

**Minutes of Planning & Zoning Commission  
Held on May 11, 2026**

**1. CALL TO ORDER 5:35PM**

**2. ROLL CALL**

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

STAFF: Kate Thomas

Also Present:

Robert Seidman, Southeast Alaska Power Agency (via Zoom)

Members of the public

**3. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:** None

**4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the Planning & Zoning regular meeting minutes from April 9, 2026.

M/S: Privett/ St. Clair. All in favor.

**6. DIRECTORS REPORT:** Planning Administrator Kate Thomas thanked attendees for participating and reminded the public that comments could be made during each public hearing item. Written comments received prior to the meeting would be read into the record under correspondence. No additional Director's Report items were presented.

**7. CORRESPONDENCE**

Written correspondence was received regarding the proposed Timber Management zoning designation for Thoms Place entitlement lands.

**Correspondence Received:**

- Elizabeth, Joseph, and Peter Whitmore expressing opposition to potential logging activities near Thoms Place.
- Bruce and Nancy McQueen expressing opposition to Timber Management zoning at Thoms Place, citing concerns regarding impacts to property values, recreation, subsistence use, environmental character, and adequacy of public notice.

**8. PERSONS TO BE HEARD**

- Peter Branson, Thoms Place – Request to table the Thoms Place zoning designation until further public engagement and notice has taken place. Request to issue public notice of Timber Management to all residents of the remote subdivision.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. (PH) Request from Southeast Alaska Power Agency to lease a portion of Borough-owned property identified as Lot 2, of the W-2 &W-3 Subdivision, according to Plat No. 2020-5.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No public testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett / Watkins. All in favor.

Motion: Move to approve the findings of fact and recommend that the Borough Assembly approve the request from Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) to lease Borough-owned property identified as Lot 2, USS 3790 according to Plat No. 2020-5, zoned Timber Management (TM).

Staff provided an overview of the proposed SEAPA solar utility project. Staff explained:

- The lease area consists of approximately 38 acres near 5.25 Zimovia Highway.
- The project proposes a solar utility facility expected to initially generate approximately 1.5 megawatts, expanding to approximately 5 megawatts.
- The project is intended to improve community resiliency and reduce diesel generation dependence during outages and maintenance events.
- Construction is anticipated through June 2028.
- The project site is accessed through an existing 60-foot access and utility easement.
- The property was recently transferred to Borough ownership through the Mental Health Trust land exchange.

Commission discussion included project costs, location relative to the SEAPA switchyard, and minimal anticipated traffic impacts. Staff noted a recent public town hall had also been conducted regarding the project.

- b. (PH) Conditional Use Permit application to develop a solar field and associated utility infrastructure on Borough-owned property identified as Lot 2 of the W-2 &W-3 Subdivision, according to Plat No. 2020-5, requested by Southeast Alaska Power Agency.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/ Watkins. All in favor.

Move to approve the findings of fact and the Conditional Use Permit request submitted by Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) to develop a solar photovoltaic generation facility, battery energy storage system, and associated utility infrastructure on Borough-owned property identified as Lot 2, USS 3790 according to Plat No. 2020-5, subject to the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Staff provided a review of the CUP conditions of approval, including:

- Compliance with all permitting requirements;
- Maintaining public access through the easement corridor;
- Restricting improvements to the leased area unless otherwise approved;
- Maintaining vegetative buffers where practical;
- Requiring site restoration if the facility is abandoned for more than 12 months.

#### Additional Comment

SEAPA Executive Director Robert Seidman thanked the Commission and stated the project would strengthen local grid resiliency and support future economic development opportunities in Wrangell.

- c. (PH) Variance application requesting a variance to the front yard setback reduction on Lot 18AA, according to Plat No. 2020-7, owned and requested by Paul and Ellen Zahorik.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/ St. Clair. All in favor.

Motion: Move to approve the findings of fact and approve the after-the-fact variance request submitted by Paul and Ellen Zahorik for a reduction of the required front yard setback from 20 feet to 6 inches on Lot 18AA, according to Plat No. 2020-7, subject to the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Staff provide an administrative report on the following:

- The request involved replacement of a temporary nonconforming structure with a permanent foundation and improved accessory structure.
- During the permitting process it was determined the existing structure location conflicted with the State-owned right-of-way.
- The variance was necessary because neither the Borough nor State had authority to authorize encroachments into the right-of-way.
- The revised structure location would still improve overall compliance compared to the prior condition.
- Topography and shoreline limitations constrained alternative placement options.

Commission discussion addressed roadway clearance, setback interpretation, and consistency with existing neighborhood conditions.

- d. (PH) Conditional Use Permit application for a short-term rental on Lot 11, Block A, according to Plat No. 69-218, owned and requested by Solvay Gillen.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/ St. Clair. All in favor.

Move to approve the findings of fact and transfer of the existing Conditional Use Permit allowing continued operation of a short-term rental/Bed and Breakfast on Lot 11, Block A, Dewey Heights Subdivision, subject to the conditions of approval outlined in the staff report.

Staff provided administrative report.

- The property has operated as a bed and breakfast since approximately 2005.
- The application represented a transfer of an existing CUP following sale of the property.
- Current Borough code does not clearly address transfer procedures for CUPs following ownership changes.
- Staff recommended establishing an administrative record for CUP transfers and potentially revisiting code language in the future.

Commission discussion supported requiring future property owners to formally reapply or transfer CUPs to ensure permit conditions remain understood and enforceable.

