

MINUTES
ALTOONA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, May 3, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bob Gutshall, Chairperson
James Dixon
Sam Frye
Jennifer Mikolajczyk
Barbara Wiens-Tuers

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dave Albright
Randy Isenberg

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF PRESENT

Lee Slusser, Director Planning and Community Development
Nick Ardizzone, Property and Program Coordinator
Bette Fischer, Clerical Associate

GUESTS PRESENT

Ted Beam – Blair County Commissioner
Mark Taylor – Blair County Emergency Management Agency
Stephanie Shoenfelt – Keller Engineers, Inc.
Donna Royer, Guest
Bill Kibler, Altoona Mirror

The Altoona City Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on May 3, 2016 at 3:00 P.M. in the Public Meeting Room, City Hall 1301 12th Street, Altoona. Bob Gutshall, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

1. **Approval of meeting minutes of April 6, 2016.**
The meeting minutes April 6, 2016 were approved as read by a motion made by Jennifer Mikolajczyk and seconded by James Dixon. Motion carried unanimously.

2. **Public Comment Period**
None at this time

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

3. **Blair County Emergency Management Services Parking Lot** – Mr. Slusser introduced Blair County Commissioner Ted Beam, Mr. Mark Taylor Director of Public Safety for the Blair County Emergency Management Agency and Ms. Stephanie Shoenfelt of Keller Engineers. He explained that the Blair County Emergency Management Services is asking the Commission to consider approval of a land development application and plans to build a new 32 space paved parking lot for the agency at 615 4th Street. He noted that a previous parking lot was approved at this location on the 6th Avenue side of the property and is shown on the plans. Mr. Slusser then turned the presentation over to Ms. Shoenfelt, who stated that since the previous review and approval in the summer of 2015, the County has purchased and demolished two (2) additional homes which are adjacent to the center. They have revised the parking layout in this location and are now proposing to create a fenced 39 space lot. They are proposing two (2) access points onto 7th Avenue (SR 0764). The north access offset will be a minimum use drive. It is only used by the 911 Center Mobile Command Vehicle (Big Red). The south access at offset is for employees and will be a low volume drive. There is an electric gate limiting access to employees only. The lot at the corner of 6th Avenue and 5th Street has not changed from the previous plan. The stormwater management analysis has been revised to reflect all changes to the plan. Mr. Taylor explained the need for the maximum number of parking spaces in the new secured parking lot for EMA and 911 Staff. The staff members have been parking in the unsecured church parking lot off the alley many have encountered personal harassment, damage to personal cars and county emergency response vehicles with other similar events that have made it a safety issue for employees. The agency also does not have adequate space to store 10 emergency equipment trailers and are required to keep them off site at other locations. This delays emergency response and timely deployment of this vital equipment. Mr. Taylor added that it is important to mention that the Department of Homeland Security considers Emergency Operations and 911 Centers critical infrastructure that need to be secured due to potential acts of terrorism. These operations are target hazards that need tight security. This new parking area with security gates and fencing along with restricted entry access helps to achieve that mission. Mr. Dixon asked, how many staff members are present at any one time? Mr. Taylor stated that 15 on daylight shift and 15 on night shift. Sometimes 10 extra at shift change. We need the maximum number of parking spots to accommodate these people as well as four (4) District Justice employees and frequent visits from Commissioners, PEMA and other state and federal dignitaries. The agency is requesting the following waivers:

1. Section 535-203A(3), which limits access to 7th Avenue when access to a side street (in this case, 4th & 5th Streets) is available The lot as noted above will have two (2) access points onto 7th Avenue. The 4th Street side is a minimum use drive and will only be used by Big Red. The 5th Street side will be a low volume drive with an electric gate limited access to employees only. The Commission granted this waiver.

