

**Minutes of Planning & Zoning Commission
Held on March 27, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

2. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Gary Watkins, Jillian Privett, Apryl Hutchinson, Kathleen St. Clair, Terri Henson

ABSENT:

STAFF: Kate Thomas, JR Meek

3. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA: None

4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. Approval of the Planning and Zoning regular meeting minutes from December 5th, 2024.
- b. Approval of the Planning and Zoning regular meeting minutes from February 13th, 2025.

M /S: Privett/Hutchinson

Poll Vote – All in favor

6. DIRECTORS REPORT:

- a. Planning and Zoning Commission Report on Entitlement Lands

Staff provided an oral review of the report and summary of the current conditions related to entitlement lands, along with information regarding the new Wrangell Timber Initiative.

7. CORRESPONDENCE: Letter from Kim Covalt stating the reason for the request to rezone the church property from open space to single-family residential is to be able to rent out the Church Manse to a single family for supplemental income to offset financial difficulties. Letter attached to the minutes.

8. PERSONS TO BE HEARD: None.

9. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **(PH) Conditional Use Permit Application request to operate a short-term rental (Airbnb) on Lot 8, Block 6, USS 2127, according to Plat No. 29-06 (APN 01-005-418), Zoned Single Family Residential, owned and requested by Greg and Tammi Meissner.**

M / S: Privett/St. Clair

Move to approve the findings of fact and the Conditional Use Permit application submitted by Greg and Tammi Meissner for a short-term rental (Airbnb) with the following conditions:

- 1. Provide Guest Guidance or a similar document on noise and behavior, to encourage respect for the area and neighbors; and*
- 2. Two off-street parking places must be provided*

Watkins inquired about whether the apartment is above the garage. The applicant responded. The garage is 20x24 with the apartment above at 480 Sq. Ft. It is subordinate to the main structure. Watkins asked if the design and standards of the building are up to code, with proper separation in place between the garage and the apartment. Applicant Greg Meissner confirmed that it is up to the current building code.

Poll Vote– All in Favor

- b. **(PH) Petition to Rezone Lot A, Block 16 of the Ogden/Rathke Subdivision and a portion of Presbyterian Mission Reserve, according to Plat No. 2019-7 (APN 02-021-500), zoned Open Space Public, amending the zoning designation from Open Space Public to Single Family Residential, owned and requested Kim Covalt on behalf of the Presbyterian Church.**

M / S: Privett/Hutchinson

Move to approve the findings of fact and an amendment to the City and Borough of Wrangell Zoning Map to effect a change to Lot A, Block 16 of the Ogden/Rathke Subdivision and a portion of Presbyterian Mission Reserve, according to Plat No. 2019-7 (APN 02-021-500) from Open Space Public to Single Family Residential. And, to approve the findings of fact and the conditional use permit request submitted by Kim Covalt on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, allowing the Church to continue operations on a Single-Family Residential lot.

Staff provided the administrative report. The report included review of the location, the current use and structures on the property, along with an overview of the current zoning designation. Staff highlighted that the current zoning designation of Open Space Public does not allow for single family outright, although uses that are “Uses and structures which are customarily accessory and subordinate to the above uses” as per the code. However, Single-Family Districts, although for single-family dwellings, as well as Churches as a conditional use. Which led to the initial recommended motion.

Staff met with Chair Henson before the meeting in regard to amending the zoning designation of this property. In review of the code, and the existing conditions of the property use and surrounding area, Staff recommended amending the motion to maintain the zoning designation as is, Open Space/Public, and issuing a conditional use permit to the church to allow for the single-family home that exists on the property to be rented on a short too long basis. This would maintain the zone as is to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area and issue a permit for the house under the provision “Uses and structures which are customarily accessory and subordinate to the above uses.” The house (manse) has existed on the property for many decades and historically has been used to house members of the church and pastors.

Staff recommend amending the original motion. Staff open the discussion for the Commission on the topic of conditional use.

The Commission discussed the concept of issuing a Conditional Use Permit instead of amending the zone. Watkins asked if the properties nearby are zoned Open Space/Public or Single Family. Watkins commented that he observed that many churches in Wrangell are within the Single Family or Multifamily District. The residential districts do allow churches as a conditional use.

Staff clarify that this is not a new construction or development.

M/S: Privett/ Watkins

Amend the motion to issue a conditional use permit for an accessory dwelling for long-term rental on Lot A, Block 16 of the Ogden/Rathke Subdivision.

Amended Motion Poll Vote: All in favor. Motion passes.

Original Motion Poll Vote: All against. Motion fails.

- c. **Preliminary Plat review of a Replat of Lot B (APN 03-002-304) of the Torgramsen-Glasner Subdivision according to Plat No. 2016-2, and Lot C (APN 02-035-310) of the Health Care Subdivision, according to Plat 2010-4, creating Lot B-1 and Lot C-1, zoned Zimovia Highway Mixed Use, requested by the City and Borough of Wrangell on behalf of Wrangell Cooperative Association and Bruce Smith Jr.**

M / S: Privett/Hutchinson

Move to approve the preliminary plat for Lot C, a replat of Lot B of the Torgramsen-Glasner Subdivision, according to Plat 2016-2 and Lot C of the Healthcare Subdivision, according to Plat 2010-4 and to show a reduction in the width of an easement from 50 ft to 30 ft in the agreed-upon location.

