

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

January 5, 2026 @ 5:30 p.m.

The Planning Commission held a meeting on Thursday January 5, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present

Wendell Miller, Chairman
Vice Chairman, John Choate
Cody Black, Secretary
Shirley Hatley
Dylan Edgell
Luke Duffield
Teri Klir
Justin Keller

Members Absent

Cheryl Monfee
Justin Cothren

Visitors Present:

David Garza, Rev Osvaldo Alvarado, Derek Brown, Ashton Olson Planner II Victoria Marchant, City Planner Gavin Wilson, City Attorney Trey Smith.

Welcome Visitors

The First Order of Business is the approval of the December 2, 2025 minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Choate and was seconded by Commissioner Hatley and was passed unanimously.

The Second Order of Business is Rezoning a property from R-1 Single Family Residential to C-2 Highway Commercial located at 503 E Aspen Ln. Submitted by Derek Brown on behalf of Gary Scarborough. (ZONE-1225-000702)

City Planner Gavin Wilson delivers the Existing Conditions as follow:

- This property has served as auxiliary church offices in the past, though the property owner is not the same as the owner for the adjacent church. These offices may have been utilized as housing at one point in time. This location is currently bordered by C2 Highway Commercial to the west, northwest, and southwest, and R1 Single Family Residential in all other directions.
- To the north is a residential neighborhood that is predominantly Single Family Housing. Russellville Seventh-Day Adventist Church is immediately adjacent to the east, and ARDOT District 8 Headquarters are located on the opposite side of Aspen Lane to the south.

Caddy corner to the southwest of the property in question is American Homes of Russellville, a Mobile/Manufactured Homes retailer. Immediately west of the property are several large, cleared parcels of land that are owned by Baptist Health.

City Planner Wilson presented the staff review comments:

- The applicant is requesting this change to the Zone Map be made to operate a counseling office that works directly with the Arkansas Baptist Church. Because these services would be extended to non-church members and due to the fact that the owners of the adjacent church and these offices are not the same, it cannot be considered a peripheral use of the church.
- The use (Office, Medical or Professional) is not permissible in the R1 zone. This parcel of land, however, is designated as “Suburban Center” in the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- The recommended zone for Suburban Center is C3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial, however, C2 Highway Commercial could be a suitable transition for the area since the density in the area is currently low, and would avoid complications that may arise from spot zoning.
- When considering a zone map adjustment careful consideration needs to be made in regard to the future and current land use of the area, the Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and that the request is not based exclusively upon a desire to increase the value or income potential of the property.
- Future and Current Land Uses of the Area
 - The property may have been used as a residential dwelling or other offices at one time, but it is not currently and may not have been for some time as it appears to have been built as a duplex, which would not be permitted in this zone. During technical review, the applicant stated that the building was constructed in the 1980s and has been utilized as offices periodically since then.
 - The existing commercial establishments to the west of the property reinforce the commercial nature of this part of the City. A hotel, outpatient clinic, and manufactured homes retailer are larger, more intense uses in close proximity, and government offices (ARDOT) across the street from the property in question would mirror the applicant’s intended use and serve as a transitional area where intensity tapers off before becoming rural residential uses outside of city limits, and M2 Industrial Campus further to the southeast.
 - Zoning as C2 Highway Commercial would be more suitable than C3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial at this time due to the fact that the stated use (Office, Medical or Professional) does not require this zone to be able to operate and therefore spot zoning would not be recommended, even if it more closely matches the Suburban Center description. C2 Highway Commercial zoning would more closely match the current surrounding land use pattern.
- ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan
 - This particular piece of property is situated in a transitional area per the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, where “Suburban Center” transitions into “Institutional Campus” (Russellville Seventh-Day Adventist

Church), which then in-turn will give way to larger residential tracts to the north (Suburban Multi-Family) that will be serviced by the commercial zones. Much of E Aspen Lane is slated for this kind of commercial corridor in the Comprehensive Plan.

- As stated previously, “Suburban Center” does not necessarily recommend C2 Highway Commercial, but instead C3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial. While C3 should remain the long-term target zone of this area per the Comprehensive Plan, zoning this parcel C2 Highway Commercial could ostensibly encourage further commercial development along this corridor until C3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial zoning makes more sense for this area.
- Value or Income Potential of the Property
 - While changing a property from a residential zone to a commercial zone typically increases property value by virtue of potential future uses, the applicant does not have the same vested interest in the property itself as they are not the property owner. The applicant’s request is considered recommendable by staff primarily due to the fact that the adjacent C2 zone would be more in line with the Comprehensive Plan than the current zone, not solely because the applicant would like to use the property for business purposes.
 - Though the property would be generating income through its use, the structure that is currently on the property is not intended for the current zoning, as it is a duplex within an R1 zone.

