

MINUTES
ALTOONA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY July 5, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Randy Isenberg

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF PRESENT

Lee Slusser, Director Planning and Community Development
Mary Johnson, CDBG Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

John Grey, Nehemiah Project Foundry Men's Discipleship Home
Donna Royer, Guest

The Altoona City Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on July 5, 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 May 3, 2016.**
The meeting minutes May 3, 2016 were approved as read by a motion made by James Dixon and seconded by Barbara Wiens-Tuers. Motion carried unanimously.
2. **Public Comment Period**
None at this time
3. **Nehemiah Project – Foundry Men's Discipleship Home**
Mr. Slusser introduced the issue before the Commission, explaining that this is a recommendation on a conditional use application to Altoona City Council. He introduced Pastor John Grey from the New Hope Community Church/Nehemiah Project. Mr. Grey presented that The Nehemiah Project seeks to open a "men's discipleship home... to provide a place for men in need of temporary housing" at 1519 11th Street, near their other facilities in Lower Fairview. Pastor Grey explained how the Foundry will be run, how residents will be screened, the mission behind the project, and the need for the project. The Commission asked how the backgrounds of the residents will be vetted and

how troublemakers will be expelled. Barbara Wiens-Tuers asked about succession plans for the Foundry, to which Pastor John Gray replied that he would train his successors as part of his ministry.

The Commission then reviewed the six conditions set forth for halfway houses in the Multiple Household Residential Zone as stated at Section 535-70D(2) of the *Code of the City of Altoona*. Each of these six conditions is copied *in italics* below. The Commission's findings on each condition is then explained after each.

(a) The owner of the property agrees to the arrangement

The Altoona City Planning Commission found that the Nehemiah Project, which owns 1519 11th Street, supports its own establishment of the Foundry.

(b) The facility may be single-room occupancy if all other codes governing such arrangements can be met

The Nehemiah Project testified that the Foundry will be single room occupancy. The Building Code Official has certified that the Foundry meets the requirements for single room occupancy housing in the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code. If City Council approves this application for a conditional use, then the Fire Inspector will inspect the property for compliance with the International Fire Code as is required by City ordinance.

(c) The owner of the property shall agree to make himself readily available to neighbors and City representatives to discuss and correct any problems arising from this use of the property

In the application and at the Planning Commission meeting, the Nehemiah Project agreed to this condition and stated that "the normal peace of the community is... of paramount importance to us."

(d) The rental does not impair the normal peace of the neighborhood

In the application and at the Planning Commission meeting, the Nehemiah Project and the Pleasant Valley Assembly of God explained how they will operate the Foundry so that it does not disturb the peace of Lower Fairview or the City as a whole.

(e) The exterior of the property appears as a single- or two-family house

In the application and at the Planning Commission meeting, the Nehemiah Project and staff explained that the exterior of the original two-family house at 1519 11th Street has not been changed. Only the interior has.

(f) There shall be no signs advertising the property other than a sign informing the public when a room may be available for rent

In the application and at the Planning Commission meeting, the Nehemiah Project and the Pleasant Valley Assembly of God stated that the Foundry will not be signed at all, and that potential residents will come to the Foundry through the Nehemiah Project's existing ministries.

Because of the need for such a facility (testified to by staff) and the positive answers given to each of the six conditions set forth for halfway house in the Multiple Household Residential Zone at Section 535-70D(2) of the *Code of the City of Altoona*, the City of Altoona Planning Commission recommended that Altoona City Council approve the Foundry as proposed by the Nehemiah Project and the Pleasant Valley Assembly of God. A motion to approve the conditional use application was made by Barbara Wiens-Tuers. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Mikolajczyk. Motion passed unanimously.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

4. **Staff Level Reviews** – Lee Slusser reviewed that staff has worked on the following staff level subdivision/land development reviews since the May 3, 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. Kreuz Storage Building – Land Development – 1812 -18 N 4th Avenue – Waiting Resubmission
 4. Simington Plaza III – Phase I Amendment – Under Review
 5. Garden Heights Pre School – Land Development – 109 Bellview Street – Final Approval
 6. 18th Street Community Church – Subdivision – 1416 18th Street – Recorded
 7. Blair County Emergency Services Parking Lot – Land Development – 615 4th Street Final Approval

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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

1. **3625 6th Avenue (Garage)**

Owner: John & Misty Hartman
3625 6th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition of the garage only. Garage is in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Property is a wood/siding frame building 18'6" x 21'6" garage only. Garage is in deplorable condition with wood and shingles collapsing. 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 James Dixon. Motion passed unanimously.

