



**MINUTES OF THE SPRINGDALE PLANNING COMMISSION WORK MEETING ON  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 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, Rich Swanson, Mellisa LaBorde, Kashif Bhatti, and Matt Fink from Zion National Park.

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

**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**

**Swanson: Aye**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**General Announcements:**

Mr. Connolly announced that the town will host an Emergency Preparedness Fair on Thursday, September 18, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The event will take place on the former ballfield behind the Canyon Community Center and will feature booths from emergency management professionals, along with a couple of food trucks. This is a great opportunity for residents to learn more about being prepared for emergencies.

He also noted that the following week, on Wednesday, September 24, at 9:00 a.m., the Community Development Department will host a "Two Cents" event. These events provide community members with the opportunity to meet with staff and share their input on planning and zoning matters. The format for this session will be a walking tour, beginning at Town Hall, with stops at the new town plaza, the irrigation ditch, the jail, the Pioneer Cemetery, and other historic sites. Community members are encouraged to join the walk and share their thoughts.

**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 Utah Legislature had recently passed legislation requiring the adoption of the Utah Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code beginning January 1, 2026. At the last meeting, the

Commission had raised questions about how the WUI Code would interact with the town's Land Use Ordinance, and staff had researched those issues with input from the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (FFSL).

He noted that the town would have little flexibility in adopting the code but did have discretion in two areas: (1) establishing the WUI boundary, which the state recommends include the entire town, and (2) addressing potential conflicts between the WUI Code and existing town ordinances. He requested Commission direction on these two issues.

#### **Commission Questions and Discussion:**

Mr. Kenaston asked if there had been much communication between state officials and local Hurricane Valley resources.

- Mr. Dansie replied that there had not been much; the Hurricane Valley Fire District (HVFD) enforces the International Fire Code and viewed WUI adoption as the town's responsibility.

Mr. Kenaston noted that one penalty for not adopting the code could be the state charging for firefighting services and asked how often the state had been involved in local fire response.

- Mr. Dansie said he was not certain but explained that interagency coordination is common, involving local districts, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Forest Service, Zion National Park, and sometimes state resources.

Mr. Kenaston clarified that he was not opposed to adopting the code, but wondered about the negative impact if the town had to pay for the services.

Ms. McCulloch asked about boundary setting, available resources, mapping research, and whether examples existed of areas excluded from WUI boundaries.

- Mr. Dansie said the state had not provided examples but indicated that exclusions would need to be based on technical, scientific criteria. He mentioned SR-9 might be one potential area for consideration, but expert guidance would be necessary.

Ms. McCulloch said it seemed logical to include the entire town, but thought it worthwhile to understand if some areas should be excluded. Mr. Zimmerman observed that exclusions might make sense in larger urbanized areas, but Springdale had little of that. Mr. Kruschke recalled that the SR-9 map showed only a narrow line, with most adjacent properties extending beyond it. Mr. Kenaston suggested adopting town-wide boundaries now, with the option to adjust later based on expert input. Mr. Zimmerman added that adopting the WUI Code before the end of 2025 might give the town a two-year window to refine boundaries, although he was unsure if that would be the best approach.

Mr. Kruschke said he had researched TPO membrane roofing, which he had installed on his property, to determine its fire-resistance classification. Online sources provided conflicting information: some identified TPO as Class A under the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards, while others listed it as Class C. He noted that information on these membranes was inconsistent and often based on opinion. He asked where definitive answers could be found about whether roofing materials were classified as A, B, or C.

- Mr. Dansie explained that he did not know for certain and that adopting the WUI Code would be an administrative burden on staff, who would need to develop capacities to determine class ratings for roofing materials and whether exterior building materials were fire-resistant. The good news was that the FFSL was willing to help them develop that capacity.

Mr. Swanson inquired whether existing ordinances would need to be amended if they conflicted with the WUI Code.

- Mr. Dansie said potential conflicts did exist, but in those cases, the more restrictive ordinance would apply. If the WUI Code were stricter, property owners would have to comply with it. For consistency, the town might want to consider code changes. With roofing and exterior materials, the issue was more nuanced: the WUI Code did not prohibit TPO roofs but specified how roof

classification would affect a property's fire risk score and defensible space requirements. If the Commission wanted to restrict certain materials, it could, but it was not required.

