

The following are minutes from the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Thursday, July 31, 2025, in the Abita Springs Town Hall. The meeting convened at 6:00 P.M.

Commission Chairman Pierce called the meeting to order, and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioners in attendance included John Pierce, Mike Lanaux, Claire Guidry, and Lex LeBlanc. Chad Hall was absent. Staff members Kristin Tortorich and Leanne Schaefer were also present, along with Attorney Andrew Wilson, and Planners Alex Carter and Evelyn Campo with Desire Line.

**AGENDA MODIFICATION** No modifications.

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES** The Commission accepted the minutes from the July 31, 2025, meeting.

**Commissioner Lanaux motioned to accept the minutes of the July 31, 2025, meeting as presented.**

**Commissioner Guidry seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

**PLANNING** No items.

**ZONING**

*CALL FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION*

*Discussion of potential liability concerning Lonesome Development LLC, in anticipation of litigation, per LA R.S. 42:17(A)(2).*

Attorney Andrew Wilson stated the purpose of Executive Session would be to make the Commissioners aware of their personal liability based on decisions to be made about current agenda items.

**Commissioner Guidry motioned to enter Executive Session, followed by a second by Commissioner Lanaux.**

**Public Comments:**

- Alderman Saussy reminded everyone that an appeal of a decision by the Planning & Zoning Commission would not be heard by the Board of Aldermen, but by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Court. He also said he and other Aldermen had been subpoenaed to attend a court hearing on September 8, 2025.
- Cindy Knight supported Executive Session, noting “knowledge is power.”
- Stewart Eastman urged the Commission to go into Executive Session and said it is reserved for times when the Attorney can meet in private with the Commissioners about a legal situation that he can’t tell the public.
- Alderman Eric Templet encouraged the Commission to go into Executive Session, unlike the Board of Aldermen at a recent meeting.
- Alderman Saussy asked if the items discussed in Executive Session could be shared. Attorney Andrew Wilson said the whole purpose of Executive Session is to have a confidential discussion and discussing it openly afterward would defeat the whole purpose.
- Philip Moore asked about the timing of the Executive Session so meeting attendees would know how long they’d need to wait to get to other agenda items. Leanne Schaefer said they were anticipating about ten minutes.

**Commissioners Pierce, Lanaux, and Guidry voted for Executive Session. Commissioner LeBlanc was opposed. The Commissioners left for Executive Session at 6:14 P.M. and returned at 6:28 P.M.**

**Commissioner Guidry motioned to return to the meeting. Commissioner LeBlanc seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

*ABITA MEADOWS*

- Planner Alex Carter presented the process for PUD approvals and Subdivision approvals and provided the following key points:
  - A PUD is a zoning designation, while a Subdivision details land use and infrastructure development.
  - A Development Agreement can override some elements of the Subdivision Regulations and zoning requirements.
  - Subdivision Regulations are adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission, and the Commission can approve, disapprove, or tentatively approve a subdivision.
  - The Planning & Zoning Commission cannot approve a PUD. They make a recommendation to the Town Council, who then approves or disapproves of a PUD.
  - Preliminary Plat Approval is based on several items to include minimum design and construction standards, tree and landscaping ordinance requirements, drainage study with erosion and sediment plan plus Public Hearing and vote.
  - Infrastructure construction may begin at this stage and ends with as-built drawing submissions, testing with the Town Engineer present, and approvals.
  - Developer posts a Maintenance Bond for 2 years after completion to act as a warranty of the infrastructure.
  - Final Plat Approval entails construction is 100% complete, Engineering certifications and all required submissions are received, a Public Hearing and a vote are held.
  - Lots can only be sold, according to state law, after Final Plat Approval is received. Building Permit applications then follow, but only after the Town Council approves the PUD and the Final Plat is recorded.
  - Final PUD Approval requires a final detailed plan to include Final PUD Plat to show lots, buildings and areas for common spaces, final systems plan, construction plans and schedule
  - Developer pays a deposit equal to 15% of the estimated cost of public facility installations

*PUBLIC HEARING: Abita Meadows Final PUD Approval Request*

The Commission reviewed the checklist for submissions. Kristin Tortorich said the engineer is still reviewing everything and a report is expected next week.

Public Comment:

- Stewart Eastman urged the Commission to thoroughly review the plat and not to just look at the checklist of received items.