2. Section 535-203A(3) which limits bidirectional access driveway to one for every 150 feet of frontage along 7th Avenue. After a brief discussion the Commission granted this waiver.
3. Section 535-205C(4) of the *Code of the City of Altoona* requires that commercial parking lots “shall be planted so as to screen the parking facility from all surrounding streets and properties...Such vegetation shall be planted so as to provide a full screen within five years.” The neighbor has an existing privacy fence and there is not enough room from the property line for plantings. However, there is a concern that someone could hide between these two fences and not be seen. The Commission decided not to grant this waiver and made suggestions that each end of the fence should be tied off or gated so as not to allow access to between the fences and that the chain link fence that belongs to the EMA is to be slatted with privacy slats.
4. Section 535-203C(7) of the *Code of the City of Altoona* requires that curbing “be placed at the edges of all surfaced areas including islands. To allow for maximum number of parking spaces needed the EMA is requesting a waiver from providing small gaps between or through the curbing that are used to absorb stormwater. The Commission granted this waiver.
5. Section 535—203B(3) Parking spaces are currently shown closer than 5ft to the property line at the alley. The EMA is requesting a waiver from the 5ft setback requirement. The Commission granted this waiver.
6. Section 535-203C(1) Requires a means for cars to back out of the three parking spots closet to the alley. After a brief discussion it was suggested that the trailers be parked in that area so as not to hinder cars backing out in a small space. The Commission granted this waiver.
7. Section 535-205E(3) requires curbed, planted islands at the end of each row of parking. The EMA is requesting a waiver from providing these islands, to do so would cost some parking spaces. The Commission granted this waiver.
8. Section 535-203C3(a) of the *Code of the City of Altoona* requires that all parking spaces must be 19ft long. The EMA is seeking a waiver for some of the parking spaces to be only 18ft. It was determined that there should be enough space for cars to get in that out. The Commission granted this waiver.

A motion was made by James Dixon to accept and approve seven (7) waivers and to modify (1) one waiver # 3 by having the EMA add slats to the fence. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Motion passed unanimously.

4. **Proposed Amendment to an Approval Land Development: Wingate Hotel, Sidewalk, Fencing and Piers** – Mr. Slusser then introduced a land development amendment for the Wingate Hotel. The original land development was first approved in August 2015. This amendment seeks to (1) move the street trees to the back of the sidewalk along 9th Street, 10th Street and Green Avenue, (2) place decorative piers and fencing along these parking lot edges and (3) reduce the parking lot islands at the alley by 2 feet in size. He then turned the presentation over to Stephanie Shoenfelt of Keller

Engineers, Inc., who explained the amendments that the owners are proposing. A waiver was previously requested and granted to Section 535-203.E(3) requiring landscaped islands at the ends of parking lot rows. The planning commission requested that the excess space be moved to either end of the larger parking lot or to the alley side and provide islands along the alley. Other islands were previously waived.

1. A waiver is requested to reduce this island by 2” to allow for space on the Green Avenue side of the lot for 2’X2’ decorative masonry piers within the property. Owners wish to provide the piers and decorative fence along their parking areas.
2. A waiver is requested to Section 535-204.A(5) requiring the sidewalk width to extend from the street right-of-way line to the curb with street tree wells for street trees. We are proposing to provide a 5” sidewalk along 9th Street, 10th Street and Green Avenue with the edge being at the curb and extending towards the right-of-way. This provides for a grass planting strip (approximately 3’ wide) at the rear of the sidewalk where the street trees and other landscaping is proposed. This increases the green space and landscaping provided at the site and provides for a defined border around the parking areas.

A motion was made by Barbara Wiens-Tuers to accept and approve these two (2) waivers as requested. The motion was seconded by Sam Frye. Motion passed unanimously.

5. **Staff Level Reviews** – Nick Ardizzone reviewed that staff has worked on the following staff level subdivision/land development reviews since the April 5, 2016 regular meeting.

