

CITY OF FAIRVIEW

PLANNING COMMISSION

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

- Chairman, Havley Schulist
- Vice-Chairman, Jeff Pape
- Mayor, Lisa Anderson
- Vice Mayor, Chris McDonald
- Salvatore "Sam" Cali
- Rod Dawson
- <Will King
- Demetrius Ritt
- Shonda Schilling

WORK SESSION
JANUARY 22, 2026
6:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Call to order by Ms. Schulist at 6:05PM.

2. New Business

A. Discussion: Zone Fairview - Final Draft of Development Code

Public Participation and Public Hearings in the Development Review Process

The Planning Commission discussed potential changes to increase public involvement in the development review process. One proposal was to require a public participation plan for larger developments, which would obligate applicants to host a community meeting prior to appearing before the Planning Commission. This requirement would be triggered only for projects meeting specific thresholds (e.g., subdivisions over a certain number of lots or commercial developments over a defined acreage or square footage), not for small projects.

Under this model, the applicant would be responsible for organizing, advertising, and hosting the meeting—either in person or virtually or both—during the period between application submittal and Planning Commission review. Applicants would then submit a report summarizing public feedback and noting whether any project changes were made in response. This approach is commonly used in other municipalities and is intended to provide early community input without replacing formal public hearings.

The Planning Commission also discussed whether to add a public hearing at the Planning Commission level, rather than limiting public hearings to the Board of Commissioners' final reading. Several members expressed concern that the current process allows little opportunity for public input before final action, while others emphasized the importance of keeping decisions fact-based and within zoning regulations.

Additional considerations included:

- Ensuring public input does not improperly influence decisions.
- Clarifying compliance with open meetings and sunshine laws.
- Determining staff involvement and resource impacts.
- Allowing staff discretion to require public participation for unique or high-impact projects.
- Establishing enforcement mechanisms (e.g., applications not advancing without compliance).

There was general interest in further exploring these concepts and reviewing examples or draft language. Any agreed-upon recommendations would be included as exhibits to the Planning Commission's resolution and forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for final consideration.

Commercial Development Flexibility and Planned Development (PD) Zoning

The Planning Commission discussed how restrictive the proposed development code should be for commercial development, noting that much of the public feedback had focused on residential standards while commercial impacts may be more significant long term.

Concerns were raised that current commercial design requirements—such as strict building placement near the right-of-way, front-facing entrances, parking located behind buildings, and maximum building widths—could discourage desirable large-scale commercial users. Examples were cited indicating that common retailers (e.g., Target, Publix, Walmart Neighborhood Market) would not be able to develop under the proposed standards without workarounds.

Planning Commission members discussed examples from other municipalities where developers used lot splits, shared parking, or alternative frontage arrangements to comply with similar codes. It was noted that relying on workarounds is inefficient and limits local control, especially when drafting a new ordinance.

As a potential solution, the Planning Commission discussed reintroducing a Planned Development (PD) zoning option for large or unique commercial and mixed-use projects. This tool would allow flexibility while still maintaining oversight, with clearly defined standards such as:

- Minimum acreage thresholds (e.g., 20 acres).
- Applicability limited primarily to commercial or mixed-use districts (e.g., CD-4).
- Defined density, layout, and use standards established at rezoning and locked in through a master plan.
- Use of PD zoning only for projects that do not reasonably fit within standard zoning requirements.

Planning Commission members noted that PD zoning could reduce the need for multiple variances and hearings, improve efficiency, and allow the City to accommodate high-quality projects while maintaining appropriate controls. Past concerns with PDs were discussed, particularly related to density increases, and it was emphasized that such outcomes result from approval decisions rather than the PD tool itself.

The Planning Commission also discussed limitations on controlling specific business types, acknowledging that while the City cannot select individual tenants, zoning tools such as use tables and spacing requirements (e.g., limits on certain uses like gas stations or automotive services within set distances) may provide some influence.

Staff noted that recent ordinance updates already reflect community input, including restricting self-storage facilities to light industrial districts and removing them from commercial zoning.

There was general support for further evaluating a PD option for commercial development, with proposed thresholds (e.g., 20-acre minimum) and limitations to commercial use. These concepts were noted for inclusion on the list of potential recommendations to be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners as part of the ordinance review process.

Hilltops and Ridgelines

The Planning Commission discussed the proposed hilltop and ridgeline protection standards in the development code and whether they are appropriate for the City of Fairview. Planning Commission members noted that Fairview does not have clearly defined or iconic ridgelines comparable to other communities, and that applying a fixed elevation-based standard could create significant administrative challenges and unintended restrictions on existing and future neighborhoods.

It was noted that the draft defines hilltops and ridgelines as areas above 875 feet in elevation, which could encompass large portions of the city and potentially prohibit development patterns that already exist. Several members expressed concern that, if applied as written, many current neighborhoods would not have been permitted. Staff confirmed that the hilltop/ridgeline language is a standard provision included by the consultant in most ordinances, but acknowledged it would be difficult to administer in Fairview and would require frequent interpretation or justification.