2. **4015 5th Avenue (Garage)**

Owner: Daniel C. Horvath
4015 5th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition. Property is vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Property is a wood sided garage in a state of collapse. Exterior walls are pushing outwards and roof has collapsed. Owner is financially unable to demolish structure on his own. Garage is a hazard to the neighborhood. 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 David Albright to approve this property as blighted. The motion was seconded by Barbara Wiens-Tuers. Motion passed unanimously.

3. **3000 West Chestnut Avenue**

Owner: Isabelle M. McClain
% Maria McClain
12812 Cheyney Lane
Bowie, MD 20715

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition. Property is Vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Owner is deceased and no estate has been opened for the property. Daughter-in-

law (Maria McClain) states she has no responsibility for the property. All utilities are off and taxes are owed for 2013 and 2014. Brick façade is loose and missing mortar and wood is rotted. Stone and mortar are falling out. There are holes in the roof with sheeting materials blowing off. All windows are in poor condition in need of replacement. Owner's family will not take responsibility 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 Sam Frye to approve this property as blighted. The motion was seconded by James Dixon. Motion passed unanimously.

4. 221 Walnut Avenue

Owner: Archie and Susan Buchanan
762 Henry's Road
Irvona, PA 16656

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition. Property is vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Owner is terminally ill and can't repair the property. Exterior and roof are in poor condition. All windows are broken and/or missing. Interior is full of trash. All utilities are off and taxes are owed for 2015. Owner can't or will not comply with the demolition order, therefore under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code the City will demolish the structure 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 David Albright. Motion passed unanimously.

5. 407 Crawford Avenue

Owner: Lisa D. Galentine
407 Crawford Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition. Property is vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Property is in disrepair, interior is full of trash and Codes has been receiving numerous complaints. All utilities are off and taxes are current. Owner has been unresponsive to the demolition order sent by code enforcement. 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.

6. 719 N 5th Avenue

Owner: Cynthia L. Lyles
719 N. 5th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16601

Property was submitted to the Blighted Program 6/23/2016 for demolition. Property is vacant and in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Property's interior has been fire damaged. Exterior is in need of major repairs with the roof having holes and windows are broken and missing. House is being entered by kids. Taxes are owed for 2014 and 2015. Water and gas are off since 2014, electric is still on. Owner has been non responsive to the demolition order sent by code enforcement. 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 the property blighted. The motion was seconded by David Albright. Motion passed unanimously.

7. 2117 8th Avenue (Fire Damage)

Owner: Mark Westberry
2117 8th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602

Property was submitted as an emergency demolition on June 20, 2016 due to fire. Owner did not have insurance. Immediate demolition was requested by the City's Fire Marshall and Building Inspector. 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 the property blighted. The motion was seconded by Sam Frye. Motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

6. Planning Report

- a. Grantmanship activities (CDBG, HOME, ESG) - Mr. Slusser explained how we're looking at funding safeguarding through the Safe Housing/Healthy Living Program.
- b. Shade Tree Commission Report – No report
- c. Zoning Hearing Board Report – Donna Royer reviewed the cases on their docket for July.
- d. GAEDC Report – Barbara Wiens-Tuers reviewed what GAEDC did at their monthly meeting
- e. Blair County Commission Report – James Dixon reviewed what was going on at the Blair County Commission

7. Commissioner's Forum
 8. Questions from the Media and Public - None
 9. **ADJOURN MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:50 P.M.**
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Signed: Sam Frye, Secretary