

Town of Amherst
Planning Advisory Committee
Minutes

Date: September 3, 2024
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Ronald Wilson, Citizen Representative, Chair
Councillor Hal Davidson, Vice Chair
Councillor Leon Landry
Councillor Charlie Chambers
Creighton McCarthy, Citizen Representative
Jim Lamplugh, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Andrew Fisher, Director of Planning & Strategic Initiatives
Torben Laux, Planner
Marc Buske, Building Official
Emily Wainwright, Dangerous/Unsightly Premises Administrator
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order.

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda and Acceptance of Minutes

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

The Chair indicated that the legal representative for the tenant at 19 Spring Street would not be available until 5:00 p.m. and therefore asked that the agenda be amended to address 77 Station Street first.

Moved By: Councillor Davidson

Seconded By: Creighton McCarthy

That the agenda of the Planning Advisory Committee be approved as amended.

Motion Carried

2.2 Acceptance of the Minutes - July 2, 2024

The Chair called for any errors or omissions in the minutes. There being none, the minutes of the July 2, 2024 meeting of the Planning Advisory Committee were accepted as included in the agenda package.

3. Unsightly / Dangerous Premises

3.1 77 Station Street

3.1.1 Staff Report

Emily Wainwright presented the issue of 77 Station Street (PID: 25124017) of its lack of maintenance and how the building was in serious disrepair and had partly collapsed. She presented her inspection reports showing the various structural, safety and health concerns with the building.

Councillor Hal Davidson asked about the part of the report when Nova Scotia Power was called out to examine and turn off the power to the property and it mentioned pie plating. Emily Wainwright answered that is a terminology that Nova Scotia Power uses when they remove the wires going to the building and puts a metal plate over the meter.

Jim Lamplugh asked if the property owner responded to any of the notices. Emily Wainwright answered no, any work that has been done has been done by contractors hired by the Town of Amherst.

Andrew Fisher asked Emily Wainwright about the process before a building is boarded up. Emily Wainwright described the process and the challenges it presents. The Amherst Police Department has been assisting with inspections of this particular property as the building is quite large and there are many hiding places for people to conceal themselves. Andrew Fisher said that during one of these inspections a person went undetected and was trapped in the building after it was boarded up.

3.1.2 Owner / Representative Questions/Comments to PAC

Walter Wells, the property owner of 77 Station Street was in attendance. Mr. Wells told the Committee that he wishes to keep the property and will do his best to secure the building. Gordon Wells, Walter Wells son, asked the Committee why they have not seen any notices of issues with this building before, and further asked who was the representative that was receiving the notices. He also wanted to know why the power was cut to the building and why the front door was boarded up.

The Chair asked Emily Wainwright what address she sent the notices to and what was the procedure on how the notices were handled. Emily Wainwright explained how the notices are to be mailed out and posted to the property according the Municipal Government Act.

3.1.3 Complainant / Representative Questions/Comments to PAC

The complainant was not in attendance.

The Chair stated that the Planning Advisory Committee will reconvene at a later date to make a recommendation to Council.

3.2 19 Spring Street

3.2.1 Staff Report

Emily Wainwright presented the issue of 19 Spring Street (PID: 25031626) of its lack of maintenance and how the building was in serious disrepair and had partly collapsed. She presented her inspection reports showing the various structural, safety and health concerns with the building.

Councillor Charlie Chambers said he feels sorry for the tenant and worries for her safety. Creighton McCarthy asked if there was a mold issue. Emily Wainwright answered that they would have to hire a professional to determine that. Marc Buske went into detail as to why the building is unsafe for habitation.

Councillor Hal Davidson asked if the unoccupied portion of the house posing the most threat could be removed. Marc Buske said if it was done the tenant could not be in building while the work is being completed. He added that the cost to have that portion removed would more than outweigh the value of the structure, and would require jacking up the building, adding it would not be a simple process.

Councillor Leon Landry asked if the Planning Advisory Committee have the authority to order the property owner to repair the unoccupied unit. Andrew Fisher answered that under the Municipal Government Act the Committee can order a remediation of the unsightly/ dangerous property either by repair, removal or by demolition. Andrew said that before there could be a repair we would need something from a qualified professional indicating what that scope of work would be.

3.2.2 Owner / Representative Questions/Comments to PAC

The property owner Walter Wells was in attendance. Walter told the Committee that Mrs. Hutchinson has been a tenant for over 40 years, and that he lived in the now unoccupied until his recent hospitalization. Walter said it looks like there have been some windows broken and he feels that there was a tap left running.

Zachary MacMillan with Nova Scotia Legal Aid discussed with the Planning Advisory Committee that the tenant, Mrs. Hutchinson who is 95 years old would like to stay in her unit. He further stated he is aware she has no standing with the Committee as she is just a tenant but was hoping the Committee could find a solution that will work for Mrs. Hutchinson.

3.2.3 Complainant / Representative Questions/Comments to PAC

The complainant was not in attendance.

The Chair stated that the Planning Advisory Committee will reconvene at a later date to make a recommendation to Council.

3.2.4 Written Submission to PAC

Information item included as part of the agenda package.

Councillor Leon Landry left the meeting at 6:08 PM.

**4. Application for Exterior Substantial Renovation of a Registered Heritage Property
- 96 Church Street**

Andrew Fisher presented the proposed changes to the design of the building.

Councillor Davidson expressed that he does not feel the proposed changes will take away from the architecture of the building.

Moved By: Councillor Davidson

Seconded By: Jim Lamplugh

That the Heritage Advisory Committee approve the substantial exterior alteration of the dwelling at 96 Church Street based on the sketch provided.

Motion Carried

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Ron Wilson
Chair