The Planning Commission discussed whether the Comprehensive Plan specifically calls for hilltop or ridgeline preservation and determined it does not, though it does emphasize tree preservation. It was also noted that steep slope protections are already addressed elsewhere in the ordinance and would remain in effect regardless of

action on hilltops and ridgelines.

Alternative approaches were discussed, including modifying the definition to rely on slope, vertical relief, or site-specific criteria rather than a fixed elevation, but concerns remained about potential bias, enforceability, and administrative burden. Staff advised that the ordinance could be amended, revised, or removed at the Planning Commission's discretion.

After discussion, the Planning Commission reached consensus to remove the hilltop and ridgeline provisions (Items B and C), while retaining steep slope protections. The Planning Commission indicated general agreement to proceed with removing these sections from the draft ordinance.

Zoning Map

The Planning Commission discussed a parcel shown on the zoning map that stands out due to its proposed CD-4C zoning outside of the I-40 interchange area. It was noted that this property has been the subject of multiple rezoning requests over the years, all of which were denied, and that previous hearings on this site have drawn significant public opposition related to concerns about density.

Concern was expressed that placing a CD-4C district (allowing up to 16 units per acre) in the middle of town, outside the I-40 corridor, is inconsistent with surrounding development patterns and community expectations. Several members indicated that CD-3, or a reduced-density CD-4 classification, would be more appropriate for this location, with CD-3 allowing up to 6 units per acre.

Staff provided background, explaining that the property was originally mapped as CD-4C based on its current Commercial General zoning and the zoning translation matrix adopted by the City. The CD-4C designation was requested by the property owner during meetings with staff and was consistent with how Commercial General zoning translated under the matrix.

Discussion followed regarding a potential compromise to reclassify the property from CD-4C to CD-4, which would maintain similar commercial allowances while reducing residential density from 16 units per acre to a lower level. It was noted that this approach could better align with the surrounding neighborhood while remaining fair to the property owner and preserving existing commercial zoning rights.

While continuing discussion of the zoning map, the Planning Commission considered future land use near the I-840 interchange. A question was raised about whether CD-4 or CD-4C zoning should be applied in that area in anticipation of long-term commercial viability, noting that the development code is intended to guide growth over the next 15--25 years.

Staff responded that the area is currently zoned CD-2 Rural, and that no commercial development is anticipated there in the near term. Staff advised that maintaining the current zoning would ensure that any future commercial development would require a formal rezoning request, allowing both the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners to review and provide input at that time, rather than permitting development by right.

It was noted that the 2040 Comprehensive Plan designates the I-840 interchange area as a Commercial/Business Interchange District, which supports the idea that the area may be appropriate for commercial development in the future, subject to future rezoning and policy decisions.

Principal Uses

The Planning Commission discussed concerns related to automotive and motor vehicle--oriented uses, particularly gas stations, in areas shown on the zoning map. Members questioned whether the development code adequately limits the proximity and number of gas stations, noting opposition to allowing another gas station near an existing one.

Staff explained that principal uses have been a significant focus in the code revisions and that most automotive and motor vehicle--related uses are restricted to light industrial districts. The primary exception is tire sales, which are permitted in the CD-4C district, largely concentrated around the I-40 interchange.

Gas stations were discussed as a use that is generally limited and not broadly permitted across commercial

districts. Staff noted that many properties in question are currently undeveloped, natural, or recently released industrial properties, and that additional automotive uses, including gas stations, would generally require a rezoning request. Any such rezoning would be subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners, ensuring oversight and public input before approval.

Historic Zoning Commission

Questions were raised regarding the appointment process for the Planning and Zoning Commission and other boards, including how vacancies are filled. Staff explained that when a vacancy occurs, the position is advertised, applications are received, and the Board of Commissioners reviews and appoints members. This process is generally consistent across City boards and commissions.

Discussion then turned to the appointment of a Historic Zoning Commission. Reference was made to the draft ordinance, which states that members of the Historic Zoning Commission are appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Board of Commissioners. A concern was raised about whether this appointment method was inconsistent with other boards.

Staff clarified that this appointment structure is required by Tennessee state law for historic zoning commissions. The City is not required to establish a Historic Zoning Commission; however, if the City chooses to create one, it must follow the state-mandated appointment process. It was noted that similar language exists in the City's current zoning ordinance, although a Historic Zoning Commission has never been formed.

Further discussion explained that the creation of a Historic Zoning Commission would typically follow the establishment of a historic overlay district by the Board of Commissioners. If created, the commission would review proposed changes to designated historic properties. Staff noted that standards for historic designation vary by community, with many jurisdictions following National Park Service guidelines, generally using a minimum age of 50 years along with other criteria such as architectural significance or historical importance.

The discussion concluded with clarification that the draft ordinance language applies only if the City elects to establish a Historic Zoning Commission in the future.

