

MINUTES of the Vernal City PLANNING COMMISSION

Vernal City Council Chambers - 374 East Main Street, Vernal, Utah

January 14, 2025

5:30 pm

Members Present: Stephen Lytle, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch and Brittany Young

Members Excused:

Alternates Present:

Alternates Excused:

Staff Present: Braeden Christofferson, Assistant City Manager; Gabby Hawkes Blackburn, Vernal City Consultant; Matthew Tate, Building Official, Gay Lee Jeffs, Administrative Secretary.

WELCOME AND DESIGNATION OF CHAIR AND MEMBERS: Chair Stephen Lytle welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn introduced Braden Christofferson who has joined Vernal City as the new Assistant City Manager and Planning Director. In this dual role, he brings extensive experience from his previous position in Lehi City. Over the past couple of weeks, he has already demonstrated his capabilities and enthusiasm, earning praise for his fantastic work. While Mr. Christofferson transitions into this position full-time as he and his family relocate to Vernal, Ms. Hawkes Blackburn will continue as a consultant and available to provide support as needed. Mr. Christofferson is excited to collaborate with the team and contribute to the community's growth and success.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM, December 10, 2024: Stephen Lytle Chair asked if there were any changes to the minutes from, December 10, 2024. The minutes were approved with there being no corrections, *Samantha Chapoose moved to approve the minutes of, December 10, 2024 as presented. Ryan Balch seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.*

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER AMENDING THE VERNAL CITY MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND ZONING CODE, SECTION 16.20 – EXTENDED STAY HOTEL/MOTEL– ORDINANCE 2025-02

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn revisited and reviewed in detail the proposed ordinance for extended stay hotels. There were several key updates to the ordinance:

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Room amenities were modified to ensure compliance with International Building Code (IBC) standards, replacing the previous requirement for 270 square feet of living and sleeping space. Parking requirements, initially set at two spaces per extended stay unit, were adjusted to 1.5 spaces per unit after deliberation, reflecting a balance between apartment and hotel-style standards. Landscaping requirements were also updated, shifting from a blanket 10% requirement to adherence to the underlying zoning regulations, ensuring that properties include some landscaping rather than being fully paved. Additionally, the ordinance removed the previous cap of 180 days for maximum length of stay, allowing extended stay hotels greater operational flexibility.

Chair, Stephen Lytle, opened the public hearing for public comment.

Anna Billings, 234 South 3290 West, Vernal, Utah, general manager of the Ledge Stone Hotel, addressed the commission. She pointed out an inconsistency in Section D of the ordinance, which still included language about verifying compliance with a maximum length of stay, even though the cap had been removed. The commission acknowledged the oversight and agreed to update the language to maintain consistency. Ms. Billings also sought clarification on whether her property, which was compliant at the time of construction, would need to meet the new 1.5 parking spaces per unit requirement. The commission confirmed that her property would remain compliant under the conditions present when it was built.

Chair, Stephen Lytle, closed the public hearing.

An additional adjustment involved removing a signage requirement for individual units, which had been mistakenly retained from an earlier version of the ordinance. This correction was presented as a grammatical and administrative fix.

Ryan Balch moved to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council to amend the Vernal City Municipal Planning and Zoning Code, Section 16.20 – Extended Stay Hotel/Motel– Ordinance 2025-02 with the changes as discussed. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MORTON SHORT TERM RENTAL CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 41 EAST 100 NORTH, VERNAL, UTAH (PARCEL #05 019 0027) – 2024-026-CUP

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn introduced a request from Kevin Lance Morton to convert a previously operated flower shop into a short-term rental. The property, owned by the Morton's, would feature a two-bedroom, one-bath setup. As the land-use authority, the Planning Commission was tasked with determining the use classification and potential conditions for the proposal while ensuring compatibility with City Code and surrounding areas.

Currently, Vernal City's short-term rental ordinance applies only to residential zones, creating ambiguity for a proposal in a commercial zone. The most similar classification, a bed and breakfast, requires owner occupancy, which does not align with the Morton's plans for the property. The Planning Commission acknowledged the need for future updates to the Code to better address such situations.

Staff reviewed applicable Code requirements, including off-street parking, signage, trash storage, and landscaping, noting no significant compliance issues. Specific conditions for outdoor storage and noise levels were also discussed as potential mitigations. However, the commission noted that the small size of the parcel limited potential for outdoor storage or additional structures.

During the discussion, some commissioners expressed the view that the proposal was reasonable for a commercial zone and that short-term rentals could be beneficial in such areas. They also clarified that the applicants did not intend to reside in the property, distinguishing it further from the bed and breakfast model.

Ryan Balch moved to approve the Morton Short Term Rental Conditional Use permit for property located at 41 East 100 North, Vernal, Utah (parcel #05 019 0027) – 2024-026-CUP without additional conditions. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.

