

**CITY OF BRENHAM
BUILDING AND STANDARDS COMMISSION MINUTES**

May 15, 2025

The meeting minutes herein are a summarization of meeting procedures, not a verbatim transcription.

A regular meeting of the Building and Standards Commission (BSC) was held on May 15, 2025, at 4:00 P.M. in the Brenham Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, at 200 West Vulcan Street, Brenham, Texas.

Commissioners present:

Arlen Thielemann, Chair
Matthew Metzger, Vice Chair
Marshall Bevers
Walt Edmunds
Richard Morris

Commissioners absent:

None

Staff present:

Stephanie Doland, Director of Development Services
Allen Jacobs, Building Official
David Doelitsch, Assistant Building Official
Mark Pierce, Environmental Health Specialist
Steven Loving, Fire Marshal
Cary Bovey, City Attorney
Kim Hodde, Planning Technician

Citizens/others present:

Jason Vestuto

Media present:

None

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Thielemann called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. with a quorum of five (5) Commissioners present.

2. Public Comments and Receipt of Petitions

There were no public comments and/or receipt of petitions.

3. Reports and Announcements

- Allen Jacobs, Building Official, gave the Board an update on the status of various substandard building cases that are currently in process. Mr. Jacobs stated that in 2024, notices were sent to eight (8) property owners regarding nine (9) substandard buildings and compliance was achieved for all but three (3) structures. He stated that one of the cases is being brought before the board tonight and the other two will likely be forthcoming at a later meeting since the owners have indicated that they will be addressing the substandard conditions; however, no progress has been made to date.
- Kim Hodde advised the Board that the City Secretary's office is starting the Board appointment/re-appointment process early this year. Terms of office for Arlen Thielemann and Walt Edmunds will be expiring in December 2025 so if they wish to serve another term, Kim Hodde has the form for them to fill out.

4. Discuss and Possibly Act Upon Approval of the Minutes from the April 3, 2025, Building and Standards Commission meeting.

Chairman Thielemann asked for any corrections or additions to the minutes. Kim Hodde stated that a revised set of minutes was placed on the dais since she had listed Roger Morris as the Vice Chair instead of Matthew Metzger. A motion was made by Commissioner Metzger and seconded by Commissioner Morris to approve the minutes from April 3, 2025, Building and Standards Commission meeting, as corrected.

Chairman Thielemann called for a vote. The motion passed with the Commissioners voting as follows:

Thielemann	Yes
Metzger	Yes
Bevers	Yes
Edmunds	Yes
Morris	Yes

5. Conduct a hearing regarding Case Number 2025-01 regarding the property located at 703 W. Main Street and further described as Lot 15 A of the West Main Street Addition aka DB Williams, Lot 3 which has been determined by the Building Official to be a substandard building.

Chair Thielemann opened the Public Hearing on Case Number 2025-01 at 4:06 pm. Chair Thielemann administered the Oath of Office to Allen Jacobs, Building Official, and Stephanie Doland, Development Services Director.

Allen Jacobs presented the Findings on Substandard Building Case No. 2025-01.

January 14, 2025: The Building Official and Fire Marshal inspection reports were completed. The dwelling has structural deterioration consisting of failing structural members under the dwelling and structural columns at the front porch, inadequate sanitary plumbing, broken

windows, deteriorated eaves, and the dwelling is unsecured and exposed to the weather elements. The Accessory Building(s) are deteriorated and/or the wall systems that have buckled have created leaning structures that are prone to possibly collapse. There is evidence of uninvited (transient) person(s) on the property and within the substandard dwelling.

Recap – Brief Timeline

- September 2024: A courtesy notification was sent to the owner of record; however, the notice was returned.
- October 2024: Legal notification was sent to the owner of record; however, the notice was returned. It was discovered that the apparent owner of record was deceased.
- November 2024: The City of Brenham orders a title search on the property.
- January 2025: The City of Brenham exercises a premises search warrant and inspection reports are completed by the Building Official and the Fire Marshal.
- January 2025: The City of Brenham secures the doors and contracts to have weedy and overgrown lot maintained and junk and trash removed from the property.
- April 2025: It was discovered that the property was scheduled to be auctioned for unpaid property taxes. One week later, the City of Brenham was contacted by an apparent heir of the property who had paid the outstanding taxes on the property; therefore, the property was pulled from the tax sale.
- April 2025: Heir (Jason Vestuto) contacts the City of Brenham
 - Mr. Vestuto's intent is to cooperate with the City of Brenham in abating the substandard conditions as soon as possible.
 - The owner plans to monitor the property regularly, take over the mowing, have the junk inside removed, have the house boarded up, and install no trespassing signage.
 - The owner has communicated with the local Police Department and has provided his contact information to them.
 - The owner has communicated with adjoining and nearby residents and has provided his contact information to them as well.
 - The heirship case was filed in Washington County Court on March 27, 2025, and the heirship court date is tentatively scheduled for May 27, 2025.
 - The owner plans to coordinate rehabilitation or demolition of the dwelling as outlined in an email correspondence dated May 12, 2025.

