

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
HELD JUNE 12 2025**

REGULAR MEETING – 6:00 PM.

President Fisher called Meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PRESENT: President Fisher, Vice President Ping, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Kavanagh

ABSENT: Commissioner Berube

Also present: City Manager Hanks, City Planner Mulcahy, City Attorney Breck (via Zoom), Public Works Clerk Sobczak

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of May 8, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Kavanagh to approve the May 8, 2025 minutes as presented, Seconded by Johnson. Motion carried with all Commissioners present voting AYE

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

No public comment was presented.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ACTION:

A zone change request from the existing CI-1 (Light Industrial) to CB-2 (General Commercial):

City Planner Mulcahy presented a zone change request for the property located at 2155 9th Street West, commonly known as the Lazy Days Mobile Home Park. The request seeks to change the zoning of the northern half of the property from CI-1 Light Industrial to CB-2 General Business, aligning it with the existing CB-2 General Business zone of the southern half.

The property is currently split-zoned, with the southern half designated CB-2 and the northern half as Light Industrial. This split zoning has existed for at least 30 years.

The existing manufactured home park is a legal non-conforming use under current requirements.

Senate Bill 245, passed in 2023, allows residential and multifamily uses in commercial zones, leading to updates in the local zoning code.

The new owners are in the process of converting the property to a different commercial use and are requesting the zone change to achieve a single, consistent zoning classification (CB-2) for the entire parcel, which is a recommendation in the zoning ordinance to avoid complications with site development.

Adjacent zonings include Light Industrial to the north, CB-2 to the south (Super 1, AutoZone), CRA-1 (multifamily) to the east (an assisted living facility), and B-2 (Flathead County) to the west. The property is located within the city limits, specifically as the westernmost property.

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The City's Growth Policy, which guides zoning, designates the entire property as commercial, supporting the proposed CB-2 zone.

Staff reviewed the request against the 12 criteria outlined in the City Zoning Ordinance, finding compliance with the Growth Policy. The change from a light industrial zone to a business zone, both intensive classifications, was noted as having no significant emphasis on local services or general welfare. The property is located at the intersection of Meadowlake Boulevard and Highway 2.

Potential transportation impacts were noted due to the property's location at the intersection of Meadowlake Boulevard and Highway 2. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) will require a study to determine appropriate access approaches when the property converts to a new use, as transportation situations will definitely change. Otherwise, the zone change complies with the 12 criteria, which are the sole focus for such decisions.

Staff acknowledged the sensitive nature of converting a manufactured home park, which provides attainable housing, but emphasized that the decision must be based strictly on established criteria and growth policies, not the specific future use.

Staff recommended adopting the findings of fact from Staff Report #CZC-25-02 and approving the zone change.

The public hearing was opened at 6:08 PM. No proponents for the project came forward, and no members of the public offered comments. The public hearing was subsequently closed at 6:08 PM.

Commission members discussed the request, noting the procedural aspects and the benefit of consolidating the split zoning. Commissioner Johnson expressed initial difficulty in making a decision without knowing the specific future use but acknowledged the procedural understanding and the allowance for mixed-use projects under new legislation. Commissioner Kavanagh agreed that consolidating the split zoning made sense. President Fisher noted that while applications typically have a clear plan, this change was still logical.

A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to adopt Staff Report #CZC-25-02 as findings of fact. Seconded by Vice President Ping. A roll call vote was performed and the motion passed with all Commissioners present voting AYE.

A motion was made by Vice President Ping to recommend approval of the Zone Change to City Council. Seconded by Commissioner Kavanagh. A roll call vote was performed and the motion passed with all Commissioners present voting AYE. City Council will hear this Zone Change on July 7, 2025.

A brief discussion was held regarding the ongoing housing study, the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MLUPA), and related initiatives. City Planner, confirmed that he and City Manager Hanks had a meeting about this prior to the current meeting. Their goal is to engage a planning consultant within the next couple of months to assist with these significant initiatives, including participation in the new land use plan. Additionally, a contract for water and sewer PERs (Preliminary Engineering Reports) is being prepared for City Council approval, which will help feed into the planning process, though this contract has not yet been approved. President Fisher noted that some other cities in the State appear to be further along in this process, and he has been observing their progress and surveys. City Planner Mulcahy mentioned are only a handful of consultants in Montana capable of handling this work, and many have been assisting other cities.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Vice President Ping. The motion carried with all Commissioners present voting AYE.

ADJOURNMENT – Meeting duly adjourned at 6:15 PM

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President

Attest:

Public Works Clerk