

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

February 5, 2026 @ 5:30 p.m.

The Planning Commission held a meeting on Thursday February 5, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present

Wendell Miller, Chairman

Cody Black, Secretary

Dylan Edgell

Teri Klir

Justin Keller

Members Absent

Vice Chairman, John Choate

Shirley Hatley

Luke Duffield

Visitors Present:

City Planner Gavin Wilson, Planner II Victoria Marchant, David Garza, Harry Komprood, Harold Cuertes, Tom Bleau, Christian Anderson, Rex Surette, Mark Bertel, Mark Soileau, Hannah Thaxton, Evie Byrd.

Welcome Visitors

The First Order of Business is an Election of Officers for the 2026 Calendar Year.

Commissioner Klir made a motion to keep the officers from the 2025 calendar year (Wendell Miller Chairperson, John Choate Vice Chairperson, Cody Black Secretary). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Monfee and passed unanimously

The Second Order of Business is Vacation of an Alley between lots 1-3 and 10-12 of block 8 of the Maddison White Addition. Submitted by Barrett & Associates on behalf of Chris Olson. (VAC-0126-000721)

City Planner Gavin Wilson presented the existing conditions as follows:

- Located at 301 S Utah within the Inglewood Neighborhood, this is currently a Single Family Dwelling that was constructed over the alley in question. All surrounding zoning in the property's immediate vicinity is R-1 Single Family Residential. All surrounding uses are also presumed to be Single Family Housing.

City Planner Wilson stated the staff review comments were:

- The house purchased by Mr. Olson appears to have been constructed over an alley, and that alley should have been vacated prior to construction as it is considered a public ROW. Without vacating, this causes a jurisdictional issue as there is technically a strip of

public ROW passing through an already existing private residence. The entirety of this section of alley would be vacated to Mr. Olson, as he is the only property owner on both sides of the ROW.

- When considering a Vacation of Right of Way, staff must take into consideration three key questions:
 - What is the impact of the proposed vacation upon the “public trust functions” of the ROW? Does the vacation impair circulation, access, utilities, open space, and/or views?
 - What are the land use impacts regarding the vacation of the ROW?
 - What Public Benefit is received by vacating the Right-of-Way?
- What is the impact of the proposed vacation upon the “public trust functions” of the ROW? Does the vacation impair circulation, access, utilities, open space, and/or views?
 - Closing this alley would not impact negatively any of the aforementioned subjects, as it is staff’s understanding that this alley is functionally closed already due to the fact that the home is already existing. Additionally, utilities that have responded to requests for information regarding possible impacts to their infrastructure have indicated that they have no improvements that would be impacted by this vacation.
- What are the land use impacts regarding the vacation of the ROW?
 - Land use impacts from this vacation would be minimal. The alley currently runs through the middle of this pre-existing Single Family Residence. It is unlikely, from staff’s perspective, that the public is utilizing this alley in any form or function.
- What Public Benefit is received by vacating the Right-of-Way?
 - The most immediate public benefit would be clarifying jurisdictional boundaries between private and public property. Because this alley has been functionally closed due to the presence of this Single Family Residence, staff believe it would be in both the public and the property owner’s best interest to provide clarity that the section of alley in question should be formally vacated.

City Planner Wilson stated that the staff recommendation was as follows:

- It is staff’s recommendation that the commission forward this application to the City Council for approval to vacate this 120’ portion of the 12’ wide alley as a result of the findings below:
 1. There is not an impact to the Public Trust, Land Use, or effects to the Public Benefit; and
 2. Letters from utility companies provided by the applicant release the use of the area to be vacated.

David Garza with Barrett and Associates stated that the house was built over the alley in 1960 and the City is not maintaining the alley and the public is not utilizing it. He stated that the vacation makes sense and there are no utilities in the alley.

Commissioner Klir made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Monfee and passed unanimously.

The Third Order of Business is Rezoning a property from R-2 Medium Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business located at 500-502 Tyler Road. Submitted by the Disabled American Veterans on behalf of Clarence Harbour. (ZONE-0126-000711)

Planner II Victoria Marchant stated the existing conditions are:

- Located in the Rural East City District, this is an R-2 zoned property. This property was previously utilized by the Arkansas Center for Music Education but has sat vacant for several years. This location is bordered to the north, south, and east by R-2 zoned properties. It is bordered to the west by M-1 Light Industrial.
- The property directly west of this property is zoned and used as Industrial. Properties south of 6th street on Tyler Road are all industrial properties. Uses along Tyler Road in the industrial area include Tyson, a Utility substation, and a bitcoin mining facility. Directly behind the subject property is KBM Industrial Services.