2040 Comprehensive Plan

Questions were raised regarding whether the 2040 plan references would be updated following formal adoption of the new development code and how this would relate to the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Staff responded that, after adoption, staff intends to update the relevant zoning references and ensure consistency between the adopted code, zoning matrix, and how districts are translated and applied. The development character areas and appropriate land uses identified in the 2040 Plan were used as the basis for the character-based zoning framework in the new code, and those references will be aligned accordingly. These updates are expected to occur relatively soon after adoption and will be completed in-house by staff.

Staff also acknowledged questions regarding a broader update to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. It was noted that although the planning process began in 2017, the plan was not formally adopted until approximately 2019. Given the pace of development, staff indicated that a comprehensive update would likely be appropriate after the five-year mark rather than immediately.

Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems

The Planning Commission discussed decentralized (alternative) wastewater treatment systems and their growing role in future development. Members noted that these systems can require substantial land area and may generate public concern, particularly when located near roadways or residential areas. Discussion focused on the City's ability, through the zoning ordinance, to regulate these systems by use classification and performance standards rather than prohibiting them outright.

Staff confirmed that decentralized wastewater treatment facilities are listed as a permitted utility use in the principal use chart, subject to additional standards. The ordinance provides authority to regulate their placement, screening, buffering, landscaping, and visual impacts, as well as to impose thresholds that could require a special or

conditional use permit (for example, based on the number of homes served). Staff emphasized that while zoning can control location and standards, the City does not regulate how the Water Authority of Dickson County provides service; that authority ultimately operates the systems, with oversight and approval by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC).

The Planning Commission discussed concerns about visibility of treatment facilities, particularly along major roads, and expressed interest in ensuring they are placed away from public rights-of-way and adjacent properties where feasible. Staff noted that existing ordinance provisions already require screening and buffering and that additional standards could be added if desired.

Background was provided on the City's relationship with the Water Authority of Dickson County, which has operated Fairview's water and sewer system since 2006 following transfer of the City's wastewater treatment responsibilities. It was noted that conventional sewer service is generally available closer to I-40 and Highway 96, while areas farther west, including near I-840, typically rely on septic or decentralized systems due to lack of sewer infrastructure.

Members discussed trends at the state and regional level favoring decentralized systems and the importance of establishing clear, enforceable standards to address aesthetics, compatibility with surrounding uses, and long-term functionality. Staff identified the specific ordinance sections where decentralized wastewater standards are addressed and noted that the Planning Commission has discretion to recommend additional requirements or district-specific limitations as part of the code review.

Buffer for Bowie Nature Park

Planning Commission members discussed public concerns regarding development adjacent to Bowie Nature Park and considered options to enhance protections for park boundaries. The Planning Commission reviewed existing buffer requirements and zoning, noting that current standards include setbacks, fencing requirements, and buffers intended to prevent homes from directly abutting the park.

Staff clarified property ownership around the park, including adjacent single-family residential parcels and commercially developable land near Walmart that could potentially back up to the park. Mapping details and access points were also discussed, including park entrances, surrounding roads, and restrictions on activities within the park.

The Planning Commission discussed the possibility of strengthening buffer requirements, specifically proposing a 50-foot buffer around the park with at least 50% (25 feet) required to remain undisturbed. The intent is to preserve trees, limit grading up to property lines, enhance stormwater management, and provide additional visual and environmental protection for the park. Existing fencing requirements (wooden, four-rail style) were acknowledged, with interest expressed in maintaining consistency around the park perimeter.

There was consensus among members that the proposed buffer approach is reasonable and appropriate. The Planning Commission agreed to move forward with incorporating this undisturbed buffer requirement into the standards.

Traffic Studies

The Planning Commission discussed thresholds for requiring traffic impact studies, particularly for residential developments. Members considered whether requirements should be strictly numerical or allow flexibility based on staff judgment. There was general agreement that being overly restrictive could be unreasonable for small developments, such as a few homes, where a traffic study would not be warranted.


Discussion focused on establishing a residential threshold of 30 homes to trigger a traffic impact study requirement. Developments below this threshold would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis at staff's discretion, recognizing that certain locations or conditions may still warrant a study due to safety or traffic concerns.

The Planning Commission also reviewed existing commercial traffic study standards, noting that current requirements include developments exceeding 30,000 square feet of non-residential floor area, uses generating 500 vehicle trips per day or 50 peak-hour trips, or projects with access to non-standard roads. Members acknowledged that the existing commercial threshold of 1,000 peak-hour trips is very high and often not triggered,

even by large retail uses, while certain uses (e.g., daycare facilities) may create significant peak-hour impacts despite lower daily volumes.

Consensus was reached to move forward with 30 residential units as the traffic study threshold, with flexibility for staff to require studies for smaller developments when appropriate. The Planning Commission expressed agreement with this approach.

3. Adjournment



Marisa Howell, Community Services Assistant