- e. (PH) Preliminary Plat review of a subdivision of Lot A-2 of Presbyterian - CBW Replat (Plat NO. 2025-3), creating Lots B-1 and A-2A, owned by the City and Borough of Wrangell, requested by Teniya Morelli.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/Hutchinson. All in favor.

Move to approve the findings of fact and preliminary plat for the Morelli – CBW Replat, a replat of Lot A-2 and Lot B of Presbyterian – CBW Replat, according to Plat Nos. 2025-3 and 2019-7, creating Lots B-1 and A-2A, as requested by Teniya Morelli.

Staff provided administrative report.

- The preliminary plat was associated with a previous Borough land sale and lot line adjustment.
- The replat would provide additional frontage and buildable area to the Morelli property.
- Two title issues had been identified:

- An unrecorded deed between the Presbyterian Church and the Morellis;
- A corrective Borough deed required following prior platting activity.
- Both title matters had been resolved prior to final plat review.

f. (PH) Preliminary Plat review of a subdivision of Lot 6A, of the Dan Nore Subdivision (Plat No. 90-2), creating Lots 5A-1 and 6B-2, owned by the City and Borough of Wrangell, requested by Brian Ashton and Twyla Nore.

Chair Henson opened the public hearing. No testimony was provided. Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/St. Clair. All in favor.

Move to approve the findings of fact, the variance to minimum lot width requirements, and the preliminary plat for the Case Avenue Replat, a subdivision of Lot 6A of the Dan Nore Subdivision, according to Plat No. 90-2, creating Lots 5A-1 and 6B-2, as requested by Brian Ashton and Twyla Nore, subject to the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Staff provided administrative report.

- The proposal related to a Borough land sale and subdivision.
- The property configuration required a variance to minimum lot width standards due to existing access easements and topographic constraints.
- Existing access easements serving adjoining lots would remain preserved.
- Shared access and maintenance agreements would be required among benefiting property owners.

g. (PH) Zoning Ordinance of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, amending the zoning map to establish a zoning designation of Timber Management for Thoms Place and Zarembo Island (Entitlement Lands)

Chair Henson opened the public hearing.

Peter Branson provided testimony expressing concerns regarding:

- Lack of broad public notice to Thoms Place property owners;
- Potential impacts from future timber harvesting;
- Recreation, hunting, scenic corridor, and environmental values associated with the area;
- Long-standing opposition within the subdivision to timber harvesting activities.

Public hearing closed.

M/S: Privett/Watkins

Move to approve the findings of fact and recommend that the Borough Assembly adopt an ordinance establishing Timber Management zoning on designated Borough entitlement lands within Thoms Place and Zarembo (St. John Harbor).

Staff provided administrator report.

- The Borough's timber initiative and entitlement planning efforts had been ongoing for many years.
- Timber Management zoning was required before conducting timber cruising, appraisals, or contract development.
- Thoms Place had documented historical concerns regarding resource extraction near residential areas.
- Zarembo Island had prior timber harvest history and ongoing interest from industry representatives.

Staff also clarified:

- Timber Management zoning does not automatically authorize timber harvest;
- Additional public review, environmental review, and contractual approvals would still be required;
- Recreation and conservation opportunities may still coexist within Timber Management zoning.

Commission discussion also included broader long-range land use considerations for the St. John Harbor area on Zarembo Island. Commissioners discussed the possibility that portions of the entitlement lands could eventually support future recreational or remote mixed-use subdivision opportunities in conjunction with, or subsequent to, selective timber management activities. Staff noted that future planning efforts could evaluate whether certain areas should be preserved for recreation, remote cabin sites, trail systems, or other community-oriented uses while still allowing timber resource management in appropriate locations. Staff further clarified that any such subdivision or land use planning would require additional surveying, public engagement, zoning review, and future Borough approval processes prior to implementation.

Additional discussion occurred regarding the unique character and historical land use patterns associated with the Thoms Place area. Commissioners acknowledged testimony and written correspondence describing the area's longstanding recreational, subsistence, and residential use, including hunting, crabbing, boating access, anchorage use, and preservation of the scenic coastal viewshed. Staff referenced prior Comprehensive Plan discussions indicating that residents within the Thoms Place area historically expressed concerns regarding large-scale resource extraction activities adjacent to residential and recreational lands.

Commissioners also discussed the limited extent of the current public notice requirements under Borough code, noting that only a small number of adjacent property owners were required to receive mailed notice despite the broader community interest associated with the entitlement lands. Based on the testimony received and the potential long-term implications

of establishing Timber Management zoning in close proximity to the subdivision, the Commission expressed support for conducting additional public outreach and community engagement prior to further consideration of the Thoms Place designation.

Staff clarified for the record that adoption of Timber Management zoning would not itself authorize timber harvest activities, clearcutting, or development, but would instead establish the initial zoning framework necessary for future timber evaluation, cruising, environmental review, and potential resource management planning. Any future timber harvest proposals would remain subject to additional Borough review, state and federal permitting requirements, environmental protections, and future public process.

Commissioner discussion supported additional public outreach regarding Thoms Place.

Amendment: M/S: Watkins/Privett

Motion to amend the original motion to table the Thoms Place portion of the request for further public engagement and discussion while proceeding with the Zarembo designation.

Amendment approved unanimously.

Motion approved unanimously as amended:

- Zarembo Timber Management zoning forwarded for approval;
- Thoms Place Timber Management zoning tabled for future review and additional outreach.

**10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

## **11. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Discussion occurred regarding scheduling of the next meeting. Staff noted upcoming travel obligations and advised the next meeting may tentatively occur on June 18, 2026, depending on agenda needs.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

6:52PM

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
J.R. Meek, Secretary

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Terri Henson, Chair