Planner II Marchant stated the review comments are:

- The applicant is requesting to rezone the property from R-2 Medium Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business. The request has been submitted by the Disabled American Veterans who are requesting to rezone the property to serve as their new location. The DAV utilizes their building for office space, assisting disabled American veterans with processing claims, monthly meetings, and food distribution. The DAV has been in communication with the City for several months with how they could potentially move forward with utilizing this property as their new location. Many different options were considered throughout these conversations and the final proposal of rezoning the property to C-4 was reached and was acceptable to both the DAV and the current property owner.
- In 2024 the property was rezoned from M-1 Light Industrial to R-2 Medium Density Residential for the current owner to create a duplex development on the property. The current owner has not moved forward with these plans and now intends to sell the property to the DAV. The rationale behind the C-4 zoning is that it is in line with the comprehensive plan but would still allow the DAV to utilize the site or if the sale fell through, the applicant could move forward with their duplex development.
- When considering a zone map adjustment careful consideration needs to be made in regard to the future and current land use of the area, the Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and that the request is not based exclusively upon a desire to increase the value or income potential of the property.
- 1. Future and Current Land Uses of the Area.
 - This property was historically utilized as an industrial use and then a music school and has sat vacant for several years. This area contains a mixture of land uses ranging from single family and multifamily residential to heavy industrial uses. Due to the variety of land uses in this area, staff believes a Community Service use could be appropriate at this location. This location will primarily be used as an office space for volunteers to help Disabled American Veterans process claims and host the chapters' monthly meetings. The DAV also has monthly food distribution, serving around 200 veterans. While this will likely cause an increase in traffic to the area, the food distribution takes place during work/school hours. Additionally, the applicant has stated that they believe they can stack a high volume of vehicles through a number of switchbacks behind the building. As a result, staff does not believe this once a month distribution will have much of an impact on traffic patterns for the area.
- 2. ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
 - This piece of property and a handful of properties to the west are called out in the

Comprehensive Plan as Suburban Corridor. The ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan states appropriate zoning categories for Suburban Corridor are R-O, C-2, and C-4. Therefore rezoning this property to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business would be appropriate and is in line with the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan states that appropriate uses for Suburban Corridor include offices. While the technical use on their business license will be “Community Services, Not Listed,” the DAV building will primarily be used in a similar fashion to an office. Staff does acknowledge that this will be a spot zoning, which is typically not something that is supported. However, this rezoning does fall in line with the Future Land Use Plan in the Comprehensive Plan, and meets all other rezoning requirements.

- 3. Value or Income potential of the property.
 - While changing a property from a residential zone to a commercial zone typically increases property value by virtue of potential future uses, the applicant is proposing to rezone it for a Community Service use and not a typical for profit commercial use. The applicant’s request is considered recommendable by staff primarily due to the fact that the C-4 zone would be more in line with the Comprehensive Plan than the current zone. In this unique circumstance, the current proposal for the property (a duplex development) would actually create more revenue than the proposed future use (the DAV). For this reason, staff does concur this rezoning request is not to increase the value or income potential of the property.

Planner II Marchant stated the staff recommendations were as follows:

- Staff recommends that the commission forward this application to the City Council for approval to rezone the property from R-2 Medium Density Residential to C-4 Neighborhood and Quiet Business as a result of the findings below:
 1. The application is in line with existing and Future Land Uses within the area (Suburban Corridor); and
 2. The proposal aligns with the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan; and
 3. Rezoning to the C-4 zone appears to be appropriate and aligns with the vision outlined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Rex Surette with the Disabled American Veterans stated the DAV is currently located in a 1400 square foot building at 206 S Pittsburgh Ave. He stated that they have outgrown their current office and are looking to relocate to this location which has a 3200 square foot building. Mr. Surette discussed the history of the house and explained the services the DAV provides. He stated this was not only an opportunity to help their current veterans but also to expand their operations.

Commissioner Black made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Klir and passed unanimously.

The Fourth Order of Business is Rezoning a property from C-2 Highway Commercial to C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial located at 2407 N Arkansas Ave. Submitted by The Dels Inc. (ZONE-0126-000716)

City Planner Gavin Wilson stated the existing conditions were as follows:

- Located at 2407 N Arkansas Ave within the Highway 7 Interchange District, this is the former site of the Clarion Hotel. The adjacent property to the west is an America's Best Value Inn, and to the east is a Phillips 66 Gas Station. Other surrounding uses include restaurants, gas stations, hotel/motels, a church, and two single family homes. The property has since been purchased by The Dels Corporation (Applicant) in order to operate Multi-Family housing, however this use is not permissible in the C-2 zone.
- Surrounding zones include large swaths of C-2 Highway Commercial, as well as smaller pockets of C-4 Neighborhood & Quiet Business, R-3 Medium/High Density Residential, and R-4 Manufactured Home Park or Subdivision (due to a former manufactured home park that is no longer present).

