THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE
NORTH CAROLINA

Planning & Zoning Commission
8/6/2025
ACTION MINUTES

These action minutes are intended to provide the reader with an overview of the committee meeting and actions taken during the meeting.

For detailed information on this meeting, please refer to the meeting recording, also located on the commission web page, ashevillenc.gov/pzc, or contact Will Palmquist with any questions.

Present: Chair Geoffrey Barton, Brenton Faircloth, Jane Margaret Bell, Jason Seickel, Jared Wheatley, and Anna Zuevskaya.

Absent: None.

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
Acknowledgement of Byron Greiner. Commissioners acknowledged the passing of Vice-Chair Byron Greiner, reflecting on his dedication, knowledge of Asheville's history, and integrity during his decades of service on various City boards. The commission will be advising the City Clerk's Office to extend the application process and reopen applications to allow more time for new candidates to apply for this PZC vacancy.	
Planning & Zoning Commission Land Acknowledgment Chair Barton read the PZC Land Acknowledgement: "As we are gathering today as the Planning and Zoning Commission, the body tasked with reviewing and advising on appropriate land use in the city of Asheville, it is fitting to acknowledge the storied history of this land. We occupy the Land of the Cherokee people, who have stewarded and been in relationship with these mountains and waterways from time immemorial. This land is occupied through violence, oppression, coercion, broken treaties, and forced relocation. Please join me in expressing respect and gratitude for the present-day Eastern Band of Cherokee, the Cherokee Nation, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee, and all of our Indigenous neighbors, as well as the past and present marginalized community members, as we seek to join in the healing of the indelible trauma that is embedded in this land."	
Update from committee liaisons and workgroups Stormwater and Flood Plain Policy Working Group: The group provided an update on its work, noting a shift in focus. Instead of a deep dive into existing policies, the group will now serve as a liaison and report on progress related to the city's grant application to FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for reviewing and potentially changing the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) regarding stormwater and flood resilience. Anti-Displacement Work Group: A new, working definition of "displacement" was proposed for consideration: "the economic, social, cultural, or physical relocation of a people within a defined	

census tract or within a City adopted neighborhood." This definition aims to provide a clear foundation for future anti-displacement measures.

Approval of minutes from the June 4, 2025, meeting	**Motion:** Approve minutes **Motion made by:** Commissioner Faircloth **Motion 2nd by:** Commissioner Bell **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 6:33)

Presentation on the Affordable Housing Plan

Sasha Vrtunski, the City's affordable housing officer, presented a summary of the recently released Affordable Housing Plan, which outlines five main goals, 42 strategies, and key priorities such as preserving existing housing, increasing supply, and protecting against displacement. She also provided updates on recent initiatives, including storm-related home repair and progress on the 319 Biltmore project, and discussed the new Housing Needs Assessment.

Level II site plan review request for a new 9-story condominium building with 47 units located at 161 Church St.	**Motion:** Approve **Motion made by:** Commissioner Seickel **Motion 2nd by:** Commissioner Bell **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 48:22)

Will Palmquist, Principal Planner with Planning and Urban Design, presented the application for the level 2 site plan review for a new nine-story, 47-unit condominium building at 161 Church Street. The project, known as Church Hill Condominiums, was found by staff to be in compliance with the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and staff recommended approval.

Conditional zoning amendment request for properties located at 1617 Hendersonville Rd to amend the site plan and project conditions.	**Motion:** Continue to 9/3/25 PZC meeting **Motion made by:** Commissioner Wheatley **Motion 2nd by:** Commissioner Bell **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 1:33:23)

Will Palmquist, Principal Planner with Planning and Urban Design, presented the application to amend the conditional zoning for properties located at 1617 Hendersonville Rd which would allow for the expansion of the Deerfield Episcopal retirement community.

The applicant requested a continuance to the next Planning & Zoning Commission meeting to allow for more time for the applicant to work with the community on concerns with the proposed site plan and specifically the proposed grounds maintenance building.

