

# Athens City Planning Commission

## Minutes of Regular Meeting

Wednesday, April 2, 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 April 2, 2025, at 11:30 a.m.

### 1. Call to Order

Chair John Kotowski called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m. and administered the oath to those in the audience intending to speak before the Commission. A quorum was established.

#### Planning Commission Members:

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

#### Staff Present:

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

### 2. Disposition of Minutes

**Motion:** Mr. Phillips moved to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2025, meeting.

**Second:** Ms. Knisely

**Vote:** Motion passed 3:0 with Mr. Patterson and Mr. Stone abstaining.

### 3. Cases

#### Case 25-01: 111 Hooper Street Zone Change Request

**Applicant:** Taylor Koch, Hill Tide Partners

**Proposal:** Rezoning eight parcels from R1/R2 to R3 for a 50+ unit multi-family affordable housing project.

#### Applicant Presentation

- The project site consists of 18.45 acres, with 5.13 acres within Athens and 13.32 acres in Athens Township.
- The proposed R3 zoning aligns with adjacent Monticello Village.

- The project supports the Athens 2040 comprehensive plan, addressing affordable housing needs and urban infill development.
- Market study indicates a 6% capture rate, reflecting strong demand for affordable housing.
- Nearby property owners were notified via postal mail.

### **Commission Discussion**

- **Transit Accessibility:** Ms. Knisely inquired about bus routes; the nearest stop is a half-mile away.
- **Public Transit Expansion:** Mr. Kotowski suggested the city discuss service expansion with HAPCAP.
- Concerns were raised about sewer capacity and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Concerns raised over zoning changes being made without guaranteed LIHTC funding. Mr. Koch clarified they are pursuing the new Ohio Statewide 4% credit paired with a state-level credit—noncompetitive with the other current LIHTC applicant.
- The project will comply with Athens' outdoor illumination regulations.
- Concerns were raised whether the development is contingent upon annexation of adjacent parcels. Mr. Mott confirmed annexation is desirable but not required for current development.

### **Motion and Vote**

- **Motion:** Ms. Knisely moved to recommend approval of the zoning change to the City Council.
- **Second:** Mr. Stone
- **Vote:** Motion passed 5:0

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## **Case 25-02: Blackburn Landings - Title 41 Application**

**Applicant:** Sean McMickle, Spire Development

**Proposal:** 50-unit affordable housing project at 142 Albany Road, already zoned R3.

### **Applicant Presentation**

- Mr. McMickle confirmed no material changes to the project since the previous presentation.
- Committed to assisting with shared-use path design to enhance pedestrian infrastructure in the area.
- Acknowledged pending review by the Shade Tree Commission and agreed to comply with any recommendations made.
- Undergoing engineering analysis to confirm lift station capacity; committed to necessary upgrades if current infrastructure is insufficient.
- The project is independently viable and not reliant on a future phase.

- The current development was awarded 9% competitive tax credits in 2024, with no guarantee or commitment for additional phases.
- The development is consistent with local planning goals and zoning regulations.
- Traffic impacts are minimal:
  - According to ITE standards, peak hour traffic is estimated at 25 trips.
  - This falls well below the thresholds for requiring a Traffic Impact Study (200 trips) or a Traffic Analysis (60 trips) per ODOT guidelines.
  - The development is consistent with local planning goals and zoning regulations.

### Public Concerns

- *Traffic Impact:* Nearby residents raised concerns about increased traffic through adjacent properties.
- *Sewer Lift Station Capacity:* Developer committed to upgrades if needed.
- *Pedestrian Safety & Access:* City working with the developer to improve connectivity.
- Mr. Leatherwood emphasized unsafe conditions at Andover Road access point. He suggested exploring alternate access via Blackburn Road on adjacent developer-controlled parcel.

### Motion and Vote

- **Motion:** Mr. Patterson moved to accept the Title 41 application for 142 Albany Road with the following conditions:
  - Further design development of the shared use path.
  - Evaluation and/or enhancement of lift station capacity.
  - Notification and coordination with the Shade Tree Commission prior to proceeding.
- **Second:** Mr. Stone
- **Vote:** Motion passed 5:0

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## 4. Communications

### Shade Tree Code Changes

#### Proposed Changes:

- Amend Title 9 to include invasive plant species and exempt large lots from certain requirements.
- Simplify tree calculation requirements (1 tree per 4,500 sq ft).
- Exempt manufacturing zones from landscaping plans.
- Ensure city retains regulatory authority over shade tree coverage.