City Planner Wilson stated the staff review comments were:

- The applicant had originally stated that their intention was to operate as a hotel/motel, however, after a meeting between city staff and the applicant, the logical use type based on the City of Russellville Zoning Code use definitions would be Dwelling or Complex, Multi-Family, due to the fact that descriptions of operations provided to city staff did not match the Zoning Code's definition of Hotel/Motel. Dwelling or Complex, Multi-Family is not permissible in the C-2 zone, which is the current zoning of the property.
- The most appropriate lens to view the use that the applicant is pursuing would be affordable multi-family housing that specifically caters to transient workers (construction crews, travel nurses, etc.) and single individuals.
- In an effort to work with the applicant in finding a path forward for their operation, city staff recommended pursuing a rezoning from C-2 Highway Commercial to C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial, as this could be more in line with the long-term goals of this district according to the Comprehensive Plan.
- When considering a Zone Map Amendment, or rezoning, staff must take into consideration three key questions:
 - Future and Current Land Use of the Area
 - ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan
 - Value or Income Potential of the Property
- Future and Current Land Uses of the Area
 - Currently, the southern half of the Highway 7 Interchange District is predominantly comprised of hotel/motels, gas stations, and restaurants. Bordering specifically to the south of the subject property begins the University Place District, which nearby comprises of two single family dwellings, a church, Bona Dea Trails and Wildlife Sanctuary, and, further south, the Loft Apartments.
 - The current zoning map for this area is somewhat of a patchwork, indicative of the increased development activity in this area over the past several years.
 - Due to the presence of another apartment complex some 750' south of the subject property as well as other uses that could be complementary to the C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial zone (Restaurants, gasoline service stations, etc.), a C-3 zone could be appropriate in this district and match current land use patterns in the area.
- ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan
 - According to the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the prescription for the subject property as well as most of the Highway 7 Interchange

District south of Interstate 40 is Suburban Center, which recommends the C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial zone or the C-5 Highway Commercial Casino zone. Given the location, C-3 would make the most logical sense in this case.

- Ideally, Suburban Center would serve as a high intensity commercial area that services surrounding residential uses and features pedestrian amenities, however, the table of permitted uses in the zoning code would also support higher density housing in the C-3 zone.
- Staff would also like to note that this zone map amendment would constitute a spot-zoning, however, since the target zone of C-3 is directly in line with the Comprehensive Plan, this rezoning should still be considered well founded.
- Given the already existing higher intensity of the southern half of the Highway 7 Interchange District and the Suburban Center prescription for the property, moving the property from C-2 to C-3 could be appropriate in this case.
- Value or Income Potential of the Property
 - Generally speaking, moving from a lower intensity zone to a higher intensity zone does increase the value of a property due to the fact that that typically expands the possible commercial uses of the property. Moving from C-2 to C-3 would on paper likely have the effect of increasing the value of this property. That said, the former use of the property as a hotel/motel would likely have higher revenue potential than the current target use of the property, Dwelling or Complex, Multi-Family, as night-by-night rentals usually generate more revenue over time than long term, annual leases.
 - Further, the leasing options provided by the applicant may be competitive with other rental market prices in Russellville. Therefore, staff cannot say that short term profits or increasing property value is the applicant's goal with this rezoning.

City Planner Wilson stated the staff recommendations were as follows:

- It is staff's recommendation that the commission forward this application to the City Council for approval to rezone the property from C-2 Highway Commercial to C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial request with the following conditions:
 1. The applicant adjusts their City of Russellville Business License from Hotel/Motel to Dwelling or Complex, Multi-Family.
- Based on the findings below:
 1. The application is in line with existing and Future Land Uses within the area; and
 2. The proposal aligns with the ReImagine Russellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan; and
 3. Rezoning to the C-3 Large Scale and Shopping Center Commercial appears to be appropriate and aligns with the vision outlined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Mark Soileau the COO of the Dels Corp gave the Planning Commission an overview about the company. He stated that they provide affordable housing options and they fill a need for transient renters such as travel nurses and contract workers. He stated that their market is to buy rundown hotels or motels and fulfill a need in the market.

Commissioner Klir asked what percentage of occupancy were they looking at? Mr. Soileau stated that most of their facilities run anywhere between 90-95%.

Commissioner Klir asked Fire Marshal and Building Official Richard Setian if there was any difference between the life safety codes for residencies vs hotel/motels. Chief Setian stated that extended stay hotels and apartments were in the same occupancy classification. He stated when Fire, Building, and Safety inspected the upgrades, it all applied the same.

Commissioner Monfee stated that she believed the previous owners of the property were also allowing transient rentals for a month or two at a time. Planner II Marchant clarified that the Clarion Hotel still had a night by night rental option even if some individuals had monthly rates whereas the Dels are not going to offer that and will instead have rental contracts.

Commissioner Black stated that he would like the City to look into what transpired in this case at the Long Range Planning Committee meeting to ensure that city staff has a process and framework for situations like this in the future. City Planner Wilson stated that it would be discussed at the next Long Range Planning Committee meeting.

Commissioner Edgell made a motion to approve the application as presented by staff, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Black and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned
