

Athens City Planning Commission

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 21, 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 May 21, 2025, at 11:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair John Kotowski called the meeting to order at 11:33 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-Absent
- Austin Phillips, Vice Chair-Arrived at 11:38 a.m.
- Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director-Present

Staff Present:

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

2. Disposition of Minutes

Motion: Mr. Stone moved to approve the minutes from the May 7, 2025 meeting.

Second: Ms. Knisely seconded.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Cases

Case #25-04/ Recommendation to City Council to allow a use not permitted in a R-3 Zone for 7 Congress- The Gathering Place Conestoga Huts

Commission Discussion

- Concern expressed over downtown location and potential image impacts.
- Clarification provided that this is an accessory, not primary, use.
- Approval would apply to the property, not the owner.
- A speaker questioned whether 3 units justified the location, suggesting a less central site could help more people.

- The issue of density was discussed, linking unit numbers to plumbing infrastructure.
- It was suggested that the notification process include pre-hearing outreach by the applicant.

Motion: Ms. Knisely motioned to recommend this case to City Council with the following conditions:

- The use must be renewed every two years (biannual review).
- A limit of 3 huts per available sink and toilet (within 200 feet).

Second: Mr. Stone seconded the motion.

Vote: Passed by a 3:1 vote

Case #25-05/ Changes to Title 23 to allow Temporary Housing Shelters in R-3 and B-3 Zones as a permitted accessory use.

- Property value concerns raised; suggestion to include adjacent property owner consent.
- Consideration of changing from “accessory use” to “conditional use.”
- Clarification on conditional use requiring Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) approval and community input.
- Debate over whether “conditional accessory use” is a viable framework.
- Discussion of zoning language, location appropriateness (R3 vs. B3), bathroom proximity requirements, and precedent in existing zoning codes.
- Mr. Riggs noted B3 aligns with existing campground regulations.

Motion: Ms. Knisely motioned to table case 25-05 to allow language revision per the commission’s guidance.

Second: Mr. Phillips seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

4. Communications

Ms. Jennings provided an update on the proposed rezoning of the Columbus Road, Lancaster Street, and Second Street Area (map enclosed):

- She provided a map of proposed zoning from Mr. Kotowski’s suggestion.
 - Proposal includes expanding R2 zoning as a buffer, especially near residential areas.
 - Concern raised about creating non-conforming uses along Lancaster Street due to zoning changes from B2 to B3.
 - Clarification: Area in question is B2, not B1.

- B1 allows first-floor residential, but B3 may not.
 - Suggested: Consider extending B1 or Rezoning to R2/R3 to avoid non-conformity.
 - Ms. Jennings will continue to refine the rezoning plan.
 - Planning Commission members are encouraged to provide feedback or zoning proposals.
 - A public meeting will be scheduled, but a date has not yet been confirmed (contact made with Michelle Poppy).
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Mr. Riggs let commission members know there will be a Title 41 application filed in the near future by the Hugh White Dealership on Columbus, Rd.

- The development team is in the process of scheduling a pre-Title 41 meeting, anticipated to occur within the next 30 days.
 - It was noted that the dealership is undergoing significant renovations, which may include both demolition and new construction.
 - In connection with this development, the former radio station site, a triangular parcel currently outside city limits, is being considered for annexation.
 - The annexation process is not expected to align with the timeline for the Title 41 zoning approvals.
 - Mr. Riggs has communicated with Conor Lavell, County Planner, to coordinate planning and permitting considerations.
 - The development team and city staff will treat the triangle parcel as if it were within city limits for the purposes of floodplain, land development, and permitting requirements, in anticipation of annexation.
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5. Reports

- No Reports.
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6. Opportunity for Citizens to Speak About Items Not Covered on Agenda

- None.
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7. Announcements & Other Business