Conditional zoning request for a portion of the property located at 587 Haywood Rd from Community Business II-Conditional Zone (CBII-CZ) to Community Business I - Conditional Zone (CBI-CZ).	**Motion:** Approve **Motion made by:** Commissioner Faircloth **Motion 2nd by:** Chair Barton **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 1:59:53)

Will Palmquist, Principal Planner with Planning and Urban Design, presented the request to conditional rezone the property for the purpose of permanently allowing an overnight shelter

and other community-focused uses. The site is currently operating under a temporary use permit.

Commissioners sought clarification on the partial rezoning of the property and the applicant's community engagement efforts. The director of the organization confirmed a long-standing dialogue with the neighborhood and the community's support for the project.

Zoning text amendment request to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Chapter 7 of the Asheville Code of Ordinances, to amend sections 7-14-1 non-conforming Accessory Dwelling Unit structures.	**Motion:** Continue to 10/1/25 PZC meeting **Motion made by:** Chair Geoffrey Barton **Motion 2nd by:** Commissioner Seickel **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 2:56:44)

Sam Starr-Baum, Urban Planner III with Planning and Urban Design, presented the proposed amendments which include five minor, process-related zoning text amendments to the UDO, relating to:

Board of Adjustment (BOA) Processes: Four of the amendments aimed to streamline the BOA's operations by changing where applications are submitted, reducing the number of alternate members, and removing the requirement for statutory legal ads in the newspaper.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): One amendment aimed to allow existing accessory structures that do not meet current setback requirements to be converted into ADUs without a variance from the BOA. Staff presented data showing that 15 of 16 such variance requests in the past two years were approved, indicating that the current requirement is an administrative burden.

Commissioners acknowledged the staff's data showing a pattern of variance approvals for ADUs (15 out of 16 cases), which suggests the current regulation is inefficient. However, some expressed hesitation to assume that past performance predicts future outcomes. They wondered if the change could disproportionately affect certain neighborhoods, noting a lack of data on the distribution of existing non-conforming structures. Staff clarified that their data shows no single neighborhood is unfairly burdened by these requests and that all of the variance cases involved older buildings, not newly constructed ones.

Commissioners weighed the fiscal savings of eliminating legal notices in the newspaper against the potential loss of public awareness. While sympathizing with the need for fiscal responsibility, one commissioner argued that the potential benefit of a single person being informed through the newspaper and engaging in the process outweighs the relatively small cost.

The discussion expanded to include the equity of information distribution. Commissioners noted that different age groups and communities access information in different ways. They expressed concern that removing a traditional media source might disadvantage older residents or those not connected to online information channels. It was also mentioned that quasi-judicial hearings, which are meant to focus on adjacent property owners, can be confusing for the general public, and newspaper notices sometimes create a false sense of standing for those who are not directly affected.

Following the discussion, commissioners and staff explored alternative solutions. They considered options to replace the newspaper notice with other "cost-free" in-house methods, such as notifying neighborhood associations directly. This conversation led to a compromise

where the commission approved the change to the ordinance but conditioned it on the city establishing a new standard for disseminating information to neighborhood organizations.

Public Comment
Sekou Coleman spoke on behalf of the Legacy Neighborhoods Coalition, representing neighborhoods such as Burton Street, East End Valley Street, Emma, Southside, and Shiloh. The coalition requested a delay on the proposed ADU zoning text amendment. The reason for the request was to allow community leaders and residents more time to fully understand the implications of the change, particularly concerning potential displacement or unintended consequences for historically marginalized communities. The speaker emphasized that the request was not to halt the process, but to ensure a more equitable planning process that respects the pace at which these residents are able to engage.

The commission decided to split up portions of the proposed zoning text amendments in order to approve the amendments related to the Board of Adjustment application filing, membership composition, and legal ad noticing requirements, while continuing the amendment related to Accessory Dwelling Units to a future meeting.

Zoning text amendment request to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Chapter 7 of the Asheville Code of Ordinances, to amend sections 7-3-3(b), 7-6-1(c), 7-5-20, relating to Board of Adjustment membership and legal ad notification requirements.	**Motion:** Approve with a condition to recommend that the City establish a standard for disseminating information regarding the Board of Adjustment to associated neighborhood organizations **Motion made by:** Commissioner Wheatley **Motion 2nd by:** Commissioner Seickel **Vote:** Motion passes 6-0 (Motion made at 2:57:14)

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.