

***City Planning Commission  
Erie, Pennsylvania  
February 20, 2018***

***-Minutes-***

The regular meeting of the City Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at **1:00 pm** in Council Chambers, City of Erie Municipal Building, 626 State Street, Erie PA.

1. *Call to Order / Roll Call*

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Thomas Dworzanski, Chair	X	
Don Marinelli, Vice-Chair		X
Armand Chimenti	X	
Mark Kloecker	X	
Richard Speicher	X	

Four of five members present; quorum achieved

2. *Approval of the January 16, 2018 meeting minutes.* On a motion by Mr. Kloecker, seconded by Mr. Speicher, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the January 16, 2018 meeting minutes as received.

3. *Review of the City of Erie Blighted Property Review Committee request that the City Planning Commission designate the following twelve (12) properties as blighted as that the same may be certified to the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie for action:*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 353/355 West 3rd Street</li> <li>• 441 East 5th Street</li> <li>• 534 East 8th Street</li> <li>• 710 East 8th Street</li> <li>• 706 West 10th Street</li> <li>• 616 East 13th Street</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1943 Buffalo Road</li> <li>• 416 Cherry Street</li> <li>• 515 Myrtle Street</li> <li>• 2417 Parade Street</li> <li>• 422 Poplar Street</li> <li>• 312 Walnut Street</li> </ul> |
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Scott Henry from the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie presented information to the members regarding the twelve properties; indicating that the properties have all been declared blighted by the Blighted Property Review Committee. The properties typically have multiple property maintenance and/or building code violations, delinquent taxes, and other issues which led to the blighted declaration. These properties have typically reached the end of the code enforcement cycle, usually because the property is abandoned and the owner cannot be located. He noted that appraisals have been completed and all properties

have been valued at zero; considering the cost of rehabilitating the structure to bring it up to code far exceeds the market or assessed value of the property.

Mr. Chimenti asked if the blighted properties could still be sold if a valid offer was received. Mr. Henry indicated that properties have been sold in the past; with the condition that the property owner has agreed to make the repairs to bring the building up to code. Not all properties designated as blighted are necessarily planned for demolition; there are cases where rehabilitation may be option depending on the condition of the structure. Mr. Henry also noted that sometimes the blight designation is the catalyst for the property owner to make the necessary repairs; in which case the blight designation can then be removed.

On a motion by Mr. Speicher, seconded by Mr. Kloecker, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to designate the twelve properties as blighted.

4. *Review of a proposed Demolition Delay Ordinance for a recommendation to City Council for any appropriate amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.*

Mr. Welsh indicated that the purpose of additional advertisement of this item from today's agenda was to hear additional input from members of the public or any interested parties, and opened the floor for comments.

Melinda Meyer, president of the Preservation Erie Board of Directors, was present to advocate for historic preservation and express support for the Demolition Delay Ordinance. Ms. Meyer referenced several recent community planning efforts including the City's Comprehensive Plan and Erie County Cultural Heritage Plan that recommend and support strategies for historic preservation efforts. She stressed the positive link between historic preservation and community and economic development goals. Ms. Meyer also described the 'Certified Local Government' designation opportunity that municipalities can qualify for if they adopt and implement historic preservation activities.

George Deutsch, Executive Director of the Erie County Historical Society, also expressed support for the Demolition Delay Ordinance. He stated that he did not feel the proposed 90-day delay for the demolition of historically significant structures would be overly burdensome to property owners or prospective purchasers of such properties. He indicated that since this would only apply to properties determined to be historically significant, other properties would not be affected by the proposed ordinance. He indicated that the historical society has worked with the City in the past to assist in verifying historic properties.

Councilmember Kathy Schaaf spoke in support of historic preservation in general, commenting on the potential tourism value of the City designating historic districts, as well as the positive educational opportunities for students and others to learn about Erie's history.

No other public comments were heard.

Commission members briefly discussed comments and edits on the proposed ordinance recently received from the City solicitor's office. It was noted that the solicitor's review appeared to be mostly a technical review of the proposed language, with no substantive changes being suggested or commented on. The edits were grammatical in nature.

There was discussion of whether the proposed demolition delay ordinance would be more suitable as a stand-alone ordinance/requirement versus the proposed amendment to the zoning ordinance. Mr. Welsh indicated that since the proposed ordinance applies to all properties within the City, regardless of the zoning district, and is specifically geared toward outlining requirements to obtain a demolition permit only, it doesn't necessarily fit into the typical zoning/land use approval process under the purview of the zoning ordinance. Ms. Meyer stated that the original concept of the ordinance was that it be considered as a stand-alone requirement.

Regarding historic preservation, Mr. Welsh stated that there are processes in place for documenting and certifying historic resources in PA. Ms. Meyer described the Federal National Register of Historic Places and PA Historic and Museum Commission roles. She also described the Historic Resource Inventory completed in Erie County in 2014 that documents the historic properties in the City of Erie. It was noted that the PHMC has expressed interest in working with the City to update the inventory.

Mr. Welsh stated that the existing Historic Resources Protection section [Article 7] of the zoning ordinance does provide for creation of a Historic Overlay District that identifies and maps historic resources. All applications within those districts for proposed alterations or improvements would be subject to review and approval. He stated that the City does not have an adopted Historic Overlay District map at this time, so the provisions of Article 7 are essentially dormant, but suggested that the update of the 2014 Inventory could be used in creating the Overlay District.

The planning commission members requested additional input from the solicitor's office to comment specifically on preparing the proposed demolition delay ordinance as a stand-alone ordinance. The members also requested additional input from the City planning director regarding comprehensive plan recommendations and strategies for historic preservation.

On a motion by Mr. Speicher, seconded by Mr. Kloecker, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to continue discussion on the item at the next meeting pending additional input from the solicitor's office and planning director.

5. *Review of existing regulations and proposed amendments to Section 306 – Conditional Uses – Waterfront Districts and 306.10 – Public Access – Waterfront Districts, of the City of Erie Zoning Ordinance for a recommendation to City Council for appropriate amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.*

Discussion centered on the recommendations contained in the recently approved final draft of the Port Authority Master Plan; which contains several comments and recommendations related to the land use and design regulations in the waterfront zoning districts. The plan recommends updating the conditional use approval standards in the zoning ordinance to eliminate vague language from the plan review criteria, and creating detailed development and design standards. Other zoning related recommendations in the plan include modifying permitted uses, off-street parking requirements, and building setback, height and density requirements in the waterfront zoning districts.

One of the recommendations directly related to the public access section [Section 306.10] of the zoning ordinance suggests expanding this section of the code to provide a clearer description of the preferred design of the public access way space. The plan recommends detailing design features including lighting, fencing, walkway width, pavement material, bollards, etc.

Commission members felt that trying to address all of the recommendations in the plan at one time may not be feasible. Members agreed the next step is to meet with port authority representatives to discuss and prioritize their recommendations. Members also requested the new City solicitor review the previous language that was submitted, and also that the City planning director be consulted for recommendations.

On a motion by Mr. Kloecker, seconded by Mr. Chimenti, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to continue discussion on the item at the next meeting pending additional input from the solicitor's office and planning director and additional coordination with the Port Authority.

6. *Being no further business; the Commission adjourned.*