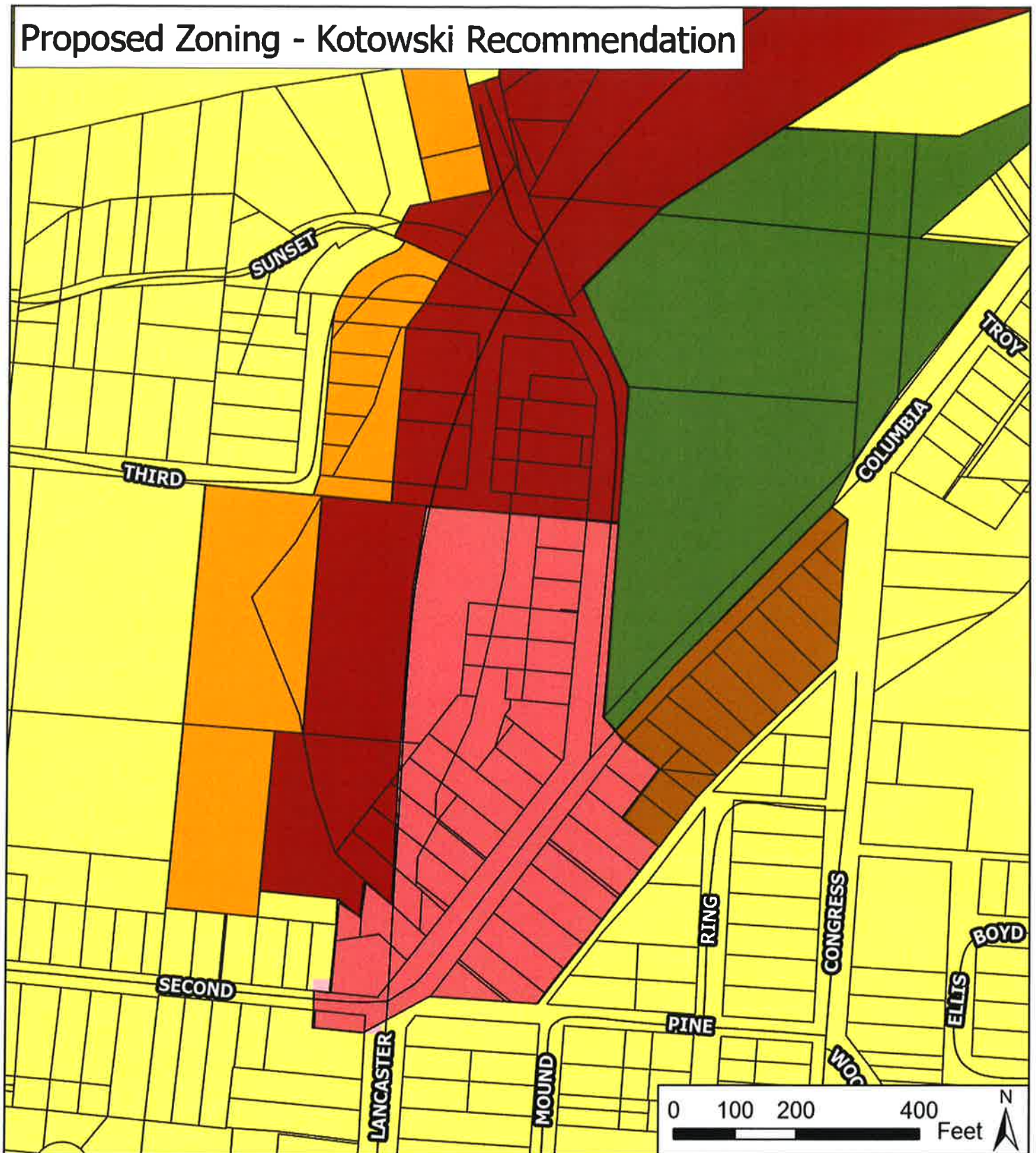
- Next Meeting is June 4, 2025.

8. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Monica Flowers, Secretary, Planning Commission

Proposed Zoning - Kotowski Recommendation



Proposed Zone Changes

Proposed zone change for properties along N. Lancaster Street, Second Street, Columbia Avenue, and Columbus Road.

Map created by Athens City Planner. Data recent as of 5/13/2025.

Legend

Parcel

Zoning

B-1	M
B-2	OS
B-2D	R-1
B-3	R-2
EI	R-3