**Commissioner Lanaux motioned to make the recommendation to Town Council to accept the PUD. Commissioner Guidry seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

*PUBLIC HEARING: Abita Meadows Final Subdivision Plat Approval Request*

Public Comments:

- Thad Mancil, III expressed concern about the drainage on Hebert Road, as it has worsened with the development of Abita Meadow to date.
- Adam Henning, representing Lonesome Development, said Phase 1 infrastructure is complete, as is all testing with the exception of the lift station in the development which is scheduled for next week. Commissioner LeBlanc asked about the status of the twelve-inch sewer force main to the Pearl Street lift station. Mr. Henning said it is part of the Developmental Agreement and is required when it is necessary. He said it would be required after the completion of Phase 2 according to the engineering firm at the time of the Developmental Agreement. Although the current engineering firm doesn't think it would be required, Mr. Henning said Lonesome Development plans to still meet the terms of the Agreement by installing the force main when it becomes necessary. Commission Chairman Pierce asked if those determinations were listed in a

report. Mr. Henning said he hasn't seen such a report, and that he can only go off of the status of the testing and the pending engineering report.

- Mike Strain expressed drainage concerns as Dundee Street becomes impassable.
- Stewart Eastman supported deferring the item until the engineering report is received and stated his concerns about the subdivision's impact on drainage.
- Eric Lowe asked why the Town Engineer wasn't at the meeting. Chairman Pierce and Kristin Tortorich said he is reviewing results from the testing, and he likely wouldn't be able to speak on the items until the completion of the report but he would attend the meeting once the report is complete.
- Kori Reine expressed concerns about the drainage impact on residents.
- Scott Payne shared the same concerns about impact on drainage.

Kristin Tortorich said that the as-built drawings for gas, water, and sewer infrastructure are still pending. Attorney Andrew Wilson clarified that four items on the checklist for the Final Plat Approval were not complete by the developer, and the Developmental Agreement did not call for the installation of a sewer force main "as necessary", so the developer is still required to install the force main. Mr. Wilson said that according to the Town Engineer's March 30, 2023, report, doing so would create a sewage back up. The Town Engineer has tried to come up with a solution to avoid the backup and Alderman Boudreaux presented a resolution to try to address the issue as well. Mr. Wilson said the developer said at a Town Council meeting that they would not negotiate on the sewer issue and only do what is stated in the Developmental Agreement. Attorney Wilson noted that the developer has tried to put the Mayor in jail and is doing so again on September 8, 2025, as well as sue Mr. Wilson himself and the Aldermen to go to jail. Adam Henning then shouted from the audience that Mr. Wilson was "a paid liar." Mr. Wilson continued that the developer also threatened the Town Engineer with contempt and accused him of malfeasance but hasn't provided any report that would contradict the Town Engineer's findings.

- Alderman Saussy said that Town Council voted unanimously to apply for a 3.8-million-dollar revolving loan to help with sewer capacity issues and there is a 49.9% forgiveness option when meeting certain criteria. Mr. Saussy said that there was a moratorium in place for building on certain lots due to the capacity issue. Kristin Tortorich corrected the statement and said that there is currently not a moratorium, but that some lots are required to provide private sewer treatment due to the inability to currently connect to the town sewer system in some areas of town.
- Stewart Eastman encouraged the Commission to not vote based on speculation for a loan that may or may not be granted.

Commissioner Guidry told the audience that the Commission is taking the application seriously and to know that their voices have been heard. She also said that they have the same concerns, as they are all residents of Abita Springs.

- Thad Mancil, III started to express his frustration at the behavior of the developer when he was interrupted by Adam Henning from the audience. Mr. Mancil continued to express his concerns about the cost that is being passed onto the taxpayers and said he hopes that loan forgiveness is an option because it isn't fair for taxpayers to help a developer profit. Mr. Mancil then called Mr. Henning's behavior disrespectful and was met with applause from the audience.

**Commissioner LeBlanc motioned to defer until the Engineering Report is received. Commissioner Guidry seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.**

*Comprehensive Zoning Code Review; presented by Desire Line*

- Kristin Tortorich said the process is being slowed down and will not be up for a vote in October as previously planned to allow even more time for public feedback.

- Alex Carter recapped the comprehensive zoning process from adoption of the Master Plan in early 2024, followed by the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), to present.
- The feedback has been predominantly against Traditional Residential and duplexes.
- The intensity of uses in the Mixed-Use District has been scaled back.
- There are a lot of Conditional Uses in order to allow public comment on more intense uses.

