

Athens City Planning Commission

A regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on September 17, 2025, at 12:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Chair John Kotowski called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM 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
- Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director-Present
- Ally Rapp Lee-Present

Staff Present:

- David Riggs- Code Enforcement Director
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2. Disposition of September 3, 2025, Minutes

Motion: Ms. Rapp Lee moved to approve the minutes.

Second: Ms. Knisely seconded.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Cases

No cases presented.

4. Communications

No communications presented.

5. Reports

No reports presented.

6. Opportunity for Citizens to Speak About Items Not Listed on the Agenda

- No additional comments were offered on items not listed on the agenda.
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7. Announcements & Other Business

Sowash Law Office's Request

- **Overview**
 - Staff reported on two projects in The Plains. Letters submitted by Mr. Sowash (Aug. 26 and Sept. 2) argued the projects should be considered subdivisions. Staff reviewed the letters and reaffirmed that the projects did not meet subdivision criteria and were not subject to city jurisdiction.
- **Public Comments**
 - Attorney Rusty Rittenhouse, representing Erie Land Company, stated that developers relied on prior determinations, noted the length of project development, raised concerns about revisiting decisions, cited a potential conflict of interest, and urged no further action.
 - Rob Delach asked what criteria the Commission would apply if subdivision regulations were deemed applicable.
 - John Branner expressed support for affordable housing and recommended coordinated planning, expedited review, and involvement of the County Regional Planning Commission.
 - Todd Acheson criticized the lack of hearings, planning, and oversight, and stated that neighbors support affordable housing but want it properly integrated.
- **Commission Discussion**
 - Some members supported a broader legal review to guide future projects.
 - Concern about whether such review would delay current development.
 - Debate over whether questions could be general or must be case-specific.
 - Members considered time implications for the developer if a review were required.

Motion: Ms. Knisely made a motion to request a legal opinion from the City Law Director on whether the projects fall under subdivision regulations.

Second: Ms. Rapp Lee seconded the motion.

Discussion: Consideration of potential burdens to the developer; intent to clarify subdivision applicability for both present and future projects.

Vote: A Vote of 2-2 resulted in a tie, therefore motion failed.

The Chair clarified that a tied vote means the motion does not pass but could be reconsidered at a future meeting.

8. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 12:46PM