It was suggested that City staff revise the Code to provide clearer guidelines for short-term rentals in commercial zones, ensuring better alignment with future applications.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF PREECE FLAG LOT FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 740 WEST 1100 SOUTH, VERNAL, UTAH (PARCEL #05 065 0001) – 2024-024-SUB

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn presented a proposal from Mike Eskelson, the applicant, and Peggy J. Preece, the property owner, to subdivide a 2.19-acre lot into three parcels, including one designated as a flag lot. This decision would determine whether the property could be split as proposed, though it would not finalize the subdivision itself. The lot, which is part of a recorded subdivision, is significantly larger than neighboring parcels and exceeds the zoning requirements of 20,000 square feet and 65 feet of frontage per single-family dwelling. With 180 feet of frontage, the lot could be divided into two parcels under current zoning rules, but the creation of a third lot would require the use of a flag lot.

The Commission considered whether a flag lot was necessary for the substantial use of the property, as this type of development is less desirable and requires justification. The property's size and context made the proposal reasonable, particularly since the surrounding neighborhood already includes several flag lots. These lots were historically approved because of limited opportunities to extend public roads into the area, making the flag lot configuration a practical solution to allow for additional density.

Several requirements and considerations were discussed during the meeting. The flag lot would need a 24-foot-wide access strip with an all-weather surface. Utilities and safety requirements included placing a fire hydrant within 250 feet of the proposed dwelling and ensuring the address of the flag lot would be visible from the public street. Setbacks and the home's orientation would also be established during the building permit process. While privacy, aesthetics, and potential future transportation corridors were considered, the Commission concluded that the proposal aligned with the character of the neighborhood and would not negatively impact the surrounding properties.

Commissioners agreed that denying the proposal would unfairly restrict the owner's ability to utilize the property fully, given its size and context. It was noted that developing a public road to access the back portion of the property would be impractical, further supporting the use of a flag lot.

Nick Porter moved to approve the Preece Flag Lot for property located at 740 West 1100 South, Vernal, Utah (parcel #05 065 0001) – 2024-024-SUB. Brittany Young seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF COCHRAN CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 92 WEST MAIN, VERNAL, UTAH (PARCEL #05 024 0050) – 2025-001-CUP

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn reviewed a conditional use permit application from Steve Cochran to convert a former manufacturing and warehouse building, previously used by Cedar Bear Naturals, into a mixed-use property with commercial space on the ground floor and residential units above. This proposal closely resembled an earlier application by the same applicant for a different property earlier in the year.

The proposed use aligns well with Vernal City's zoning and general plan, as the CC-1 zone permits multifamily housing as a conditional use. The inclusion of residential units downtown is viewed positively, as it can increase activity and vibrancy in the area. However, conditional use permits require the mitigation of potential nuisances to neighbors, and several factors were discussed to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area.

One of the primary concerns was the impact on public infrastructure, including water lines, which had previously been an issue for nearby properties due to inadequate capacity. However, recent public infrastructure upgrades appear to have resolved these concerns. The proposal's impact on health, safety, and welfare will be addressed through building permits and inspections, including reviews by the Health Department and compliance with fire codes. Parking and Master Site Plan requirements will also need to be met, regardless of the conditional use permit approval.

Another significant topic was the potential for future noise complaints from residents living in a commercial area with frequent downtown events. Commissioners discussed the importance of

preventing conflicts by requiring notices on leases or deeds to inform tenants about the nature of the area. This would acknowledge that downtown events are an integral part of the neighborhood and not subject to change based on residential complaints.

The Commission also noted that similar mixed-use developments already exist in the vicinity, including apartments across the street and above nearby commercial buildings. These precedents further supported the proposal's compatibility with the area's character and zoning intentions.

Ryan Balch moved to approve the Cochran Conditional Use permit for property located at 92 West Main, Vernal, Utah (parcel #05 024 0050) – 2025-001- with a specific condition: tenants must be informed, through a notice on their lease or deed, that downtown noise and events are inherent to the area and cannot be grounds for complaints to the City. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.

2025 MEETING SCHEDULE

Chair, Stephen Lytle, asked Commission members if they would like to maintain the current meeting schedule or consider changes. The consensus was that the current schedule has been effective and accommodating for the Commissioners. One member noted occasional lateness due to a prior appointment but expressed that it had not caused significant disruptions and was manageable.

The possibility of holding meetings earlier was briefly considered but dismissed, as earlier times were deemed less convenient. Several members expressed their preference for the existing 5:30 PM schedule, noting that it works well overall.

Samantha Chapoose moved to approve the 2025 Planning Commission meeting schedule of 5:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of every month. Ryan Balch seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose, Brittany Young and Ryan Balch voting in favor.

2025 PLANNING COMMISSION ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Chair, Stephen Lytle, conducted a voting process to elect the Planning Commission Chair and Vice Chair for the upcoming term. The procedure began with instructions on writing names for the vote. The process was clarified, ensuring an organized approach to selecting the leadership positions.

The Commission first voted for the Chair position. Once the votes were tallied, Steven Lytle was re-elected Chair with a unanimous decision. The group then proceeded to vote for the Vice Chair. While the votes were being counted, Gabby Hawkes Blackburn acknowledged the professionalism and contributions of the Commission members, emphasizing their expertise and effective governance.

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The votes for Vice Chair were also unanimous, re-electing Nick Porter. The elections demonstrated a structured and collaborative process for leadership selection within the Planning Commission.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, *Samantha Chapoose moved to adjourn. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned.*

Stephen Lytle , Planning Commission Chair