Plan Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 08, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Monday.

Roll Call

A quorum in attendance consisted of Anfinson, Stapelmann, Hajewski, Monday, and Finkler.

Staff liaisons Kornmann and Bennett were present.

Notice of Open Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was posted according to law.

Approval of Agenda

Finkler motioned to approve the agenda after swapping items two (2) and three (3); seconded by Anfinson. There was no additional discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Approval of Minutes

1. Approve minutes

   Hajewski motioned to approve the Plan Commission meeting minutes from September 10, 2026; seconded by Finkler. There was no discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comments (3 minutes per person)

Brian Nagle on behalf of the Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission (HLPC) made comments regarding the design standards review recommendations by the HLPC. Nagle noted that HLPC recommends the draft design standards, moving committee composition to Chapter 2, and keep the landmarking procedures the same as the current code. Nagle noted a need to maintain Certified Local Government (CLG) status.

There were no additional comments from the public and no correspondence.

Regular Business

2. Consider and take action regarding zoning code language - various topics within the zoning rewrite

   Sonja Kruesel, Associate Planner from Vandewalle & Associates, presented updates to the draft zoning code focusing on building design along with administration and procedures.

   Kruesel highlighted definitions for administration, processes that align with State law along with optional concept reviews. Optional concept reviews would be determined by staff if needed, but otherwise zoning text or map changes don't require it. Kruesel highlighted conditional use permits (CUP) procedures.

   Plan Development process was highlighted dividing it into zoning and site plan procedures. There were comments about timelines in which the commission was hesitant on implementing a sunset

clause. There was support for triggered clauses to provide an "off ramp" if challenges are too much to overcome for developments. Kruesel highlighted that a due process must be performed and advocated for a 5-year time limit.

Kruesel highlighted variances procedure and its limits to hardship situations.

Site Plan Review procedure was highlighted. Kruesel noted various discretion implemented depending on which portion of the site plan is being reviewed. Currently site plans are only reviewed by staff, unless there's a CUP attached, but the draft would have the Plan Commission would have an opportunity to review. There was discussion about expediting site plan reviews. A hybrid approach was discussed. Kruesel noted that the draft code is moving toward more detail than the current code. There were concerns about adding requirements that weren't in the code.

Appeals were highlighted by Kruesel and requested direction as to where appeals would go. Zoning appeals could go to either Zoning Board of Appeals or the Council. The commission recommended appeals go to Council.

Design Standards for downtown were highlighted with an initial focus on building heights with Kornmann noting that downtown building heights vary and many buildings have an extended facade that skews the height perception. The draft code presented a 60-foot maximum height, and a minimum height of two stories.

Design Standards by land use type were presented by Kreusel and discussed by the commission. Monotonized housing was highlighted during the discussion along with diversifying materials used in multi-family housing and the challenges of enforcement. Kornmann suggested application of standards for initial new development in which the commission was receptive. Kreusel will look into additional standards. Other land use design standards were presented with highlights and discussion regarding materials used for developments and downtown properties.

Procedures regarding how downtown design review would be handled and how the Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission (HLPC) could be involved. Any involvement would be mentioned that the involvement would be optional in the zoning code, but an internal detailed procedure process would be drafted. Kreusel did not have any information regarding Certified Local Government status and Kornmann recapped previous discussion regarding historic preservation overlay in the draft code and noted a change allowing wider range of appeals compared to the current code. Appeals process was discussed. Nagle presented State Statute that allows for wider appeals beyond just economic hardship. Kornmann noted the current code only specifies appeals for only economic hardship.

Kornmann would like to have a policy to address scenarios in which a property owner owns two (2) adjacent lots and wants to build an accessory structure on the lot adjacent to the lot with the primary structure. Kornmann has received questions regarding this scenario.

Outdoor storage for industrial equipment and supplies was discussed. Screening would be required for light industrial, but not for heavy industrial due to each land uses proximity to other land uses. Kornmann noted the need to clarify how non-conforming uses get handled. The commission noted potential financial impact to businesses.

Kornmann presented the City Attorney's opinion of only having a set height for fences and noted the 6-foot maximum height for residential and 10-feet for industrial. Kornmann noted currently there is a process for residents to request up to 8 feet pending Plan Commission approval and appeals can be made to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The commission expressed desire to establish a maximum height and send requests for taller fencing to be referred to the ZBA.

The draft zoning code will be reviewed at the November Plan Commission meeting with a public hearing at the December meeting. The final version could be approved at a December Council meeting with the new code coming into effect by January 2027.

3. Consider and take action regarding resolution declaring current comprehensive plan housing element provides adequate housing

Kornmann presented a resolution to update the housing element of the City's comprehensive plan to help support a downtown redevelopment project and to meet State Statutes.

Kornmann noted an error on the draft resolution and made changes to match both instances of the 2021 dates as May instead of April 2021 and May 2021.

Finkler motioned to recommend to Council to approve the resolution; seconded by Hajewski. The motion was amended for the clerical correction Kornmann stated. There was no additional discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

4. Consider and take action regarding the update of the city’s comprehensive plan

Kornmann presented State changes to the Planning Law that requires timing of development and density to be included in the future land use map. The update must take place in 2027. Staff plans to bring to a future meeting a strategy for updating at least the land use chapter and other chapters, if possible, to focus on. Updated maps would be included. Kornmann noted that there would be Plan Commission recommendation, public hearing and Council approval needed.

Kornmann provided a rough timeline and noted completion would be in the Fall of 2027, with review and approval process in the Winter of 2027.

Kornmann highlighted updates to the draft provided and noted the overview of growth scenarios in a 20-year projection that estimates projected housing growth with breakdowns by housing types to help determine if the City has enough land for additional housing. Data was provided regarding housing affordability.

Finkler motioned to approve adoption the timeline and consideration for combining the land use chapter update along with others as part of updating the City's comprehensive plan; seconded by Hajewski. There was no additional discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Future Agenda Items

The main item for next meeting is anticipated to be review of the zoning code rewrite draft. There was discussion about reviewing the proposed final zoning code rewrite draft prior to the November meeting review. The consensus was to not have any special meetings and to only review the draft at the November meeting. Kornmann will provide a draft prior.

Adjourn

Finkler motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Anfinson. There was no discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

** These minutes will be approved at a future meeting and may be amended. These minutes are respectfully submitted by David Bennett, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator **