

Carlisle Borough Planning Commission Minutes

Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 5:30 pm

Members in Attendance: Isabelle Harman, David Maher, Robert Pinnell, Lee Winton, John Werner and Rachel James

Borough Officials in Attendance: Jared Woolston, Malcolm Marcewicz, Matt Marshall

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Robert Pinnell

1. Meeting Minutes

“That the Planning Commission approved the February 27, 2024 Minutes.”

Motion by: J. Werner

Seconded by: L. Winton

2. Public Comments – The audience may request Commission Members address and/or discuss items not listed on the agenda. Commission members may choose, at their discretion, to address issues at a later date.

There were no public comments.

3. Final Land Development Plan

- A. The Planning Commission may review and provide a recommendation to Borough Council to Table the Northside Village LLC Lot 7 Final Land Development Plan at the request of the developer.

That Carlisle Borough Planning Commission recommends approval to Table the Northside Village LLC Lot 7 Final Land Development Plan at the request of the developer.

Motion by: L. Winton

Seconded by: J. Werner

4. Blighted Property Designation

- A. The Planning Commission may review and provide a recommendation to Borough Council to designate the property located at 137 South East Street as “Blighted.”

J. Woolston stated three out of the five properties we referred to the Blight Control Board are appearing tonight.

J. Woolston stated the code officers are proactive with issues they see from a public way. If you can see something from the street that the property is deteriorating or there is a safety issue then the code officers address that.

J. Woolston stated we identify the violation, tell people what the code says, and give them a corrective action deadline. If we fail to get compliance we will issue a citation. If we still don't get compliance we issue another citation and the process continues.

J. Woolston stated if they want their day in court, the District Magistrate will issue a court date. The code enforcement officer will appear on behalf of the borough, violator will also be there to present testimony in front of the magistrate district judge. The district magistrate only has the power to determine there was in fact a violation. They don't have ability to require corrective action.

J. Woolston stated the Blight Control board is the county entity that considers issues and reviews Blighted properties. Referring to the Blight Control Board is our last resort to get compliance. Getting their acknowledgment that yes they do agree its blight, the next part of the process is to go in front of the planning commission to get their acknowledgment.

J. Woolston stated there are three possible outcomes. One is do nothing. Coordinate with the Municipality to find a private buyer or secure ownership of the property by eminent domain or court appointment conservatorship, remove blight and offer the property for sale. We try to work with people.

J. Woolston stated if we're not getting compliance, you start to see some neighborhood decline. When one property starts to decline others start to suffer. Property values go down. We do our best to try to keep people in properties as best we can.

J. Woolston presents 137 South East Street as blighted.

D. Maher asked do they typically only submit a picture of the front door?

J. Woolston stated so there's an enforcement case that goes along with this. We don't share the enforcement materials. We provide the observations. We document what the code enforcement officer observes, and what they can determine by using their judgment. Some of these are pretty obvious from the outside will see charring from fire damage. Other things are more concealed.

J. Woolston stated several attempts have been made to communicate with the owner through enforcement and property maintenance, but also through this process were required to reach out to the owner.

L. Winton asked if there had been communication with the owner?

J. Woolston stated several attempts had been made to communicate with the owner. Not just enforcement action, we do property maintenance code, but also in the blight process we are required to reach out to the owner. We haven't had an formal citations for any of these properties. The property owner of 137 South East stated that she has no money, no insurance. She's just been waiting for either a sheriff or somebody to take the property over.

M. Marcewicz state we posted our notice of violation sent her the letter certified in first class mail giving her. I think we gave her 60 days to produce some sort of plan to us. In this case she didn't.

M. Marcewicz stated that M. Marshall tried getting a hold of her again and we are unable to contact her for very long periods of time. The best way for us to do this is to post a note on the door. Rather than site her when she says she doesn't have any money and she's just waiting for us to take this particular property we just initiate the blight process as it meets the conditions per Cumberland counties guidelines which we also posted on the door with a 60 day, and another 60 day. When that period passed it went back to Cumberland County and they did a blight determination resolution, and that was adopted by their commission board in November. So then the next step of the process which they accepted in January was to recommend to the municipal planning commission. So this property itself does not have a citation. It really wasn't a necessary step to penalize somebody who just doesn't have the financial means to remedy these violations.

M. Marcewicz stated there is another property in this stack where there's been three citations that I'm aware of issued by M. Marshall here to get the property cleaned up. They haven't been paid, they haven't been contested and when you're getting almost monthly complaints on the property we have to take some sort of corrective action.

M. Marcewicz state for each property in all three of these, we have done the same process of public posting and repeated attempts to contact the property owner. Our main priority is always compliance. Certainly not a punitive action on our part. This is what the Blight Board is for.

R. James asked so a follow up question then in this matter, especially as you're not going forward with any formalized citations because of kind of the desire to take over the property is the next step after this a petition for conservatorship is that what you intend?

M. Marcewicz stated the next step would be it would go back to Cumberland County's planning commission and if adopted then the Redevelopment authority will then have the options to either do nothing, coordinate with us the local municipality to find the buyer as

Jared said, or secure the ownership and then do the conservatorship. And that's basically the process that Cumberland County has.

I. Harman asked a question about the timeline, this dates back to 2020?

M. Marcewicz stated yes.

I. Harman asked so is this now what you have done is the effective timeline of when the property owner has to respond or I mean 2020?

M. Marcewicz stated in 2020 the notice of violation condemnation was issued and the code enforcement officer that was on the job at the time didn't pursue a citation at the time didn't pursue the citation for the same reason we didn't. For whatever reason that staff member never brought it to the Blight Board. We have an all new team here now. We are following basically the guidelines that are presented with us.

I. Harman asked, so the decision you're asking this body to make is to allow you to move forward to go back to the county?

J. Woolston stated no it is just to determine that it meets the definition of Blight.

J. Woolston stated I think you know if I'm being candid, I always try to be. I think they make this process a little bit circuitous, a little bit difficult, because it's a difficult thing to take somebody's property. It's a big deal so to make it as public and transparent as possible is probably the goal.

J. Woolston stated why this body was selected to do this, I don't really know. But that's what it is.

D. Maher asked do we come in at any other step in the process down the road?

J. Woolston stated as far as I know this is it. I mean, potentially the borough council could ask you to do something if you know if they really wanted to. But I think when it comes to acquiring a piece of land or trying to find a municipal or a local buyer it's probably going to be between the council and that person I don't think it would come back to the commission. For whatever reason they just want the planning commission to determine that this is in fact a blighted property, that's all you have to do.

J. Woolston stated if for some reason you, I don't think this is a blighted property then we would ask you to articulate why?

That Carlisle Borough Planning Commission recommends approval to designate the property located at 137 South East Street as "Blighted"

Motion by: I. Harman

Seconded by: J. Werner

5. Blighted Property Designation

- A. The Planning Commission may review and provide a recommendation to Borough Council to designate the property located at 156 South West Street as “Blighted.”

That Carlisle Borough Planning Commission recommends approval to designate the property located at 156 South West Street as “Blighted.”

Motion by: D. Maher

Seconded by: J. Werner

6. Blighted Property Designation

- A. The Planning Commission may review and provide a recommendation to Borough Council to designate the property located at 224 North Pitt Street as “Blighted.”

That Carlisle Borough Planning Commission recommends approval to designate the property located at 224 North Pitt Street as “Blighted.”

Motion by: R. James

Seconded by: J. Werner

7. Adjournment at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Woolston
Director of SCEP