Staff Analysis and Findings

- The Building Official recommendation is that the dwelling and outbuildings are substandard and recommend demolition.
- As of April 24, 2025, the owner has made his intentions known:
 - The owner/heir has taken action to secure and clean up the premises and to take an active role to abate the substandard conditions.
 - The owner/heir has plans to oversee the abatement and any activity on the property.
 - The owner/heir has paid back due taxes.
 - The owner/heir has provided a written plan with a schedule.

At this point, Chairman Thielemann swore in the heir/property owner, Jason Vestuto.

Jason Vestuto asked if there are any additional steps that need to be taken to secure the building prior to his heirship hearing on May 27th? Staff responded that the building is secure; therefore, no further steps need to be taken at this time. Mr. Vestuto did not have any other questions for the Building Official or City Staff. The Building and Standards Commission did not have any further questions for the Building Official or City Staff.

Mr. Vestuto provided background information on the case:

- His parents divorced in 1974, and his father raised him.
- For over 30 years, he has had little or no contact with his mother, Ruth Vestuto.
- Both of his parents were only children, so it was not a large family.
- Mr. Vestuto learned of his mother's passing in late 2024 although she passed away in January 2024.
- Mr. Vestuto has hired an attorney and has filed for heirship.
- From what he has discovered, it appears that his mother may have suffered for many years with mental illness.
- The utilities to the house have been disconnected since 2012 or 2013.

Mr. Vestuto has contacted the Brenham Police Department and various neighbors who state that since the property has been boarded up, no trespassers have been seen. He wants to make sure that he has ownership of the property before expending any additional expenses. He provided the following timeline of events:

- Once he was made aware of the unpaid property taxes and impending tax sale, he paid the delinquent property taxes.
- He found the notice of the substandard building and contacted Allen Jacobs.
- On April 29th, there was a trespasser, so he contacted Brenham Police Department, and they were issued a criminal trespass.
- On April 30th, he paid the 2024 property taxes.
- On May 1st, he received the court date notification.
- On May 2nd, mowing of the property was completed.
- On May 4 and May 11th, the building was secured.

Mr. Vestuto noted that this project may be larger than he anticipated. He has received a couple of cash offers for the property already so he has contacted several realtors to get fair market value. He is evaluating the project to determine a plan of action – rehabilitation versus demolition or sell the property as-is. If the rehab is done, he would likely partner with someone to get it done. Mr. Vestuto is hopeful to have a plan by the time of the heirship judgement. He noted that he was told that it could take up to 4 weeks to get the heirship finalized and recorded.

Commissioner Morris asked if the property was sold, would the new owners know about the substandard status. Cary Bovey, City Attorney, replied that the City of Brenham Ordinance has a provision that states that the owner cannot sell the property unless the owner provides the Substandard Building Order to the purchaser then the new owner will be required to adhere to the order.

Mr. Vestuto stated that there is also approximately \$2,500 in mowing bills owed. He asked if this was a firm amount and if it could be put on hold until heirship has been established. Stephanie Doland stated that his questions would be forwarded to the City Secretary.

The Buildings and Standards Commission nor the Building Official or City staff did not have any further questions for the property owner/heir.

There were no Persons of Interest in attendance for this hearing.

There was no rebuttal from the Building Official

Chair Thielemann stated As Chairman of the Building and Standards Commission, I hereby incorporate into the record of this hearing and testimony, documents, records, and additional evidence presented by the Building Official and other City representatives, the Property Owner(s), Person(s) of Interest and any other persons who testified with no exceptions of evidence.

Chair Thielemann closed the Public Hearing on Case Number 2025-01 at 4:42 pm.

6. Discuss and Possibly Act Upon Case Number 2025-01 regarding the property located at 703 W. Main Street and further described as Lot 15 A of the West Main Street Addition aka DB Williams, Lot 3 which has been determined by the Building Official to be a substandard building.

The Board deliberated the evidence presented for this case.

A motion was made by Matthew Metzger to defer all action on this case until such time that heirship has been legally established. The motion died due to lack of a second.

A motion was made by Walt Edmunds to order the buildings substandard but to defer any timeline for demolition or repair of the property until such time that heirship has legally been established. The motion died due to lack of a second.

A motion was made by Richard Morris and seconded by Matthew Metzger to find that the dwelling and outbuilding structures are substandard buildings, and to allow time for heirship to be finalized, **order** that the accessory (out) buildings are secured within 30-days, **order** that the accessory (out) buildings are demolished and removed within 60-days of the heirship being finalized, and allow additional time for remediation plans for the dwelling unit and defer Commission decision for reconsideration on August 7, 2025.

Chairman Thielemann called for a vote. The motion passed with the Commissioners voting as follows:

Thielemann	Yes
Metzger	Yes
Bevers	Yes
Edmunds	Yes
Morris	Yes

8. Adjourn

A motion was made by Commissioner Metzger and seconded by Commissioner Edmunds to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

The City of Brenham appreciates the participation of our citizens, and the role of the Building and Standards Commissioners in this decision-making process.

Certification of Meeting Minutes:

Arlen Thielemann
Building & Standards Commission

Arlen Thielemann
Chair

August 21, 2025
Meeting Date

Kim Hodde
Attest

Kim Hodde
Staff Secretary

August 21, 2025
Meeting Date