Mr. Swanson noted the state's implementation date seemed to be at the beginning of the year.

- Mr. Dansie clarified that beginning January 1, 2026, if a fire occurred and state resources were used, towns that had not adopted the WUI Code could be liable for suppression costs. There was no hard deadline, but there were consequences for failing to adopt.

Mr. Swanson expressed concern that the town would not fully understand the code and its implications by January 2026.

- Mr. Dansie acknowledged the steep learning curve but emphasized that the state was committed to helping the town develop expertise to enforce the code.

Mr. Kruschke added that the WUI Code allowed little flexibility, since it was essentially a template ordinance. The town might adopt provisions it did not yet fully understand until staff developed more knowledge.

Mr. Swanson asked if they could tentatively adopt the code.

- Mr. Dansie said the choice was either to adopt or not. The Commission could indicate an intent to adopt and take time to study the code further before making a decision.

Mr. Zimmerman said the only alternative was to adopt the previous version before the year's end, which would delay adoption of the new version by two years. Mr. Kruschke noted that the Commission knew little about the older version either. Mr. Zimmerman agreed but said it was less restrictive.

Mr. Kenaston emphasized the importance of developing an implementation timeline.

Mr. Kenaston said the process would likely start with education and warnings, followed by citations if necessary. He compared it to the town's Dark Sky ordinance, which took years to implement.

- Mr. Dansie agreed, noting that new development would need to comply immediately, while existing properties could take years to come into compliance.

Mr. Swanson clarified that new building permits would need to meet the code and questioned whether staff could be ready by January.

- Mr. Dansie acknowledged the challenge but noted state resources and staff commitment to preparing for enforcement.

Mr. Kruschke inquired whether the WUI Code would necessitate a fire risk evaluation as part of the Design Development Review (DDR) or at the building permit stage.

- Mr. Dansie said the town would need to determine the most appropriate stage for that requirement.

Mr. Kruschke raised the issue of the current requirement to replace every tree removed with two new trees. He asked whether, in light of the WUI Code's defensible space requirements, it would make sense to reduce that ratio to one-to-one. He sought input from the other Commissioners.

Mr. Kenaston noted that in some neighborhoods, such as Red Hawk, the building footprint was roughly the same size as the home itself, making it challenging to replace trees. In Anasazi, he said, there could also be limitations, especially when a 50-foot defensible space from structures was required. He suggested that different areas of town might need different rules based on available space.

Mr. Kruschke added that tree replacement could potentially be based on where replacement trees could realistically be planted. He said they should avoid forcing homeowners to place trees close to their homes if doing so would conflict with defensible space guidelines.

Mr. Kenaston suggested placing replacement trees in common areas instead of private yards.

Mr. Zimmerman explained that the WUI Code did not mandate specific placement or removal of trees but instead assessed risk. A tree near a home could increase the fire hazard score, which could affect required defensible space and insurance rates. Proper placement and choice of trees can mitigate risk, but noncompliance would result in higher hazard scores, rather than a legal violation in itself.

Ms. McCulloch added that the size of the tree mattered. Specific allowances permitted planting closer to homes if lower branches were trimmed at least six feet above the ground. She supported a one-to-one replacement ratio or some formula based on property size and the number of trees removed, rather than maintaining the current two-to-one ratio.

Mr. Kruschke emphasized that the goal was to avoid forcing homeowners to plant trees in ways that could increase fire risk. He suggested balancing fire protection with preserving the natural appearance of the community and assessing the impact on surrounding areas before determining replacement requirements.

Mr. Kenaston highlighted the town's long-term objective: reducing overall fire risk. He suggested the Commission consider strategies to lower the likelihood of fire spreading through the community, while acknowledging that solutions could vary by property.

Mr. Zimmerman raised concerns about replacing large trees with small saplings, which could take decades to grow. He suggested selecting fire-resistant species for replacement to ensure both community aesthetics and safety. He added that the town could maintain the two-to-one replacement ratio while requiring that replacement trees be selected from a state-approved list of fire-resistant species.

