the annual report, particularly noting the Commission's efforts throughout the year to move the project forward.

Mr. Rutledge had tried to move the process along as quickly as possible, but explained the Hildebrand GIS Mapping System, while highly capable, manages multiple responsibilities which sometimes slows the pace of completion.

Chairman Carthew clarified that Hildebrand serves as the City's consultant responsible for GIS mapping services.

Mr. Rutledge added that the consultant handles several other projects as well, which requires coordinating schedules in order to complete the requested work.

Chairman Carthew emphasized the GIS system will serve as an important tool for future planning efforts. He noted the ability to identify vacant lots and track opportunities within neighborhoods could assist the City in stabilizing and improving certain areas.

Mr. Rutledge stated the software provides a clear path forward for capturing and organizing the types of data necessary for those planning efforts.

Commissioner Grandinetti commented on the comprehensive plan materials and noted some of the statistics and information presented in the plan were troubling.

Chairman Carthew acknowledged the extensive data compiled in the comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Grandinetti encouraged all commission members to review the information carefully and consider the implications of the data presented.

Chairman Carthew suggested the Commission consider scheduling another opportunity to meet and review the information together so the group could analyze the data and identify key findings that could be translated into implementable plans or planning opportunities.

Mr. Martynuska offered an update regarding the public safety building renovation project. Mr. Martynuska explained City Council previously issued a request for proposals for architectural design services for the project and received three submissions. After reviewing the proposals, Council selected Upstreet to complete the design work. He reported the firm had already begun moving quickly with the project and started mapping the building's interior.

Mr. Martynuska further reported that drone flights were recently conducted with assistance from county GIS personnel to complete 3D mapping of the structure. He noted preliminary renderings were produced, and drilling equipment will soon be brought to the site to collect soil samples near the location for the installation of the new elevator.

In addition, the permitting process began, and environmental assessments, including lead testing and air quality analysis, were currently underway as required for the project.

Mr. Martynuska stated the project was moving at a rapid pace, which is necessary due to funding timelines. Approximately \$2.4 to \$2.45 million in ARPA funding must be spent by the end of 2026. He also noted that funding from the RACP program was involved and the City received information suggesting that additional federal funding may become available to assist with the project. He recently toured the building with representatives from Upstreet to evaluate floor layouts, restroom configurations, and other potential space reconfigurations.

Chairman Carthew asked whether the current plan would keep all existing departments in the building and whether any additional departments might be added.

Mr. Martynuska explained several office configurations on the floor will change, although final layouts had not yet been fully determined. He noted the new elevator will be installed in a location that will allow access through the current area, and doorway changes will be required. The council chamber will be relocated to one of the back offices, creating a new primary entrance for council functions. The elevator will serve all five floors of the building, beginning at the sally port in the basement.

Mr. Martynuska also explained the holding cells will be moved from the second floor to the first floor to improve safety and accessibility for police officers, so they will not need to transport individuals using the small existing elevator. Additional improvements will include upgrades to HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, along with a complete roof replacement. He noted the roof contract had already been awarded, and the work was progressing.

Commissioner Grandinetti asked whether there were any plans to rent unused space within the building.

Mr. Martynuska replied that no formal plans currently existed, but the City would remain open to that possibility. Commissioner Grandinetti acknowledged the space could potentially become available in the future.

Chairman Carthew commented that the design could allow for the development of additional space within the building.

Mr. Martynuska confirmed, once the roof work is completed, particularly on the fifth floor, there would be a significant amount of space available there. He added there may also be available space on the current floor, which would represent most of the building's remaining capacity.

Mr. Martynuska also reported the basement had undergone remediation work. Inspectors from the Department of Labor and Industry visited and identified a few additional

deficiencies to be addressed. He stated several of those issues had already been corrected, while others, such as painting the back stairwell and completing air-quality sampling, still needed to be finalized.

Chairman Carthew asked about the overall project timeline and noted it was encouraging to see the project moving forward quickly.

Mr. Martynuska estimated the building could be completed and operational by approximately mid-May of the following year. However, he explained, if additional federal funding is received and used to expand the project scope, the timeline could change.

Commissioner Grandinetti commented the progress represents a significant change compared to discussions about the building two or three years earlier.

Mr. Martynuska explained part of the current effort involved restoring the building to a functional state while recognizing its history. He noted the facility originally included courtrooms, laboratories, and approximately 60 jail cells arranged in two tiers.

Mr. Martynuska added, during the planning process, the team discovered original blueprints and a folder containing the original contract documents. The architect who designed the building was based in Altoona, and the documents also included a manual for the original Gainwell system that was published in 1924.

Chairman Carthew thanked Mr. Martynuska for providing the update.

Mr. Martynuska was pleased to be able to share the information with the board.

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

**RECESS/ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.