



**MINUTES OF THE SPRINGDALE PLANNING COMMISSION WORK MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025, AT 5:00 PM
AT THE CANYON COMMUNITY CENTER,
126 LION BOULEVARD, SPRINGDALE, UT 84767**

The meeting convened at 05:00 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Tom Kenaston, Commissioners Terry Kruschke, Paul Zimmerman, Jennifer McCulloch, Kashif Bhatti, and Matt Fink from Zion National Park.

EXCUSED: Rich Swanson and Mellisa LaBorde.

ALSO PRESENT: Director of Community Development Tom Dansie, Principal Planner Niall Connolly, and Deputy Town Clerk Robin Romero, recording. See the attached sheet for attendees.

Mr. Kenaston designated Kashif Bhatti as a voting member in Mr. Swanson's absence.

Approval of the Agenda:

Motion made by Jennifer McCulloch to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Paul Zimmerman.

Kenaston: Aye

Kruschke: Aye

Zimmerman: Aye

McCulloch: Aye

Bhatti: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

General Announcements:

Mr. Dansie announced that the town would hold a ribbon-cutting event for the new plaza near the Best Western Hotel. The event was scheduled for August 20th at 10 a.m., and all were invited to attend.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest: There were no declared conflicts of interest.

A. Discussion / Non-Action items

1. Discussion of Wildfire Mitigation Strategies in the Town of Springdale, Potentially Including Adopting the Wildland Urban Interface Code. Staff Contact: Thomas Dansie

Staff Presentation:

Mr. Dansie explained that the Planning Commission had recently identified wildfire risk mitigation as a top priority. In response, staff began investigating what the Town could do to reduce exposure to wildfires and to mitigate the risks posed to structures in the event of a wildfire. The timing of the Commission's decision was coincidental with newly passed state legislation that also encouraged communities in fire-prone areas to become more fire-safe and fire-wise.

As part of their research, staff consulted with the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District, which provides fire protection services to the Town of Springdale, as well as the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State

Lands, which oversees wildfire control throughout the state. Both agencies offered valuable insights. The staff report included a list of general ideas and strategies that communities could adopt to promote fire-safe development and reduce wildfire risk and exposure. These strategies were presented as potential avenues to explore. Mr. Dansie categorized them into two main groups: property-specific issues and communitywide issues.

He suggested that it may be most appropriate for the Planning Commission to focus on property-specific issues, since the Commission's role involves recommending land use policy to the Town Council. Fire-safe development strategies fall squarely within that scope. However, he also emphasized the importance of understanding and discussing the potential impacts of recently enacted state legislation, specifically, House Bill 48.

Staff had spoken with representatives from both the Utah League of Cities and Towns and the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands to better understand H.B. 48. After reading and analyzing the bill, staff found its impact on the Town to be somewhat unclear. Essentially, H.B. 48 requires fire-prone communities to adopt a Wildland Interface Boundary, which identifies the areas of most significant wildfire risk. Properties within that boundary would then be subject to the Utah version of the Wildland Urban Interface Code, a regulatory code structured similarly to the International Fire Code but with more extensive requirements for wildfire-prone areas.

Through discussions with the fire district, state representatives, and other stakeholders, it appeared that the Town would indeed be required to adopt the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code. If so, that code would dictate which fire mitigation strategies must be imposed on development. This was particularly significant because the Utah code contains detailed and comprehensive requirements for properties located within the Wildland Urban Interface Boundary. While these standards are effective at reducing wildfire risk, they could potentially conflict with the Town's existing land use ordinances.

For example, the Town currently encourages property owners to retain native vegetation over six feet in height. If development necessitates the removal of such vegetation, the Town requires it to be replaced at a 2:1 ratio with plants of the same species. In contrast, the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code mandates the removal of non-fire-resistant vegetation within a certain distance of a structure, typically between 15 and 50 feet, depending on construction type and other factors. This could create a conflict: the Town would be requiring both removal and replanting of the same vegetation, which Mr. Dansie noted seemed counterproductive.

He highlighted these issues to ensure the Planning Commission was aware of the potential impacts if the Town adopted, or was required to adopt, the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code.

Another consideration for the Commission was the placement of the Wildland Urban Interface Boundary within the community. The staff report included links to resources from the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands that provided a high-level overview of fire-prone areas across the state. These included a "structure exposure score," which measures how exposed a building is to wildfire. According to the state, any area with a score of five or more should fall within the Wildland Urban Interface Boundary. Mr. Dansie noted that, based on the available maps, virtually the entire Town, excluding a narrow corridor along SR-9, had a score of five or more. This meant that nearly the entire community would be subject to the Wildland Urban Interface Code.

Mr. Dansie emphasized that this would have significant implications for the Town. He asked the Commission to share their feedback, questions, and general thoughts on pursuing wildfire mitigation strategies, especially in relation to adopting the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code. He explained that this input would help guide staff in ongoing conversations with the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, as well as the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District. Since neither he nor Mr. Connolly was a wildfire expert, he did not expect to have all the answers that evening. However, he expressed appreciation for any questions or concerns the Commission could identify, as they would help inform a more productive discussion with the fire experts moving forward.

Commission Questions and Discussion:

Mr. Kenaston asked whether state fire officials had worked with Washington County or the Hurricane Valley Fire District officials in developing the county's hazard map.

- Mr. Dansie replied that he was unsure what inputs were used in the modeling or to what extent local fire authorities had been consulted, but said he could find out.

Mr. Kruschke stated that the document essentially contained a template ordinance. He believed that if Springdale were required to adopt it, the town would have to take it as written without making adjustments. He asked if that was the staff's understanding.

- Mr. Dansie confirmed that it was. He explained that Appendix A contained some optional standards, so adoption of that appendix was not mandatory. Aside from that, he believed the code had to be adopted as written, similar to the building code, which the town could not amend locally.

Ms. McCulloch asked when they would know whether the town was required to adopt the ordinance.

- Mr. Dansie said that, based on his conversations with Utah Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, the direction had been that adoption was required. However, discussions with the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District suggested adoption might be optional. Because of this conflicting information, he did not yet know the definitive answer but would continue working to clarify.

Ms. McCulloch then asked if the Planning Commission had to follow the ordinance as written, what role it would play.

- Mr. Dansie said that if adoption were required, the Commission's questions and concerns would still be valuable. He noted that state officials had been very willing to assist in implementing the code and could provide resources if needed. The Commission's input on enforcement and implementation would be helpful.

He added that the town could decide where the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary would be located. While the state's modeling recommended placing the entire town within the WUI, that was not a hard-and-fast rule, and local jurisdictions had the final say. If the Commission chose to define the boundary more narrowly, it should consult with fire professionals rather than make the determination independently.

The second area for Commission involvement, he said, would be addressing conflicts between the WUI code and existing land use ordinances, which would require significant work to resolve.

Ms. McCulloch asked if the boundary might exclude certain parts of town.

- Mr. Dansie confirmed this was possible, subject to Commission decision and expert input.

Mr. Kruschke suggested that, for example, hillside or foothill residential areas could be included, while some parts of the valley might not be.

- Mr. Dansie agreed, emphasizing that experts should review any such approach.

Mr. Kruschke noted that there were significant provisions about water supply, fire hydrants, and related infrastructure. He said the town already required subdivisions to install hydrants and wondered whether they might need some expertise to understand the impacts.

- Mr. Dansie explained that new developments would be required to meet access, grading, hydrant, and fire flow requirements under the WUI code, and the town would be responsible for enforcing these standards. The larger question, he said, was how the code would affect existing developments, since some sections applied to both proposed and existing properties.

Mr. Kruschke observed that the WUI code also called for a designated fire code official, which he assumed the town did not currently have.

- Mr. Dansie confirmed that was correct. He hoped the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District might provide this service, as they already served as the town's Fire Marshal and enforced the International Fire Code. However, they had made it clear they did not enforce the WUI code, so if the town adopted it, it would need to appoint its own fire code official.

Mr. Kruschke said there were technical details in the code, such as defining IR levels, fire-resistance rating classifications for roofs and siding, etc., that he only partially understood. He thought it would be helpful to have photographs or an expert presentation to provide clarity around those ratings and classifications.

- Mr. Dansie said staff had already begun preliminary discussions but lacked the expertise to answer those questions. He provided an example: wood siding, currently an allowed building material, generally did not meet the one-hour fire-resistance rating required by the WUI code. Identifying other affected materials would be part of the research process.

Mr. Kenaston asked whether he was correct in thinking that the town could not change the state's maps, but could establish its own WUI boundary.

- Mr. Dansie confirmed this, explaining that the state's online maps were based on modeling and were separate from local decisions.

Mr. Kenaston said the state mapping had already caused his homeowners' insurance to be non-renewed, and he suspected this problem was widespread in the county.

- Mr. Dansie agreed and said he believed this was one of the motivations behind H.B. 48, which included provisions related to insurance in fire-prone areas. He planned to research the connection further and provide an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Zimmerman expressed concern that insurance companies could use the state maps to raise rates, similar to what he had seen in California.

Mr. Kruschke noted that some states offered state-run insurance for otherwise uninsurable properties, but it tended to be expensive. He believed communities were required to complete this work by January 2026.