Staff was directed to explore options, including a one-to-one ratio, a one-to-two ratio, or maintaining the current two-to-one ratio with flexibility to reduce fire risk.

Mr. Dansie said staff would develop alternatives for the Commission to consider at a future meeting.

Ms. McCulloch inquired whether trees within common areas, but not on individual properties, were included.

- Mr. Dansie explained that defensible space applied only to property owners' lots. For new communities, developers were required to provide community-defensible space; however, it was unclear how this requirement applied retroactively to existing subdivisions.

Mr. Kruschke noted that the town could adopt more restrictive or descriptive standards than those required by the WUI Code. He suggested staff verify mandatory requirements first and then explore additional recommendations.

The Commission discussed how compliance with the WUI Code would be achieved, especially for existing development.

- Mr. Dansie explained that new development would need to comply immediately, but bringing existing properties into compliance could take years. He said enforcement would focus first on education, cooperation, and voluntary compliance rather than penalties.

Mr. Kruschke noted he read in multiple places in the sample ordinance that the local WUI official was allowed to exercise discretion in certain cases, providing flexibility to work with property owners on defensible space requirements.

The Commission agreed on the importance of developing a clear public education plan to support the gradual implementation of the WUI Code and to help residents understand compliance requirements. They directed staff to bring the matter back for discussion in October in hopes of submitting preliminary findings to the Town Council, with the expectation of receiving Council feedback by November.

2. Discussion of Requirement for Enhanced Buffering and Screening on Commercial Properties Adjacent to Residential Uses. Staff Contact: Thomas Dansie.

**Staff Presentation:**

Mr. Dansie explained that the Commission had prioritized this issue based on the town's General Plan under Land Use and Appearance, Sub-Goal F, which aimed to protect residential neighborhoods from the impacts of commercial development. That sub-goal included three strategies. The first, which was the focus of discussion, directed the Planning Commission to require enhanced screening and buffering on commercial properties adjacent to residential uses as a condition of approval for new commercial development.

The other two strategies called for the Town Council to develop policies and ordinances ensuring residential areas retained peace and privacy as commercial properties were developed and to mitigate the impacts of existing commercial uses, such as noise, traffic, and lighting; and for the Planning Commission to consider increasing setback distances for commercial uses that could negatively affect adjacent residential properties.

He emphasized that the Commission was discussing one of three strategies identified in the General Plan to protect residential neighborhoods near commercial uses. Once buffering standards were addressed, the Commission could turn to other strategies if desired. He noted that the Planning Commission's role was to implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan by revising ordinances, and this discussion was directed by that plan.

Mr. Dansie added that the staff report included an overview of the function of landscape buffers, examples from other communities, and potential provisions for a buffer zone. He asked for the Commission's input and direction on how they wanted to proceed.

**Commission Questions and Discussion:**

Mr. Kenaston said this item represented the essence of planning work, noting that both residential and commercial properties had vested rights that could conflict. Businesses generated traffic, parking, lighting, activity, and noise, while residents had the right to peaceful enjoyment and safety. The Commission's task was to balance those interests. He had initially thought of solid barriers such as brick, concrete, or metal fences, but questioned whether landscaping could effectively reduce noise and light while avoiding fire risks. The broader issue was whether buffers between residential and commercial areas should be solid, opaque, landscaped, or a combination.

Mr. Kruschke raised the concept of buffer yards and questioned their relationship to setbacks. He explained that commercial setbacks varied depending on the adjacent zone, ranging from 5 to 30 feet, and this created uncertainty. He suggested the Commission consider clarifying setbacks while also exploring buffer yard standards. He pointed out that a 20-foot buffer on each side of a 50-foot commercial lot would leave little space for development, making it difficult to provide parking or adequate building width.

Mr. Zimmerman agreed, noting that parking could not go in buffer zones, leaving limited space for structures. Mr. Kenaston added that changing setbacks could make some small commercial lots undevelopable, and that buffers might be addressed without altering setbacks.

