

North East Planning Commission  
August 12, 2025

**NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**North East Town Hall Meeting Room**  
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901  
Wednesday, August 12, 2025  
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present for the meeting included Commissioner Crothers-Moore, Members Judy Duffy, and Calvin Wilson. Also present included Grant Handley, Assistant Town Administrator, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant. Melissa B. Cook-MacKenzie, Zoning Administrator was not present due to a prior commitment.

**-MINUTES-**

May 27, 2025

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the May 27, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes and Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

**-OLD BUSINESS-**

None.

**-NEW BUSINESS-**

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Façade Grant Application Review

Mr. Handley explained that Towns and Counties were eligible to apply for a Façade Grant. The Town applied for a \$50,000 Façade Grant which was consistent with what other Towns had done.

Mr. Handley read, into the record, a letter to the Planning Commission which gave a brief summary of the 2025 Façade Improvement Grant Program for commercial properties. (letter attached)

Mr. Handley stated that there are two goals the Planning Commission may want to keep in mind while reviewing the applications:

1. Score each application with the rubric given. The scores will be tabulated and then the Planning Commission will decide how the funds will be allocated to the applicants. The Town has \$50,000 in Grant funding to allocate. There is a 50/50 match requirement. The applicant must fund 50 percent of the total project cost.
2. Revitalization for downtown North East.

Mr. Handley described the rubric for scoring the applications and stated that other things to consider would be the applicants readiness to start construction and their time table. Mr. Handley also reported that priority will be determined based on the

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property's zoning designation and all of the proposed projects that have been submitted fall under the Tier 1 category: General Commercial and Village Commercial. Mr. Handley added that there are some properties that may need a little more work than others and this should be taken into consideration when deliberating which applicant will be receiving what allocated amount. The Planning Commission should consider if the proposed project is going to contribute to the overall appearance of the Town. Mr. Handley clarified that if a business owner was also a tenant and wished to apply for grant funding, the tenant would need to have the property owner sign the application.

Chairman Dobbins commented that they may need to be very specific when allocating the funds depending on what is being requested. In addition, they will need to assure that the items on the list of repairs qualify as façade improvements.

The Planning Commission reviewed the following applications and made determinations based on the applications submitted:

1. Application submitted by Kerry Doordan for 10-14 South Main Street. A building containing multiple businesses. Proposed façade improvements: new windows and exterior framing, new door, repointing brick. Total Project Budget: \$20,000.

Mr. Handley commented that the applicant proposes to replace windows on the parking lot side of the building and although this is not the front of the building it does face a public parking lot. The Planning Commission concurred that this project meets the guidelines for the grant.

The Planning Commission unanimously allocated 50% of the applicant's project budget: \$10,000.00. The applicant will be required to match the other 50% of the cost of the project.

2. Application submitted by Kelli Berkeridge for 125 South Main Street. Business: Sissy's Floral and Gifts. Proposed façade improvement: a new sign. Total Project Budget: \$1000.00 to \$2,800.00.

The applicant submitted three quotes. The Planning Commission determined that the first proposed sign did not meet the North East Zoning Regulations as it was for an LED sign.

The Planning Commission discussed the other two sign proposals and determined to allocate a portion of the grant funds for a new sign as long as the sign is compliant with the North East Zoning Regulations.

The Planning Commission unanimously allocated \$503.50 toward the applicant's project budget. The applicant will be required to match the other 50% of the cost of the project.

3. Application submitted by Kathy Roff for 100 South Main Street. Business: Kathy's Corner Store. Proposed façade improvement: painting the building, repair holes in the wall, new front porch, and fix the back sidewalk. Project Budget: \$30,000.00.

Ms. Roff has submitted three proposals. Mr. Handley reported that Ms. Roff intends on applying for the Town's Loan Revitalization Program to meet the other 50% that she is required to pay. The Planning Commission commented that all of the repairs seem to be justified and clearly identified through the pictures submitted with the application. Although, the sidewalk in the rear of the structure is listed, this is a corner property and it is visible to the public and therefore should be included under this project.

The Planning Commission unanimously allocated 50% of the applicant's project budget: \$15,000.00. The applicant will be required to match the other 50% of the cost of the project.

