

**Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 12:00 p.m.**

A regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on December 18, 2024.

Attendees: Taylor Koch, David Mott, Solveig Spjeldnes, Darius Pierce, Sean McMickle, Eric Lucas, Gabriel Scom, Jeff Risner, Mark Welch, Alan Swank, Jan McCauley, Chris McCauley, Kay Rhyan, Machel Stewart, Sharon Walker, Jerry Millier, Andy Vogt, Andrew Guidarelli, Jon Cozad, Tony Bertino, Carol Grueser, Aaron Leatherwood

1. Call to Order

John Kotowski called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:03p.m. and administered the oath to those in the audience intending to speak before the commission. Quorum established with four members present.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Chris Knisely	Present
John Kotowski, Chair	Present
Steve Patterson, Mayor	Absent
Austin Phillips, Vice-Chair	Present
Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director	Present

STAFF:

David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director	Present
Meghan Jennings, City Planner	Present

John Kotowski made a motion to adjust the agenda and hear the communication item from Jon Cozad after the disposition of minutes. Motion passed 4:0.

2. Disposition of Minutes

Austin Phillips moved to approve December 4, 2024 minutes. Chris Knisely seconded. Motion passed 4:0.

3. Cases

Case #24-07 Zone Change Request/0 Pomeroy Road

John Kotowski explained that this request was heard by the Planning Commission in November as a communication and as a case. The Planning Commission approved the case and sent it to City Council for review. At City Council there was an inconsistency discovered in the application submitted to the Code Enforcement Office. After the City Law Director reviewed the application, it was sent back to the applicant to correct and resubmit it to the Code Enforcement Office.

Sean McMickle/Spire Development

- Mr. McMickle gave a brief overview of the project and proceeded to address the questions and concerns that residents communicated at the December 9th City Council meeting:
 - Flooding concerns – Spire believes that this development will improve the stormwater situation in the area. The project design has had comprehensive engineering review. Mark Welch with Pickerington Associates, has been engaged to help with design. Stormwater protection plans will be in place during construction.
 - Unsafe increase in traffic – a certified traffic engineer conducted a study on the development and the impact it will have during peak trip hours and traffic flow. This is a small-scale development in line with the existing situation.
 - Increase in crime – Spire is always actively engaged with their projects. There will be interior and exterior surveillance cameras at the site.
 - Not enough market demand - this is a specific type of housing that focuses on workforce housing. Research indicates that there in fact is a shortage of this type of housing in the community.
 - More projects like this are proposed in this census tract – this is the highest scoring census tract in Ohio for this type of funding. Currently there are two projects being proposed. If both are approved for rezoning the state will select the project with the most units.

Commission Discussion

- The estimated monthly rent for a 1-bedroom unit will be \$350-\$850, for a 2-bedroom unit will be \$420-\$1,150, and for a 3-bedroom unit will be \$480-\$1,300. Income qualification is 30-80% of area median income. Potential tenants must apply and meet income eligibility.
- This project will compete with Woda Cooper project.
- Austin Phillips noted that the traffic study that was conducted before the Kershaw Greene project located off SR 682 across the road from University Estates, was accurate because there have been no issues with increased traffic flow now that the development is completed.

Public Comments

- S. Spjeldnes – The opinion of the City of Athens Affordable Housing Commission is that there is a need for housing in Athens. University Estates property values have not changed since the Kershaw Greene development was completed. She prefers the Pomeroy location over Hooper but would like to see both developments.
- A. Guidarelli /W. Washington St.– Hard to find housing in Athens, desperately a need. There is a growing homeless crisis in Athens. Concerned about the location of this project (need for sidewalks and crosswalks. It will increase dependency on cars.
- C. McCauley – Concerned about the needs of the tenants at this location. There are not many stores on Richland Avenue.
- A. Vogt/business owner on Richland – This development will increase impermeable surfaces which will worsen the already flood prone area. There is an Army Corp study in progress so no action should be taken until the report is submitted.

- A. Swank/40 Townsend – Expressed concern about the future for the two sites selected by the developers (Spire and Hill Tide). If the Planning Commission approves both for rezoning and they are both approved by City Council, only one of the sites will be selected by OFA to proceed. Mr. Swank asked if the unselected site could return to the original zoning.
 - David Riggs and John Kotowski noted that the city is planning to look holistically at several areas in the city to determine whether the zoning is appropriate. The zoning can be reversed by submitting a request to the Planning Commission.
- A. Leatherwood/Coventry Lane – The resubmitted application was not signed by the property owner so this needs to be resubmitted again before the Planning Commission continues with this case. He submitted a petition that states this.
 - David Riggs noted that he shared the resubmitted application with the Law Director but has not heard back from her whether she accepts the signature.
 - Sean McMickle with Spire noted that the application is correct and includes supporting documentation that shows that Craig Kennedy (who signed the application) is the trustee of the trust.

The Planning Commissioners discussed the resubmitted application and whether to table the case until a legal opinion is given by the Law Director. Waiting for the Army Corp of Engineers' report was also mentioned as a reason to table the case.

Andy Stone made a motion to approve Case #24-07, rezoning the parcels in question to R-3. Austin Phillips seconded the motion. The motion passed 3:1 (Chris Knisely voted nay).

Case #24-10 Zone Change Request/111 Hooper Street

Taylor Koch/Hill Tide Partners, LLC

- 5.13 acres located at 111 Hooper Street.
- The request is to rezone eight parcels, which are currently a mix of R-1 and R-2, to R-3.
- Hill Tide will be applying for 9% Tax Credits. OFA application is due in February.
- 60-80 units, single family units are planned in the future if an annexation succeeds. This will be financed by SFTC.
- Mr. Koch proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of how Hill Tide selected this site. It is in Census Tract 9733 and is the only site in the area that will score well. It is adjacent to existing R-3 zoning.
- Hill Tide held a public meeting at the Athens Public Library on 12/17/24 to demonstrate their commitment to public outreach. They will hold additional public meetings.
- They have approached Athens Public Transit with the idea of adding a bus stop at this location. A stop would also benefit Monticello Village which is across the street.

Commission Discussion

- There was only one citizen at the public meeting, but they were positive about the project, according to John Kotowski who was also present at the meeting.

- Andy Stone pointed out that this site will be much harder to develop than the site on Pomeroy Road and cautioned that engineering review must be comprehensively and fully undertaken, and not done “halfway.” Connecting to the city’s infrastructure will be a challenging task.
- If the rezoning is approved and this moves on to a Title 41 review which is then refused, the tax credit funding would be returned to the state.

Public Comment

- A. Guidarelli/W. Washington St. – expressed concerns about this site and its lack of walkability and accessibility. He also thought that there were other areas in Athens that could be developed that already have access to transit, sidewalks, and city infrastructure. Rezoning holistically for Athens is a need.

Chris Knisely made a motion to approve Case #24-10, rezoning the eight parcels to R-3. Andy Stone seconded the motion. Motion passed 4:0.

4. **Communications**

Ohio University Translational Research Center Jonathon Cozad, Associate VP of Design and Construction

Jonathon Cozad proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the NIH funded project located in South Green on West Union Street.

Key Points and Discussion

- This is a 4-story 80,000 square foot structure.
- The facility differs from most translation research facilities in that it includes a public health clinic, a human research facility and an animal research facility.
- Non-conformities with Athens City Code are:
 - Height is above the maximum, at 64 feet.
 - Front yard setback is below the minimum at 13 feet.
 - Meghan Jennings noted that because the city updated the bulk controls earlier this year, the above listed non-conformities are in line with the new ACC bulk controls.
- The facility is designed to reduce the footprint and preserve green space.
- The animal research currently conducted in Konneker at the Ridges, will be moved to the new facility. Future use of Konneker is undetermined.
- Accessible with patient drop off located in the rear with the area protected by a canopy.
- Completion projected to be fall of 2026.

Changes to ACC Chapter 23.09 David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director

David Riggs/Overview

Mr. Riggs and the City Planner submitted recommended changes to Athens City Code Chapter 23.09. Mr. Riggs reviewed the suggested changes in the marked-up document that was included

in the commissioner's packets (attached for reference). The suggested changes are to better involve the public in the process and include signage in the area after the Planning Commission "communication" step and before the Planning Commission "case" step. This will be similar to how Title 41 requests are handled.

5. **Reports from Director of Development & Code Enforcement and City Planner**

David Riggs/Code Enforcement Director

- No report

Meghan Jennings/City Planner

- No report

6. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

None

7. **Announcements & Other Business**

- Next meeting January 15, 2025

8. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:59 p.m.