Mr. Kruschke observed that vegetation did not block sound effectively, whereas concrete and cinder block walls did, though they had visual drawbacks. Berms offered another option, with soil and plantings reducing noise and softening the appearance. Mr. Swanson noted berms required more width than walls, though Mr. Zimmerman said they could fit within 10-foot setbacks. The Commission discussed providing flexible options, such as walls, berms, or landscaping, depending on lot size and context.

Mr. Swanson asked who would decide which buffer was used. Mr. Kruschke suggested requiring commercial developers to submit engineered recommendations, while Mr. Dansie stressed that options should be transparent, predictable, and fair to avoid inconsistent outcomes.

The Commission also discussed maintenance. Mr. Dansie explained that landscape buffers would fall under code enforcement and would typically be triggered by complaints. Mr. Kenaston suggested solid fences were more permanent, though combinations with vegetation might be effective.

The discussion turned to trade-offs. Mr. Zimmerman noted that walls blocked sound but could be unsightly, while landscaping was more attractive but less effective acoustically. Air quality and odors were also concerns. The Commission considered requiring walls to be finished or paired with vegetation, avoiding bare cinder block. They also weighed whether vegetation could be required on both sides of a wall, though that raised issues of maintenance and property rights.

The group generally supported allowing a range of solutions, with narrower lots requiring more solid barriers and wider lots allowing vegetated buffers. They referenced examples from other communities, such as Morganton, North Carolina, which offered multiple buffer options.

Mr. Dansie reminded them that if residential fences already existed, ordinances should specify whether commercial development had to provide additional buffering. He emphasized that whatever options were adopted should be predictable, effective, and enforceable. He said staff would develop options, ideas, and concepts based on the Commission's discussion and bring them back for further discussion and review.

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 at the August 6th meeting, the Commission had directed staff to revise the proposed ordinance language. He subsequently made edits to clarify the size of A-frame signs, distinguishing between the frame and the sign face. The revisions also regulated sign colors, allowed one portable sign per business on a property with multiple businesses (provided each business had at least 1,000 square feet of dedicated floor space), and addressed inflatable items and balloons attached to A-frame signs.

He noted that issues such as signage on multiple sides of a portable sign and motorized signs were covered by existing code language, which he recommended keeping in place, though that remained open for discussion. Depending on the Commission's direction, the draft could be ready for a public hearing at the next meeting in two weeks.

#### **Commission Questions and Discussion:**

Mr. Zimmerman noted that the maximum sign height was four feet, including the frame. He was comfortable with that, except that one common type of portable sign, designed to flex with the wind, measured 48.9 inches. He suggested increasing the maximum height to 50 inches to accommodate those signs. He also questioned why sign frames had to be constructed of wood or metal, since many A-frame signs were made of durable plastic with weighted bases to prevent tipping.

Mr. Kruschke recalled prior discussions where some Commissioners opposed plastic signs, citing aesthetics and the town's character. Ms. McCulloch agreed, noting the concern that plastic would make the town look more like an event venue. Mr. Zimmerman observed that the town itself used plastic A-frame signs, which raised fairness issues if businesses were prohibited from using them.

The Commission discussed whether plastic signs were appropriate. Mr. Zimmerman emphasized their safety and durability, while others expressed concern about appearance and consistency with the town's "village" character. Ms. LaBorde suggested allowing plastic signs only for events, though Mr. Kruschke and Mr. Zimmerman noted that it could be challenging to regulate. Mr. Dansie advised focusing on what materials best fit the town's character rather than mirroring town practices, since the town was exempt from sign regulations.

Mr. Kruschke said plastic could be unattractive, though some might be designed to resemble wood or metal. Ms. McCulloch preferred to restrict signs to wood or metal, citing aesthetics. Mr. Zimmerman countered that flimsy wooden and metal signs also existed, and higher-quality options in any material tended to be more expensive.

The Commission ultimately agreed to maintain the requirement for wood or metal. They also agreed to raise the maximum height of portable signs to 50 inches.

**B. Adjourn**

**Motion made by Jennifer McCulloch to Adjourn at 07:31 p.m. The motion was seconded by Rich Swanson.**

**Kenaston: Aye**

**Kruschke: Aye**

**Zimmerman: Aye**

**McCulloch: Aye**

**Swanson: Aye**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

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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](mailto:springdale@springdale.utah.gov).