4. Application submitted by Peter Wood for 23 South Main Street, Woody's Ice Cream Alley. Proposed project: Replace, restore and repair exterior doors, windows and shutters, paint the exterior of the building, gutter repair and replacement. Total Budget: \$35,000.00.

Mr. Wood submitted two estimates. Mr. Wilson commented that some of the items listed seemed to be regular maintenance items and was not sure if they should be included in the proposed project list. The Planning Commission concurred however, the items listed are part of the façade and would help the appearance of the building.

The Planning Commission unanimously allocated 50% of the applicant's project budget: \$17,500.00. The applicant will be required to match the other 50% of the cost of the project.

5. Application submitted by Robert Crouch for 131 South Main Street. Proposed project: Multiple renovations to the building which is currently under renovation due to a fire. Project budget: \$118,679.00.

Mr. Handley reported that this application did not meet the Town's Guidelines for the grant application requirements as the grant applicant may not start any work until the contract committing to complete the project has been fully executed. Mr. Handley reported that the proposed projects included siding that had already been installed. The Planning Commission, however, should have an opportunity to review this application. Mr. Wilson inquired if the property owner had begun the project but ran out of funding to complete the project, would they then be eligible for this grant funding. Mr. Handley replied no, although the Town Administration is sympathetic and recognizes the unfortunate timing, the project had begun prior to the application and before the contract committing to complete the project was executed. Commissioner Crothers-Moore reported that the renovations for this property are pursuant to a fire and fire insurance claim. Mr. Handley added that the applications and projects are reviewed by the State for compliance with the grant. The Planning Commission unanimously concurred this project was not eligible for this grant as the project had begun prior to the execution of the grant contract and therefore it does not meet the Town of North East Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program Instructions (and guidelines).

6. North East Methodist Church, 308 South Main Street. Proposed project: repair and restore stained glass windows. Project Budget: \$46,092.93.

Mr. Handley reported that this application did not meet the State of Maryland Requirements for this grant, as this grant is solely for the improvement of the outside appearance of a commercial business's building or facility. Therefore, churches and religious entities are not eligible for this grant. The Planning Commission, however, should have an opportunity to review the application. The Planning Commission unanimously concurred that this application is not eligible for this grant as it does not meet the State of Maryland Requirements as this grant is for commercial properties only.

Mrs. Vennell commented that all of the applications, except for the two that do not qualify for the grant, could potentially be approved for 50% of their total project amounts as the total is less than \$50,000.00.

The Planning Commission unanimously allocated \$43,003.50 of the façade grant funds with a remaining balance of \$6,906.50.

Chairman Dobbins stated that there are several other commercial properties on Main Street that could have benefited from this grant. For instance, the old Dollar General building (6 South Main Street).

Mr. Handley reported that the grant application was advertised on the Towns website, Chamber of Commerce website, Facebook and the Cecil Whig. Mr. Handley added that the property owners have 2 years per the State Requirements to complete the project. In addition, the property owner will have to submit a copy of an itemized bill. Mr. Handley stated that the administration will send out letters with the Planning Commissions allocation results.

#### -REPORTS-

Mrs. Vennell distributed the September 2, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Package to the Planning Commission.

#### -MISCELLANEOUS-

##### Planning Commission Meeting Dates and Times

Chairman Dobbins commented that he would prefer the Planning Commission meetings and Comprehensive Plan workshops be held on the first Tuesday of every month according to the Planning Commission Annual Meeting Schedule due to interference with the Planning members schedules. Mrs. Vennell confirmed that she would reschedule the future workshops accordingly.

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North East Preserve

Mr. Handley reported that the Town received a grant for \$70,000 for the removal of trash and debris from the North East Preserve Site. The clean-up will be conducted in the fall after the some of the weeds and grasses die off. Mr. Handley also reported that the Town has applied for a NOAA grant and should hopefully hear back this month.

Dredging Project

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there has been any word on the North East River dredging project. Mr. Handley reported that it is supposed to start this fall but has not heard any recent updates.

-NEXT MEETING-

The Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee workshop has been scheduled for Thursday August 20, 2025 as agreed to by the Planning Commission members. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be September 2, 2025.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 PM. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

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Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant

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Mark Dobbins, Chairman

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