

The following are minutes from the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Thursday, November 21, 2024, in Abita Springs Town Hall. The meeting convened at 6:02 P.M.

Commission Chairman Pierce called the meeting to order, and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioners in attendance included John Pierce, Chad Hall, Claire Guidry, and Mike Lanaux. Commissioner Lex LeBlanc was absent. Staff members Kristin Tortorich, Mark Fancey, and Heather Hockman were also present, along with Planner Kara Dudek-Mizel with Desire Line.

There were no modifications to the agenda.

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the October 24, 2024, meeting.

Commissioner Guidry motioned to accept the minutes of the October 24, 2024, meeting as presented. Commissioner Lanaux seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

**PLANNING:**

There weren't any planning items on the agenda.

**ZONING:**

**DISCUSSION**

Amend the official zoning map of the town of Abita Springs to separate the commercial-historic and residential-historic zoning designations into the base districts and the historic overlay district.

Kara Dudek-Mizel presented the draft. She explained the changes are to make amendments to the Code of Ordinances and the Zoning Map for the Commercial and multi-family uses which require clarification and get them more in alignment with the Master Plan. She said other changes include:

- working the development standards included in the Master Plan, developed by Dover Kohl, into the Code of Ordinances.
- adding an explanation of the essence of each district.
- editing some uses to be less specific.
- Historic Districts being separated into an overlay.
- Zoning Map amendments.
- Historic overlay map.

Discussion ensued over the exclusion of the Midtown Cultural District in this edit.

Mark Fancey explained the council rezoned properties thirty or forty years ago to zones that didn't exist, with the intention of having a residential zone underneath and having the Historic standards applied to them. This amendment would correct that error.

Kara Dudek-Mizel stated ordinances will be brought to the Commission next month, so there is time to submit clarifications and questions for edits prior to the meeting.

Commission Chairman Pierce clarified the item would not be changing jurisdictions or boundaries, just cleaning up the language.

Commission Chairman Pierce asked how any conflicts with the Historic guidelines would be handled. Mark Fancey said the Historic Commission should review the draft before the next Planning & Zoning meeting to reconcile any conflicts. Kristin Tortorich said that the Historic Commission will address the draft during their next meeting and their findings will be incorporated in the next Planning & Zoning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Lanaux asked if there are requirements in the ordinances for protective fencing for protected trees in town during building. Kristin Tortorich explained that there is a tree plan packet regarding protection of trees, focusing on the care to be taken for the critical root zones, in the building permit packet.

### **Review official request from the Historic Commission to remove Billboards from the allowable uses in the commercial zone**

Kristin Tortorich explained the Historic Commission recently received an application for billboards to be installed on a piece of commercial property. While the Commercial zoning does allow the use of billboards, the Historic overlay does not allow them. Thus, the Historic Commission submitted an official request for the Planning & Zoning Commission to consider removing billboards from the approved uses and to require any signs to be for the property on which it is installed, not an advertisement for another location.

Commissioner Hall asked about political signs. Kristin Tortorich said they would still have to follow Historic guidelines but are allowable.

Commission Chairman Pierce asked why only the Commercial District would have the use changed and Kristin Tortorich said the Commercial District was the only part of the Code that allowed the use of billboards as it is currently written.

Commission Chairman Pierce asked if there was any action that needed to be taken to add the caveat about the advertisement and placement of signs. Kristin Tortorich said she believed the Historic Commission needed to add that to their guidelines since sign approval is under their purview. She explained the current guidelines allow the Historic Commission to review the size, lighting, and look of the sign, but not the content or message, so that would have to be added to their guidelines for it to be enforced.

Commission Chairman Pierce then asked if there are any commercial properties that are not in the Historic overlay area. Kristin Tortorich said no, and Mark Fancey stated that because of the standard that all corridors (Highways 36, 435, and 59) fall under Historic, all commercial properties are included in the Historic overlay.

**Approval of Meeting Dates for 2025**

The Commission reviewed the meeting dates for 2025.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ray Pasqua stated his desire for the town to go back to smaller lot sizes. Mr. Pasqua said that zoning should be determined by demographics and should change as demographics change. He also said he felt the town should have a more flexible use of ancillary buildings, as he felt they should not have to be owner occupied. Mr. Pasqua shared his thoughts on building commercial property on slabs on grade, flat roofs, and increasing the hotel and guest room limits to 30 units.

Kristin Tortorich invited Mr. Pasqua into the office to review his concerns.

Commission Chairman Pierce recommended Mr. Pasqua organize his specific ideas and concerns then meet with Kristin Tortorich and Mark Fancey to discuss them while the Commission is going through the process to revise the ordinances and zoning map, as the Commission could not review the specifics without them being on the agenda.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Kristin Tortorich announced Fête De Noel will be held Sunday, December 8, 2024, from 2-7 PM. There will be a Christmas Market with tree lighting and performances held at the Trailhead Park. Ms. Tortorich also said the 2025 Krewe of Push Mow theme was announced: Nightmare at the Museum.

Commission Chairman Pierce said the Level Street overlay project would be done soon. Kristin Tortorich added it is expected to be done by the end of the year.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Guidry motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kristin Tortorich, Planning & Zoning Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date