Staff provided the administrative report. The preliminary plat reflects the survey required to subdivide Lot C in advance of sale to Wrangell Cooperative Association and Bruce Smith Jr. The Borough required a utility easement to be dedicated by the plat. Both parties had a chance to review the preliminary plat in advance of commission review. Bruce requested a few minor changes to the plat including a change to subdivision and reference to other plats in the notes.

Staff requested that a commissioner amend the motion to allow for a smaller width of easement after a certain point along the right – of – way. Narrowing the easement from 50 ft to 30 ft as it traverses up Wood Street beyond municipal infrastructure. This request stems from recent negotiations with Wrangell Cooperative Association. The Public Works department had an opportunity to review the change in advance of formal preliminary plat review. Staff provided a visual as to whether along the easement the width would change. Commissioners discussed change. Staff highlighted that a driveway agreement and easement agreement will accompany the plat upon recording.

Poll Vote – All in favor. Motion passes.

- d. **Zimovia Highway Mixed-Use Zoning District Amendment Discussion and Recommendation.**

Staff provided an administrative report. Staff explained that Search Regional Health Consortium's (SEARHC) interest in building multi-family housing in the new Zimovia Highway Mixed Use zoning district, noting initial outreach efforts received no response until the Facilities Director, unaware of the discussions and concerned about conflicts with their housing projects, contacted the borough.

Staff outlined the organization's need for diverse housing options to attract medical professionals and their desire for uniformity across their communities, contrasting this with Wrangell's current lack of provisions for the community development approach (PUD) that other communities utilize, although a draft PUD code is nearing completion.

Chair Henson inquired about the potential number of multi-family units on the lot and suggested utilizing less buildable areas for resident space, while Watkins questioned the existing structure allowances. Staff clarified the current zoning permits duplexes on 10,000 sq ft lots but would require subdivision or a zoning amendment for multi-family use, suggesting a PUD study as a flexible approach to create a mini neighborhood with walking paths.

Chair Henson recalled past PUD discussions regarding trailer parks and proposed a cul-de-sac design for affordable housing (separate from Search's project), prompting Watkins to recommend waiting for SEARHC to present a concrete proposal before considering zone amendments.

Staff highlighted the flexibility of a PUD for tailored development but couldn't immediately clarify its jurisdictional application within the existing draft code, which dates to 2021 and contains anomalies requiring review.

The Commission decided to postpone further action on rezoning or PUD application for this specific project until SAERHC submits a formal development plan, and staff will encourage the Facilities Director to attend the next meeting to provide their perspective on the Zimovia Highway Mixed-Use Zoning District and provide more details on their development plans.

e. Wrangell Medical Center (Old Hospital) Zoning Discussion and Recommendation.

Staff provided an administrative report. Planning Commission discussed the future zoning of the old Wrangell Medical Center, currently zoned open space, following interest from developers for multi-family housing and a marine services retail center. Staff sought the Commission's input on potential zoning designations, considering the property's proximity to residential areas and the school district, and what uses would be acceptable or unacceptable.

Chair Henson suggested the old hospital could have been City Hall but noted the possibility of a PUD, expressing concerns about equipment rental near the school and recommending industrial uses be directed to the industrial lot. Henson cautioned against light industrial zoning near the school or residential areas. Hutchinson questioned the structural integrity of the building and the usability of its electrical components.

Staff clarified no formal proposals were on the table, but electricity was being restored for safety, stating the building could be remodeled or demolished depending on allowed uses under conditional use permits within the open space zoning, which aims to protect recreational and natural resources but conditionally permits various uses, including some commercial and light industrial types, though outright industrial was likely unsuitable.

The existence of six adjacent open space lots was noted, and while rezoning wasn't the immediate topic, future rezoning requests would be considered. Watkins suggested affordable family housing.

Chair Henson questioned the suitability of general commercial uses in the location. Staff clarified potential uses like a learning center but emphasized the need to consider adverse effects and the broad range of commercial uses possible, including retail, offices, and hotels (excluding animal establishments).

Commissioner Privett proposed subdividing the building for residential/commercial multi-use. Hutchinson and Privett also suggested senior living and single-family uses, respectively. The Commission discussed the incomplete PUD code, with staff clarifying that PUD is a development management process, not a zoning designation, and highlighted shifts in borough land sale philosophies, emphasizing the need for a clear methodology for land development.

Ultimately, the Commission did not commit to a specific zoning designation but aimed to create an informational document outlining compatible zoning options (single-family, multi-family, commercial, and potentially some conditional light industrial uses) for prospective developers interested in the old hospital site, acknowledging the need to consider the surrounding residential and school areas and the existing open space zoning's conditional uses.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

11. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

12. ADJOURNMENT – 7:16 PM