- Mr. Dansie stated that, as he understood it, H.B. 48 directed fire entities, such as fire protection districts, to identify fire-prone areas by January 1, 2026. Communities located in those fire-prone areas would then be required to adopt the WUI Code by that same date. Based on his reading, he had not found a separate deadline for adoption once the fire-prone areas were identified. He noted, however, that there would be severe repercussions if communities failed to adopt the WUI Code by January 1, 2026. For example, most fire entities had cooperative agreements with the state for wildfire suppression. If a wildfire occurred in a community identified as fire-prone, and that community had not adopted the WUI Code, the state's cooperative agreement with the firefighting entity would not be honored. This meant the municipality would be responsible for the full cost of the state's fire suppression efforts. Mr. Dansie emphasized that, in his understanding, there was no absolute statutory deadline for adoption, but the consequences for failing to adopt were significant.

Mr. Kruschke clarified that defining the boundary would likely need to happen by January to avoid financial risk if a wildfire occurred.

- Mr. Dansie agreed.

Ms. McCulloch pointed out that adopting the code but not yet achieving full compliance might be acceptable, as compliance could take time.

- Mr. Dansie said that was correct. The WUI code was forward-looking, and he wanted to clarify how it applied to existing development and what compliance timelines might look like.

Mr. Kruschke said he believed the code primarily aimed at new construction, starting from the adoption date.

- Mr. Dansie confirmed this, though he noted that some provisions, like defensible space requirements, applied to both new and existing properties.

Ms. McCulloch expressed concern about the impact on existing landscaping.

- Mr. Dansie said junipers, which were common in Springdale, were not fire-resistant and might need to be removed under the code. This could significantly alter the town's character.

The discussion also covered mitigation strategies, budget impacts, phased implementation, Town Council coordination, enforcement responsibilities, plant replacement requirements, material and color restrictions, driveway and turnaround standards, and conservation easement conflicts. All participants contributed examples and suggestions for balancing wildfire risk reduction with maintaining the town's aesthetic character, complying with state law, and addressing financial and practical constraints.

Mr. Dansie concluded that he had sufficient direction to continue research and would return with answers to the Commission's questions at the next meeting.

2. Discussion of Potential Strategies to Implement the Virgin River Management Plan. Staff Contact: Niall Connolly

Staff Presentation:

Mr. Connolly explained that the Commission had recently made recommendations to the Town Council regarding parking spaces within the Special Flood Hazard Area. During that discussion, Commissioners expressed interest in examining the river corridor more broadly, particularly considering the importance of the Virgin River to the town, from its drinking water to its ecological significance and other factors that make it vital to Springdale.

He noted that in 2019, the town adopted the Virgin River Management Plan, which outlined goals and strategies to protect and enhance the river corridor. Potential options included creating a buffer zone along the river, pursuing opportunities to increase open space through strategies such as outright land purchases, or utilizing tools like transfer of development rights. Mr. Connolly emphasized that there were numerous directions the Commission could take in exploring this topic.

Staff recommended that the Planning Commission form a subcommittee to study the issue in more depth and return at a future meeting with recommendations and findings.

Commission Questions and Discussion:

Mr. Kruschke stated that a subcommittee could be very valuable. He noted that the Virgin River Management Plan included numerous recommendations and a significant need for expert input on defining an overlay zone, determining required setbacks, and understanding how these might vary along the river's length. He thought a subcommittee would help establish some parameters and develop a framework for the Commission to work from. He added that he had many questions and saw value in working on them with experts.

Mr. Kenaston suggested considering a property-by-property analysis, similar to the accessory structure overlay zone, to evaluate potential effects on properties near the river.

Mr. Zimmerman agreed that it would be a fairly significant effort and that forming a subcommittee would be reasonable. He noted the potential to involve park assistants or other experts in the area. He reviewed the plan and observed that many contributors had participated. He suggested consulting a few of them to gain additional perspectives or insights that might not have been included in the original plan.

Mr. Kruschke volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

Ms. McCulloch indicated she would be willing to join, but noted her participation would depend on the timeline due to her current focus on another town committee.

Mr. Kruschke acknowledged that there was no set deadline and stated that taking time to proceed carefully was likely worthwhile. He asked whether subcommittees were limited to two Commission members.

- Mr. Connolly confirmed they were and added that the Commission would likely want to rely on park services for their expertise as well.

Mr. Fink suggested scheduling meetings during working hours to make it feasible for park staff to attend. He noted he would need a schedule to take back to their resources manager to request staff participation. Mr. Kruschke added that, based on his experience, subcommittee meetings were usually coordinated by staff and held during business hours.

The Commission agreed to decide on subcommittee membership at the next meeting to allow members time to evaluate their availability and consider their participation.

Mr. Connolly stated that in the meantime, staff would reach out to other experts in the field, including those who had contributed to the original plan, to begin gathering input and building momentum.

3. Discussion of Potential Revisions to the Town's Sign Ordinance as it Relates to A-Frame Signs.
Staff Contact: Niall Connolly

Staff Presentation:

Mr. Connolly explained that the Planning Commission had recently recommended ordinance changes to the Town Council regarding A-frame and portable signs. The Council declined to adopt the recommendations, instead directing the Commission to revisit the issue. The Council's position was that portable signs should be allowed, but only under certain conditions, which the Commission was tasked with defining (such as size, color, materials, or number). Mr. Connolly included draft ordinance language in the staff report as a starting point.

Commission Questions and Discussion:

Mr. Kruschke noted the draft limited signs to six square feet but did not specify whether that applied per side or in total.

Mr. Zimmerman said he researched typical dimensions and found most posters were 24" x 36" (six square feet), but the total sign, including frame, often measured larger. He suggested allowing up to eight or ten square feet.

Ms. McCulloch preferred retaining the six-square-foot limit, consistent with standard sizes.

Mr. Dansie clarified that "sign area" meant the sign face (the poster), not the frame. The six-square-foot limit was intended to apply to the face, with double-sided A-frames permitted six square feet per side. He recommended clarifying this in the ordinance.

Commissioners discussed frame dimensions. Ms. McCulloch suggested a maximum size. Mr. Zimmerman proposed an overall limit of 2.5 feet wide by 4 feet tall, which would cover most commercially available models. Mr. Connolly agreed that allowances could be adjusted.

Discussion turned to color and materials. Mr. Zimmerman questioned the draft restriction to black frames, noting that most signs were white plastic or silver metal. Mr. Connolly said restrictions had been included only as an option, intended to align with the Town's color palette. He noted black and white were not in the palette but were commonly available.

Mr. Kruschke suggested requiring frames to be black, white, or palette-compliant, and questioned whether sign face colors should also be regulated. Mr. Connolly explained he had not proposed regulating face colors, given their temporary nature, similar to banners. Mr. Kruschke and Ms. McCulloch expressed concern that some businesses might use A-frames as long-term signs, and Mr. Zimmerman noted that permanent signs prohibited fluorescent or reflective colors. The Commission leaned toward requiring both frames and faces to be palette-compliant or black/white.

Mr. Kruschke recalled prior discussion of requiring signs to be removed when businesses closed, but thought that was likely unnecessary, as businesses would remove them to prevent theft. Mr. Connolly agreed that portable signs were not permanent by definition.

The Commission then discussed the number of signs allowed. Mr. Connolly said the draft permitted one per property. Mr. Kenaston shared that while most business owners he spoke with would not use portable signs, some felt they were important for less-visible businesses. He suggested allowing one sign per business instead of per property. Mr. Connolly noted that permanent sign regulations already provided one main sign per property plus additional signage for each licensed business, and the same approach could be considered for portable signs.

Ms. McCulloch supported a per-business allowance, and Mr. Zimmerman suggested specifying “per business operating on the property.” Mr. Kenaston agreed, saying it was more equitable.

Mr. Dansie cautioned that regulating by business license could result in many signs on some properties, since multiple businesses could share the same address. He suggested alternatives, such as limiting by business square footage or by street frontage. Ms. McCulloch preferred the square footage approach. Mr. Zimmerman asked if this would address multiple businesses in one location, and Mr. Dansie confirmed it would, since small businesses under the threshold would be limited to a single sign.

Mr. Connolly summarized the Commission’s direction:

- Limit sign faces to six square feet, clarifying the definition.
- Allow overall frame height dimensions up to approximately 4 feet.
- Restrict frame colors to black, white, or palette-compliant; require sign faces to meet the same standard.
- Allow at least one portable sign per commercial property, with additional signs tied to dedicated business square footage.
- Limit signs to two faces and prohibit attachments such as balloons or accessories.

Staff would refine ordinance language based on this direction.

B. Adjourn

Motion made by Terry Kruschke to Adjourn at 06:51 p.m. The motion was seconded by Jennifer McCulloch.

Kenaston: Aye

Kruschke: Aye

Zimmerman: Aye

McCulloch: Aye

Bhatti: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Robin Romero, Deputy Town Clerk

APPROVAL: _____ **DATE:** _____

A recording of the public meeting is available on the Town’s YouTube Channel at [youtube.com/@SpringdaleTownPublicMeetings](https://www.youtube.com/@SpringdaleTownPublicMeetings). For more information, please call 435-772-3434 or email springdale@springdale.utah.gov.