1. Domino’s Pizza – Land Development – 607-09 17th Street – Final Approval
2. Popeye’s – Land Development – 309-319 E. Plank Road – Conditional Approval
3. Union Avenue, LLC – Land Development – 1815 Union Avenue & 1738-42 Margaret Avenue – Non-Compliance Code of Ordinances – Remediation notice has been received.
4. Servello Medical Center – Land Development – 304-16 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd. – Waiting for Re-Submission
5. Kreuz Storage Building – Land Development – 1812-18 N 4th Avenue – Re-Submission Review
6. 610 7th Street, LLC – Subdivision – 610 7th Street AKA 621-23 7th Avenue – Final Approval
7. Rosenberry – Subdivision – 1201-31 N 8th Avenue – Final Approval
8. Amerine-Benzel – Subdivision – 816 E Caroline Avenue Final Approval
9. L.S. Fiore GMC – Land Development – 808 Logan Blvd. – Under Review
10. Wingate Hotel – Amended Land Development – 909 Chestnut Avenue – Under Review.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

6. Spot Blight Declaration – The Planning Commission may consider declaring the following properties as blighted.

1. **2500 Pleasant Valley Blvd,**

Owner: Ethel M. Henry (Deceased)
2500 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602

Property was originally submitted in September 2011 because of the interior's deplorable condition. The owner/occupants of the property were removed from the house, but after a hearing the judge allowed them to move back in. It is now being submitted to the Blighted Program 4/7/16 for demolition. Property is vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. The structures roof is in poor condition needing replaced. Windows are in fair condition, some being broken. The interior of the structure is in deplorable condition, full of trash, rubbish, rodents, bugs and feces. Outstanding taxes of \$1,460.34 for 2015. Gas and water are off. Electric is still on. The family that was living in the property are both deceased. The garage is in good condition. The city will demolish both the house and garage under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. A motion was made to approve this property as blighted by Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Motion seconded by Sam Frye. Motion passed unanimously.

2. **892 20th Street**

Owner: Jannette Perez
2701 Walnut Avenue
Altoona, PA 16601

Property is tax delinquent and is scheduled for the June 15, 2016 County's Judicial Sale. Property is vacant in substandard condition. The exterior's siding is missing and the bricks are coming off the chimney and landing into the neighbor's yard. The City's Demo crew has boarded this building up. The property is housing pigeons at this time due to the broken and missing windows. Foundation is cracking. Interior ceilings are falling down. All utilities are off. All correspondence to the owner is being returned undeliverable. Therefore the City will demolish the structure under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. A motion was made by Barbara Wiens-Tuers to approve this property as blighted. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Motion passed unanimously.

3. 511 N 2nd Street

Owner: Midnight Sun Enterprises
P.O. Box 5501
Santa Monica, CA 90409

Property is Vacant and in substandard condition. The property's roof has fallen inside of building making the exterior walls bow outward. Foundation is in poor condition, windows are in fair condition. Water has been shut off since 2004. Electric and gas service are not active. Owner has contacted Code Enforcement Officers and has stated that there is nothing wrong with the building. Certified Demotion Notice has been unclaimed, but the notice sent regular mail has not been returned. Therefore, the city will demolish the structure under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. A motion was made by James Dixon to approve this property as blighted. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

7. Planning Report

- a. Grantmanship activities (CDBG, HOME, ESG) – Waiting final approval by City Council for approve Action Plan.
- b. Shade Tree Commission report – Bennetti has been awarded contract to treat 100 Ash Trees against the Emerald Ash Borer. Spring planting is in progress.
- c. GAEDC report – Plan are being made for street fairs and festivals. The biggest one is the Zombie Fest to be held on August 26 and 27, 2016, to welcome Penn State Students back to school.
- d. Blair County Commission Report – Reviewed the Sun and Moon Sports Bar, and the Railroad City Brewery.

7. Questions from the Media and Public - None

8. ADJOURN MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:50 P.M.

Signed: Sam Frye, Secretary