**Public Comments:**

Multiple people spoke including the following:

- Alderman Saussy announced there will be a mailer to advertise additional meetings that will break up the town into sections for more public feedback.
- Mike Strain expressed his concern for vacant properties being held as investments and their values changing with rezoning. Mr. Strain asked for details on the process for zoning changes if the property owner is not in agreement with the zone to be applied. Alex Carter said that the map is reflective of the community feedback received to date and she'd need some more time to review the Code. Ms. Carter said that the Evelyn Campo said that broad laws allow for community rezoning.
- Herbie Rabalais expressed concern for additional density in Traditional Residential in AE Flood Zone. Twelve people in the audience agreed with Mr. Rabalais.
- Philip Moore raised concerns about policing, road infrastructure, sewer infrastructure and rates, impacts of the potential Harrison Road extension, and drainage.
- Tiffany Breshears shared her drainage concerns.
- Jean "Sissy" Wiggin supports duplexes to provide more affordable housing for younger people who want to but cannot afford to move to Abita.
- Scott Payne opposed commercial development at Hwy 435 and Allen Road due to the proximity to residences, road infrastructure, and flooding concerns. He also expressed concerns about having a gas station so close to wells and opposed gas stations in Mixed-Use.
- A poll was taken of the audience members:
  - 30+ people felt Mixed-Use was appropriate for the area of Hwy 435 and Allen Road.
  - About 30 audience members said they didn't want to have a gas station as a permitted use in the Mixed-Use District.
  - When asked about higher density in undeveloped areas, the majority of audience members were opposed to higher density.
- Ken Ashworth shared his concerns about the Hwy 435 and Allen Road area to include drainage and well protection.
- Kirby Powell supported more density in areas where it makes sense, and he opposed gas stations in Mixed-Use. He also recognized that flooding concerns should be addressed.
- Thad Mancil, III stated his concern for such a large commercial area along Hwy 36 near Hebert Road due to the more rural feel of the property in that area.
- Brad Reidenauer stated smaller lot sizes are not needed to bring young people to Abita.
- Alderman Saussy provided a photo of Minkler Street during a recent rain event and urged controlling density.
- Christine Brignac acknowledged the combination of current (C-2 Highway) Commercial and Residential zoning at Hwy 435 and the Allen Road area, but said that due to the traffic safety concerns, she opposed Commercial District zoning.
- Stewart Eastman said that the Civic District should have the uses limited to governmental and park uses.
- Tim Sanchez addressed the public's concerns about the Hwy 435 and Allen Road area with a list of areas in Abita Springs that flood, traffic crash data from the Safe Streets For All project which ranked

Hwy 435 and the Prats Dairy Road curve as ten out of fifteen for accidents in Abita, and stated the property’s access from three roads, one being a state highway, make it ideal for commercial development.

- Tim Grigsby opposes commercial at Hwy 435 and Allen Road.
- Mike Strain opposes changing the property south of Highway 36 near Dundee Street from Light Commercial.
- Evette Randolph said she previously surveyed businesses in Abita Springs about their sales and surveyed citizens about businesses they’d like to see in town. The business revenue was mostly from visitors to town, and most of the desired businesses were businesses that were previously in Abita but had to close or move due to lack of support. Ms. Randolph said that businesses provide a stronger local economy by providing jobs, increasing the tax base which takes some of the tax burden off of property owners, and providing goods and services close to home. She noted that with close to 400 new homes soon coming to Abita, those residents could either have businesses to support in town, or take their business to nearby towns, leaving the Abita Springs to figure out how to support the growing cost of road improvements.
- Ray Pasqua stated his desire to keep his lots of record.
- Adrienne Petrosini encouraged residents to take a look at Abita Oaks to see how a development can work with smaller lot sizes to provide housing for older residents or small families. She supported smaller lot sizes in the area zoned Light Industrial south of Hwy 36. Ms. Petrosini encouraged the Flood Maps to be considered when laying out new grids.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Feedback from this meeting will be incorporated into the draft.
- Decision making items will be presented to the Commission for the next meeting to guide the next draft.
- Area meetings will be held and feedback collected and forwarded to Desire Line.
- There will not be a vote for the Comprehensive Zoning Plan at the October meeting.
- Interested parties are encouraged to email the Planning & Zoning department to share their feedback.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Stewart Eastman encouraged the Town to focus on drainage and hiring professionals who can assist in improving the drainage issues.
- Scott Payne encouraged Mixed-Use as appropriate commercial development in the residential setting at Hwy 435 and Allen Road.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** Check the Town website for current events.

**ADJOURNMENT** Commissioner Guidry motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lanaux seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 P.M.

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Kristin Tortorich, Planning & Zoning Director

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Date