### Discussion & Next Steps

- Concerns about balancing development needs with tree coverage requirements.
  - A request was made for additional input from the Shade Tree Commission before the next meeting.
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## **5. Reports**

No reports were given

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## **6. Opportunity for citizens to speak about items not covered on agenda**

No citizens spoke

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## **7. Announcements & Other Business**

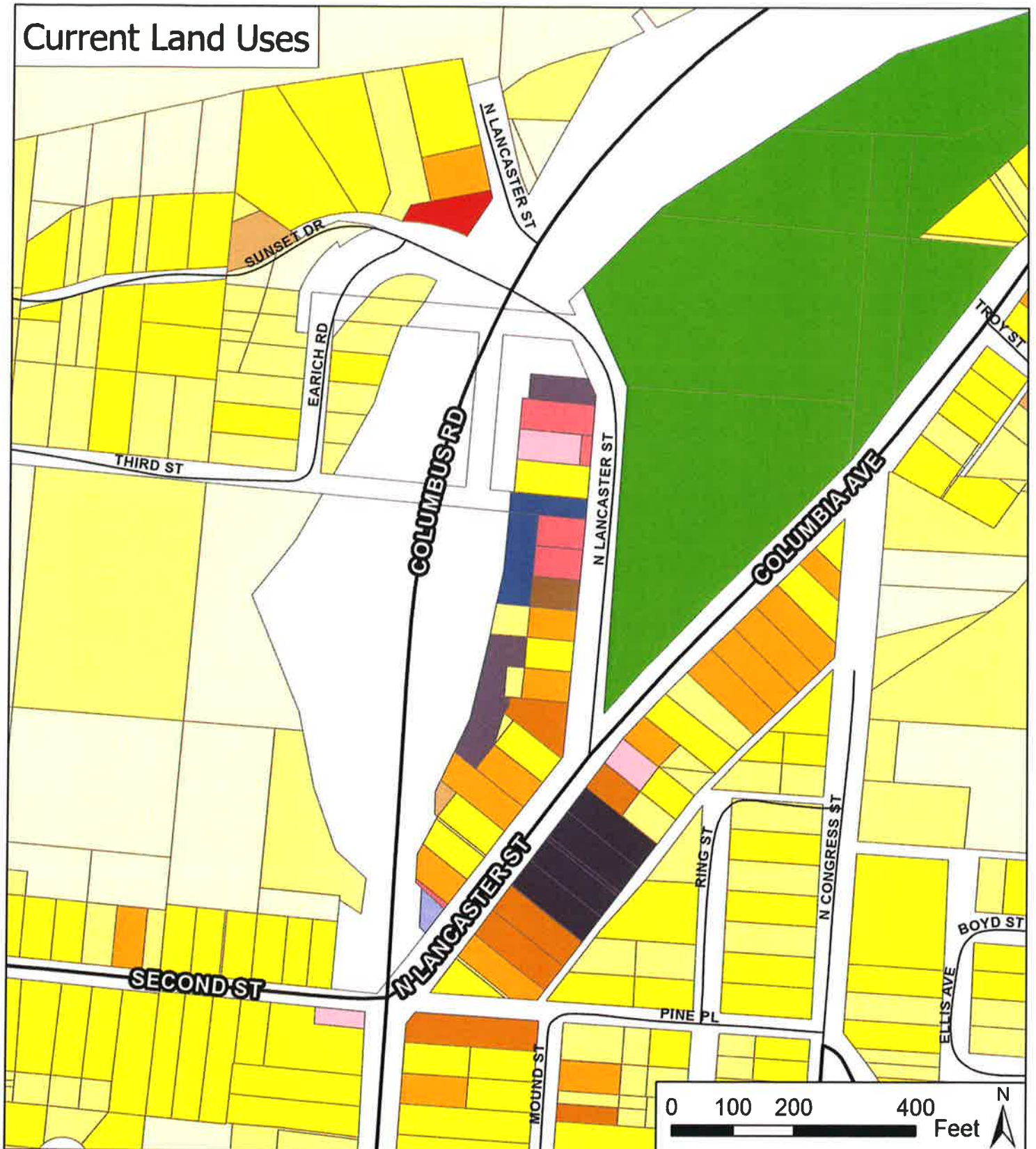
- Ms. Jennings provided a brief update regarding ongoing discussions about potential rezoning in the area encompassing Columbus Road, Lancaster Street, and Second Street. She noted the availability of a third map reflecting current land uses as recorded by the County Auditor. This map is intended as a supplemental resource to support ongoing discussions around potential rezonings in this area of town.
- Next meeting scheduled for **April 16, 2025**.

## **8. Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.
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**Minutes Submitted by:** Monica Flowers, Secretary, Planning Commission

## Current Land Uses



## Current Land Use Map

Land Uses Assigned by  
County Auditor

Map created by Athens City Planner.  
Data recent as of 3/19/2025.

### Legend

|                        |                             |                     |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Apartments, 4-19 Units | Parking                     | Single-Family       |
| Cemetery               | Right of Way                | Three Family        |
| Commercial, Other      | Residential, 0-9.99 acres   | Two Family          |
| Exempt, County         | Residential, Other          | Vacant, Commercial  |
| Exempt, Municipality   | Restaurant, Drive-In        | Vacant, Residential |
| Garage, Commercial     | Single Family, 0-9.99 acres |                     |