City Planner Wilson stated the staff recommendations:

- Staff recommends that the commission forward this application to the City Council for approval to rezone the property from R1 Single Family Residential to C2 Highway Commercial as a result of the findings below:
 1. The application is in line with existing and Future Land Uses within the area (Suburban Center); and
 2. The proposal aligns with the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan; and
 3. Rezoning to the C2 zone appears to be appropriate and aligns with the vision outlined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Klir asked how the rezoning would affect the property owners within 200’. City Planner Wilson stated that if the property redeveloped the property would have to screen (via a combination of fencing and vegetation) from the properties zoned residential to the north and northeast of the subject property.

Commissioner Choate made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Duffield and passed unanimously.

The Third Order of Business is Rezoning a property from R-2 Medium Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business located at 800 Williamson Way. Submitted by Ashton Smith on behalf of Christian and Missionary Alliance. (ZONE-1225-000701)

Planner II Marchant delivers the Existing Conditions as follow:

- This location is existing site of Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. Located within the Oakland Neighborhood this R-2 Medium Density Residential property is bordered by C-4 to the south. Properties to the north and west are R-2. The property to the east is zoned C-2.
- This property is requesting to rezone to C-4. Properties within this area include two other places of worship, a mixture of single family and duplex dwellings, and the boys and girls club.

Planner II Marchant states the staff review comments are that staff must consider the following three items:

- Future and Current Land Uses of the Area. To the east there is a large area of vacant C-2 zoned property, with the potential for commercial development along at the corner of Williamson Way and S Knoxville Ave. Although the western end of Williamson Way is primarily residential in nature this eastern end serves as a transitional area to the C-2 Highway Commercial zoned area that extends onto S Knoxville Ave and E 16th Street. As this is located just west of the commercial corridor at E 16th and S Knoxville where there are several businesses including a carwash, several auto oriented businesses including repair garages and a gas station, food trucks, a storage facility, and a pediatric occupational therapy facility. Given the proximity to this commercial corridor along S Knoxville and E 16th to the north of this location, rezoning to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business is in alignment with the Current and Future Land Uses of the area.
- ReImagine Russellville 2040 comprehensive plan, as a guide for decision making, defines the area with a mixture of Future Land Uses including “Institutional Campus”, “Suburban Multi-Family”, and “Suburban Corridor”. The subject property falls into the “Institutional Campus” area, these areas include office complexes, college campuses, large public school, and religious land use types. The only related zoning listed in the Comprehensive Plan for Institutional Campus is EPU or El Paso University Zones (College Hill, Prairie Creek, and Downtown Crossing). These zones are only permitted in the areas surrounding Arkansas Tech University, however they are commercial or mixed use in nature. Staff concur that rezoning to Neighborhood and Quiet Business would be in line with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Value or Income potential of the property. Transitioning from R-2 Medium High Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business typically does increase property value. However the intention of this rezoning is not to sell the property. The property owner has requested this zone map amendment in order to obtain a digital sign (via Special Use Permit) at this location. Therefore, the potential increase in property value is not the intent of the Rezoning of this property. Additionally due to this corridors nature serving as a transition into more intense commercial development, residential development may not be the highest and best use of the property. As a result rezoning to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business is appropriate and in line with the 2040 Comprehensive plan.

Planner II Marchant stated the staff recommendations are as follows:

- Staff recommends that the commission forward this application to the City Council for approval to rezone the property from R-2 Medium Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business as a result of the findings below:

1. The application is in line with existing and Future Land Uses within the area; and
2. The proposal aligns with the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan; and
3. Rezoning to the C-4 zone appears to be appropriate and aligns with the vision outlined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Choate asked if a portion of property to the east that is an enclave within a wider C-2 property was also included in the rezoning. Planner II Marchant stated this property would not be rezoned and would remain an R-2 enclave. They stated that the larger C-2 parcel was likely rezoned and the enclave was owned by a separate owner and was untouched at that time.

Commissioner Hatley asked if any of the surrounding property owners contacted the City in regards to rezoning. Planner II Marchant stated that one of the adjacent residences reached out to inquire about it. They stated once the application was explained to the resident they did not have any issues. The resident just wanted to confirm that the church was going to remain a church and was not changing uses.

Commissioner Choate made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Klir and passed unanimously.

