

Athens City Planning Commission

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 – 11:30 a.m.

A regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on March 19, 2025, at 11:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair **John Kotowski** called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. and administered the oath to those in the audience intending to speak before the Commission. A quorum was 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 – Absent

Staff Present:

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

2. Disposition of Minutes

Motion: Chris Knisely moved to approve the minutes from the February 19, 2025, meeting.

Second: Austin Phillips.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Cases

No cases were presented.

4. Communications

Zone Change Request – 111 Hooper Street

Presenter: Taylor Koch, Development Officer, Hill Tide Partners

Summary:

Mr. Koch presented a request for a zoning change from R1 and R2 to R3 to facilitate multi-

family housing development. The proposal is aligned with the Athens 2040 Comprehensive Plan and is designed to utilize low-income housing tax credits.

Discussion & Clarifications:

- The prior application was rescinded and resubmitted due to changes in ownership structure.
 - Commission members discussed address discrepancies, hillside stability concerns, and utility infrastructure.
 - The formal vote on the zoning request is scheduled for April 2, 2025.
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Ohio University Golf and Tennis Center – Parking Lot Expansion

A university representative was absent. **David Riggs** provided an overview based on prior discussions.

Key Issues:

- The proposed spoil area is within a floodway, requiring relocation or a floodplain permit.
 - Tree removal has been minimized, but the exact number of replantings remains unspecified.
 - The project is exempt from Planning Commission review due to university status but must comply with floodplain regulations.
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Title 41 Application – Blackburn Landing

Presenter: Sean McMickle, Spire Development

Summary:

- Proposed 50-unit multifamily affordable housing project.
- Zoning is compliant (R3 Multi-Family).
- Infrastructure concerns: pedestrian access, water pressure, sewer capacity, and fire truck accessibility.

Discussion:

- Shared-use path to be developed outside of ODOT right-of-way.
- Traffic concerns: ODOT is conducting an intersection analysis at Blackburn Road.
- Engineering review underway: water pressure tests, sewer capacity, and fire truck access assessments.

The application is scheduled for further review on April 2, 2025.

5. Reports

Zoning Review – Lancaster, Columbus Road & Second Street

Presenter: Meghan Jennings, City Planner

Summary:

- Proposed B2 and B3 zoning to better align with land use.
- The city may vacate some right-of-way acquired in the 1960s.
- The proposal includes buffer zones between business and residential areas.
- Public engagement will be encouraged before advancing to City Council.

Discussion:

- Public meetings and signage were suggested to keep residents informed.
 - Concerns about R1 residential areas being too close to B3 business zones were raised.
 - Legal non-conformities: Changes aim to reduce zoning inconsistencies but some properties may be grandfathered in.
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Budedria Hills Subdivision – Private Road Concerns

Presenter: David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director

Summary:

- Private roads within the 1993 Budedria Hills subdivision were initially intended as public roads.
 - Legal review is pending, and the Planning Commission will be updated accordingly.
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6. Opportunity for Public Comment

- **Alan Swank** emphasized early public engagement in zoning matters to prevent community concerns from surfacing too late in the process.

- **Chris Knisely** inquired about zoning coordination efforts for the South Side and Old Pomeroy Road, to which **Ms. Jennings** responded that the review was a necessary response to active applications.
 - **Chair Kotowski** expressed concerns about balancing public input with development efficiency.
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7. Announcements & Other Business

Cornerstone at Eclipse Run – 53 Johnson Road, The Plains

Discussion:

- The city received notification of a proposed 58-unit multifamily development within a 1.5-mile radius of Athens city limits.
 - **Concerns:**
 - High-density development conflicting with neighborhood character.
 - Traffic congestion near Athens City Schools due to limited access via Johnson Road.
 - Infrastructure strain and potential impacts on annexation considerations.
 - **Next Steps:**
 - The city has limited authority but may provide comments to the developer.
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8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Monica Flowers, Secretary, Athens City Planning Commission