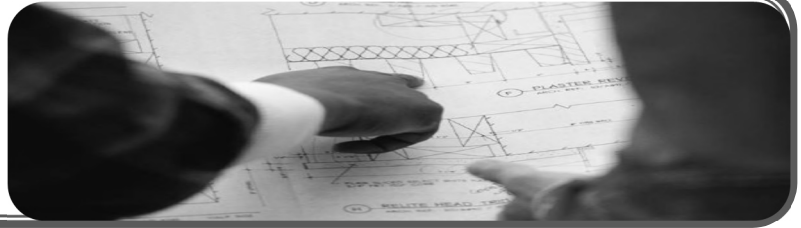


**CITY OF WARREN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 2021**



The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was held on December 15, 2021, at 7:30 AM in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 318 W. Third Avenue, Warren, PA.

ROLL CALL

Chair Angie Dart called the meeting to order. Members present were Chair Angie Dart, Vice Chair Angela Abreu, Mike Suppa, Raymond Pring Jr. and Randal Gustafson. Also present were Randy Rossey, Director of Codes & Planning, Mike Holtz, Department of Public Works Director, Scott Taylor, Zoning & Ordinance Enforcement Official and Kelly Conti, Recording Secretary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion by Mr. Suppa and second by Mr. Gustafson, the minutes of the November 17, 2021, regular meeting were unanimously approved by those present.

VISITORS

Denny Puko – Mackin Engineering
Brandi Rosselli – Mackin Engineering via Zoom call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to present to the Commission.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Denny Puko from Mackin Engineering presented the Commission with a spreadsheet showing the comparison of issues and assets brought forth by the Planning Commission, the Stakeholders Summit, the Public Input Meeting, and the online surveys.

Some issues of concern overlapped; attrition/residents leaving, passing away, population declining and businesses leaving relate to economy, business, and employment opportunities.

The top favorite things of Warren were the downtown area, places in downtown, the river front and the parks and recreation areas.

Ms. Dart discussed the broadband service in the city and tasked the Commission with trying to make it available to lower income citizens. Mr. Pring commented on the price and the lack of alternatives for broadband carriers. He suggested looking into different broadband carrier options and the internet speed issue residential customers face.

Ms. Dart also discussed the historical nature of downtown. She suggested modifying the zoning requirements to preserve what we have so that it doesn't deteriorate and to make sure new developments adhere to guidelines that incorporate the look and feel of the historical downtown.

Per Mr. Puko there was some concern regarding too much focus on the downtown area and that more focus was needed on the entire city. Mr. Pring stated that is a difficult task due to areas along Market St. that are still zoned residential areas but are clearly not residential. We need to create some opportunity there without losing the historical vibrant that we have. Mr. Suppa agreed the Commission needed to make sure everything isn't poured into the downtown area when you have businesses on the east and west sides saying, "What about us?" He felt one area of opportunity would be alternating the parade route to help increase the foot traffic to other businesses.

Mr. Gustafson expressed his observation that the favorite places noted in the surveys and a lot of the positives were items that were met with skepticism 15 – 20 years ago when they were initiated. Example: The Northwest Plaza was met with a lot of skepticism but has now become a signature image for Warren. Bett's Park is another example. Mr. Gustafson suggested highlighting the positive outcome of these items that have now become some of the most popular places in the city.

Ms. Abreu asked for the current volume of the survey responses. Per Ms. Rosselli at this point they have only received 122 of the 300 – 500 they were anticipating. She is hopeful more will be received now that the staff from the Codes Department distributed hard copies with drop off boxes and flyers around to local businesses. She suggested initiating another push to try to get more residents to fill out the surveys. Mr. Gustafson would like to know if there are any funds in the budget to do a bulk mailing. Mr. Pring suggested utilizing social media such as facebook to attempt to obtain more survey responses. Mr. Holtz suggested having the WCCBI add it to their email blasts. Mr. Suppa felt another add in the newspaper would help.

Mr. Pring asked Ms. Rosselli if she had any idea what the demographics were from the returned surveys. Per Ms. Rosselli that information was not captured on the surveys but could be if the Commission decides to do another survey.

Blighted Properties was another topic of concern from the current survey results. Mr. Pring felt Blighted was not the correct term since some properties are inhabited. Mr. Rossey said a better term would be Property Maintenance Issues. The Codes Department is trying to work with property owners to get issues such as garbage, high grass and deteriorating structural conditions addressed to prevent properties from becoming blighted. The department faces difficulties with getting issues resolved when the landlords live out of the area, in most instances they live out of the state.

Mr. Puko and Ms. Rosselli will be coordinating with City staff to set up four work sessions with local stake holders to discuss the following main takeaways from the current survey results: (1) Downtown area. (2) Business Development. (3) Community Assets. (4) Target Areas. Mr. Suppa would like to have Developing Tourism added as a topic of discussion under Community Assets. Ms. Dart recommended looking into supporting existing businesses to help them maintain and develop.

Ms. Dart and Mr. Pring expressed the need to work with outlying areas to receive their input. Many of the people working in the city and supporting local businesses do not live within the city limits. It would also be beneficial for the City of Warren Planning Commission to coordinate efforts with Warren County Planning Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

Mission Statement: Mr. Rossey asked the Commission to think about ideas for the mission statement to present at the February meeting. The target completion date is the March meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned after a motion by Mr. Pring with a second motion from Ms. Abreu. The next meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2022.

Minutes prepared by Kelly Conti.