The Fourth Order of Business is a Vacation of N Jackson Ave right-of-way adjacent to Lots 7 & 12 Block 88 of the JL Shinn Addition. Submitted by Barrett & Associates on behalf of Clarence Harbor and Armando Cienfuegos. (VAC-1225-000700)

City Planner Wilson stated that the existing conditions were:

- This section of N Jackson Avenue currently only features a gravel drive that leads to the parking lot of an apartment complex, owned by Mr. Harbor, that is currently being developed on lots 10 – 12 of Block 88. There is also a chain link fence along the lot line of lot 7 of Block 89 that belongs to Mr. Cienfuegos. A drainage ditch runs perpendicular to E ‘E’ Street towards the back of lot 12 of Block 88 and under the gravel drive.
- This property is zoned R2 Medium Density Residential with all surrounding properties zoned R2 medium density residential. This is primarily a mixed residential community with single family and duplex dwellings, however there are also various businesses within a C4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business corridor along E Parkway Drive a block south. Immediately to the north of this section of N Jackson Avenue is a closed ROW that abuts E ‘F’ Street, which was closed via Ordinance 2383 on January 21st, 2021. Caddy corner to this section of N Jackson Avenue to the Southwest is Vick Field.

City Planner Wilson presented the staff review comments:

- Items to consider when vacating an easement or right-of-way are:
 1. Public Trust;
 2. Land Use Impacts; and
 3. Public Benefits.
- What is the impact of the proposed vacation upon the “public trust functions” of the ROW? Does the vacation impair circulation, access, utilities, open space, and/or views?
 - This proposal seeks to vacate a 140’ by 80’ section of N Jackson Avenue that is

currently minimally improved and has no through access to E 'F' Street. The section of N Jackson Avenue immediately north of this proposed vacation has been vacated since January of 2021. During a site visit, the existing gravel drive was being utilized as an access to the existing drainage ditch and as a back access for garbage collection for the developing apartments. The total area to be vacated is approximately 11,200 sqft, to be split evenly between Mr. Harbor and Mr. Cienfuegos. There is nothing currently proposed within the area being vacated, however, access to the ditch by maintenance crews could be inhibited without a sufficient access easement being put in place.

- What are the land use impacts regarding the vacation of the ROW?
 - The impact is that the adjacent property owners, Mr. Harbor and Mr. Cienfuegos, will evenly split the vacated section of N Jackson Avenue and bear responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of the vacated area. There is no current use of this area beyond a gravel section of N Jackson Avenue that leads into an existing parking area for Lots 10 – 12 of Block 88, and as a ditch access for maintenance crews. Staff noted in the submittal letter that the applicant stated that the additional area vacated to Mr. Harbor could be made into additional parking for the developing property, however, during a technical review meeting, the applicant stated that this would not be the case and that there is no plan to add an off-street parking lot. Applicant did note during the technical review meeting that the gravel drive may be paved as a part of the access easement. There is currently a chain link fence on Mr. Cienfuegos's side of the vacation that would then fall on his property and can be maintained by the property owner. Drainage should not be compromised in the development of Mr. Harbor's side of the vacation, and so drainage and access easements should be established to prevent this.
- What Public Benefit is received by vacating the Right-of-Way?
 - Retaining both drainage and access easements is in the best interest of the public benefit, and the vacation of the minimally improved section of this road with no through-passage shall transfer maintenance of the land to the adjacent property owners.

City Planner Wilson stated the staff recommendations were:

- Staff recommends forwarding this application to City Council for approval to vacate a one hundred and forty (140) foot section of the eighty (80) foot ROW of N Jackson Avenue adjacent to lot 12 of Block 88 and lot 7 of Block 89 within the JL Shinn Addition with the following condition:
 1. A 10' drainage easement is provided and the applicant works directly with city engineers to verify sufficiency of the easement and represent it appropriately on future surveys/plats of the property.
 2. A 20' access easement east of the proposed drainage easement will be provided for maintenance of the drainage ditch and the applicant works directly with city engineers to verify sufficiency of the easement and represent it appropriately on future surveys/plats of the property.
 3. The existing gravel section of N Jackson Avenue is to be made into a paved access.
- As a result of the findings below:
 1. There is not an impact to the Public Trust, Land Use, or effects to the Public

- Benefit; and
2. No letters from utility companies provided by applicant releasing use of the area to be vacated.

Commissioner Choate asked how the maintenance of the property would be handled when the vacation was completed. City Planner Wilson stated that the easements were created for staff to be able to maintain the drainage ditches and they would utilize those easements if they ever needed to perform maintenance. He also stated that the eastern half of the property did not have any easements on it and would be maintained as an extension of Mr. Cienfuegos property.

David Garza with Barrett & Associates stated that the applicant was changing the proposed drainage easement to match the one to the north and the new drainage easement would be 15'. Mr. Garza stated that they would then have a 15' drainage easement and a 15' access easement.

Staff Engineer Sawyer Shannon stated the 15' drainage easement and 15' access easement would be in line with what is currently in the right-of-way. He stated that the drainage easement was used to maintain drainage flow and the access easement will be used for the City to access the drainage. He stated that the culvert in this gravel drive had just been replaced so probably wouldn't need maintenance anytime soon. Staff Engineer Shannon stated that the easement was in line with what the City would need.

Commissioner Black made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Hatley and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned
