
MEETING MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD
October 9, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Melosky, Chairman
Matthew Malozi, Vice Chairman
Joy Cohen
Richard Pongracz
Eddie Burgos

VISITORS PRESENT

Vince Gentilcore, 7 W Washington Ave
Mary Bachert, RLA, LLA. Bohler Engineering
Keith Krem, ENC, 23, LLC
Eric Bus, ENC, 23, LLC
Terry DeGroot, P.E. Terraform Engineering, LLC
Lee Snyder, Cathedral Church of Nativity

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Matthew Deschler, Esq., Asst. Solicitor
Cathy Fletcher, Bureau of Planning and Zoning
Craig Peiffer, Bureau of Planning & Zoning
Michael Simonson, Department of Code Enforcement

The October 9, 2025, meeting of Planning Commission held at the City of Bethlehem Town Hall was called to order by Chairperson, Robert Melosky at 5:00 PM.

AGENDA ITEM #1: APPROVAL OF MINUTES September 11, 2025.

Motion #1: Ms. Cohen made a motion to approve the minutes with the correction as noted from the September 11, 2025, meeting.

Second: Mr. Pongracz

Result of Vote: The Motion carried 4-0. Mr. Burgos abstained.

AGENDA ITEM #2: BLIGHTED PROPERTY

Property Location: 317 7th Avenue

Property Owner: Johnie Vereen

Proposed Work: The City of Bethlehem acquired information suggesting the above property may qualify as a blighted property. The Planning Commission has been asked for a recommendation as to whether the property appears to be blighted and for any planning recommendations which the Commission may have for the future use(s) of this property

Discussion: Mr. Simonson gave a presentation showing evidence of 317 7th Avenue's current state and explained why this property should be blighted. Mr. Simonson noted the front porch has collapsed and the foundation is in disrepair.

Mr. Melosky asked if Mr. Vereen currently lives there or rents out the dwelling. Mr. Simonson responded he believes Mr. Vereen has passed away and there is no subsequent person to accept the property.

Mr. Pongracz asked if there is anyone currently living at the property. Mr. Simonson stated the property is currently vacant.

Ms. Cohen asked if the Utilities have been shut off or disconnected. Mr. Simonson stated he has confirmation the electric has been disconnected by PPL. It is unknown if the gas service has been cut off by UGI; and according to City records, water has not been used at the property in years.

Public Comment: Vince Gentilcore, 7 West Washington Avenue, commended Mr. Simonson on following through and upholding the code.

Motion #2: Mr. Malozi made a motion to approve the proposed resolution determining 317 7th Avenue as blighted and approve the planning recommendation for future use of the property as per the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law and various City Ordinances including Article 149 of the City codified ordinances and to forward these recommendations of the blighted properties review committee and the City Development Authority.

Second: Mr. Burgos

Result of Vote: The Motion carried 5-0.

AGENDA ITEM #3: SKETCH PLAN

Property Location: 320 East 1st Street (Steel Ice Center)

Property Owner: ENC 23, LLC

Developer/Engineer: Boyle Construction, Inc.

Proposed Work: The applicant proposes to construct a 34,000 SF addition to the facility to contain a third ice rink, without spectator area, an ~6,000 SF fitness center and support facilities. No information has been submitted pertaining to off-street parking, and specifically the availability of parking on the lot across East First Street.

Discussion: Ms. Bachert gave an overview of the proposed expansion at the Steel Ice Center. There will be over an acre of disturbance occurring at the site which requires a NPDES permit. A parking lot with 250 spaces is across the street, created by the Steel Ice Center on Wind Creek's property. The Applicant has an agreement with Wind Creek to allow Steel Ice to utilize the parking lot. At the time of Land Development submission, a copy of this agreement will be provided to the City.

Mr. Peiffer talked about the City's review letter and noted the Traffic Superintendent has requested additional dialogue on potential impacts during consecutive events happening at the Steel Ice and the surrounding area. The Fire Marshall has asked for full access around the building. The Zoning Officer has noted missing street trees. The City's engineering concurred with Bohler Engineering there is no need for a traffic study.

Mr. Melosky asked if the Applicant is willing to comply with all comments in the City's review letter. Ms. Bachert affirmed the Applicant is willing to continue work with the City.

Mr. Malozi asked if any Zoning relief was needed for this project. Ms. Bachert answered no relief is needed. Mr. Malozi is in favor of this project but voiced concern of more traffic in the area.

Mr. Melosky agrees with Mr. Malozi and asked if there will be any change with the restaurant. Mr. Krem answered the restaurant will stay as there is a long-term lease. Mr. Melosky asked about the proposed gym in addition. Mr. Krem replied there is currently a gym on site run by St. Luke's and the proposed gym is an expansion of what is currently there.

Ms. Cohen asked if there were crosswalks from the parking lot across the street to Steel Ice Center. Mr. Krem replied there are crosswalks. Ms. Cohen asked how many parking spaces will be removed with the expansion. Ms. Bachert replied 13 spaces will be omitted, however, with the 250 parking spaces across the street it accommodates the offset.

Mr. Melosky asked if people who use the rink tend to park across the street and if the parking near the building is reserved for employees. Mr. Krem replied there is a mix, there are no reserves for employees, the lot across the street is used heavily. Mr. Melosky asked if the Applicant knew what logo will be placed on the building. Mr. Krem replied that St. Luke's logo will be put placed where the generic logo is on the rendering. Mr. Melosky asked if what the Commission is currently seeing is what the proposed addition will look like. Mr. Krem replied, the front of the building will look the same as it does now and the addition will tie into the existing structure's look.

Mr. Pongracz asked if all the ice rinks are utilized at the same time. Mr. Krem answered yes, there is an overlap between all three rinks. Mr. Pongracz asked how many people are in attendance in a given weekend. Mr. Krem answered their busiest weekends occur during Musikfest as the MS tournament is being held at the same time. At any given time, there are 12 teams at Steel Ice.

Mr. Melosky asked if the site is utilized by the high schools as well. Mr. Krem answered that is one of the reasons why the addition is proposed. The high schools currently use Bethlehem Municipal for their games. Right now, school hockey teams are not practicing. Lafayette College practices in New Jersey and have stated they want to move over to Steel Ice. Mr. Krem stated that some teams must practice in the early morning due to how booked the rinks become.

Mr. Melosky encourages more dialogue with the City and get confirmation of the parking lot.

AGENDA ITEM #4: SKETCH PLAN

Property Location: 321 Wyandotte Street

Property Owner: Cathedral Church of Nativity

Developer/Engineer: Terraform Engineering, LLC

Proposed Work: The applicant proposes demolishing the structures at 335-345 Shawnee Street and constructing a 26-car surface parking lot (to include a portion of Hastings

Street) and constructing six surface parking spaces at the rear of 228-232 West Third Street. This work is part of a phase of improvements proposed for the Cathedral Church of the Nativity; the master plan has been added to the sketch plan folder.

Discussion: Mr. DeGroot gave an overview of the proposed parking lot at the Church. The current parking lot for the church is also used by New Bethany. The expanded parking lot will improve parking for both parties involved. Mr. DeGroot noted that there will be some utility improvement to the site. Mr. DeGroot referenced the City's review letter. The City's Engineering Department requests a 3-foot sidewalk along Shawnee Street. However, the location where the sidewalk is requested has a retaining wall and a line of trees which makes constructing a sidewalk not possible. The Applicant also has questions regarding Hastings Street alley and where it ends, as the City asked the Applicant for information on Hastings Street, but they did not have records. A new sewer line and stormwater system will be installed with the parking lot expansion.

Mr. Lee stated that a letter was sent to Valley Taurus informing them of the church's plan to demolish the structure and expand the parking lot.

Mr. Peiffer spoke of the City's review letter and stated the City will continue dialogue addressing the items in the letter, specifically Public Works' comments regarding the sidewalk and Hastings Street. In the City's letter it is mentioned there is a possibility for green stormwater design and features and lights under the new SALDO. Mr. DeGroot noted they will look into the green stormwater and lights.

Attorney Deschler asked about the City's comment about Hastings Street being acquired and adding it to the property deed. Mr. DeGroot answered they had no records for the alley, and that the church only wants the portion of the alley that is currently on their property. Mr. Melosky stated this issue needs to be straightened out with the City as they move forward.

Mr. Melosky asked to see the location on the map where the sidewalk is requested, and the retaining wall is. Mr. DeGroot explained if the sidewalk must go in, the whole retaining wall needs to be replaced. Mr. Melsoky suggested the grass area in front of the wall could be changed to the sidewalk. Mr. DeGroot stated that it is possible but the width would not be 3 feet wide.

Ms. Cohen asked if the new Bethany employees would have to walk along Shawnee Street to get to their office. Mr. DeGroot stated the employees would go along Shawnee Street. Both employees and patrons would utilize the parking lot. Ms. Cohen spoke of her concern of New Bethany employees and patrons getting to and from the parking lot safely. Ms. Cohen also stated there is no way of getting from the proposed parking lot to the church. Mr. DeGroot explained handicapped parking would be accommodated in the upper parking lot on Wyandotte Street. Mr. DeGroot noted the 55 spaces the church has does not fit all who attend on weekends. Ms. Cohen asked if church goers would also use the lot. Mr. DeGroot answered yes, but not during the business hours of New Bethany. The church has an agreement with New Bethany for when the church can use the parking lot. Mr. DeGroot agrees with Ms. Cohen that

there are no handicap spots in the proposed lot. However, New Bethany has handicapped parking on Wyandotte, and the church has spots in their upper lots.

Mr. Melosky asked how the construction will impact traffic on the nearby streets. Mr. DeGroot stated that there will be a little more traffic, but would like to improve the driveways as well as the circulation within the parking lots.

Mr. Malozi asked if curbing is planned and if people can exit on to Hastings Street from Shawnee Street. Mr. DeGroot answered yes, and noted they are open to making it one-way, but would need to be two-way for resident access. Mr. Malozi said this is a good opportunity to add this access.

Attorney Deschler asked if there was a description of Hastings on the meets and bounds description. Mr. DeGroot answered no, that is where the issue of ownership is, more research needs to be done. Attorney Deschler asked what indicates Hastings Street on the church's lot. Mr. DeGroot answered, and old survey shows the alley but not where it ends. Mr. Melosky asked if the Applicant will continue dialogue with the City on this issue. Mr. DeGroot stated that they will.

Mr. Malozi asked if a sidewalk deferral would be submitted. Mr. DeGroot answered yes. Mr. Malozi asked for clarification if New Bethany employees and patrons would walk Shawnee Street. Mr. DeGroot answered they would walk along the street. Mr. Malozi voiced his concern on the matter.

AGENDA ITEM #5: DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Peiffer reviewed the upcoming Agenda items.

There being no further business, upon a Motion by Robert Melosky, a Second by Matthew Malozi, and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.

ATTEST:

Craig D. Peiffer, Commission Secretary