

Boulder Town, Utah Minutes

Boulder Town Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

6:00 PM at Boulder Town Community Center

Boulder Community Center, 351 North 100 East, Boulder, UT 84716 Phone: 435-335-7300

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Nancy Tosta called the Boulder Town Planning Commission Regular Meeting to order at 6:02 PM on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at the Boulder Town Community Center.

Present: Chair Nancy Tosta, Commissioner Tina Karlsson, Commissioner Elena Hughes (via Zoom), Alternate Commissioner Nick Vincent, and Commissioner Colleen Thompson (via Zoom)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Julian, Town Clerk

Also Present: John Veranth, Town Council Liaison, and Michael Winn, Town Attorney (Via Zoom; arrived approximately 6:10 pm)

Absent: Commissioner Darrell Fuller

Chair Nancy Tosta confirmed that a quorum was present to conduct business, noted Commissioner Darrell Fuller was absent, and that he had not contacted her.

Note: A technical issue prevented remote Zoom participants from seeing those physically present, as the meeting room's Owl camera was not working, although commissioners could see the Zoom attendees on their screens.

2. Adoption of Agenda

MOTION: *Commissioner Tina Karlsson moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Colleen Thompson seconded.*

VOICE VOTE: *All in favor. None opposed.*

RESULT: *APPROVED unanimously*

3. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

No conflicts of interest were disclosed by any commissioner.

4. Meeting Minutes Approval: September 16 Regular Meeting, November 18 Regular Meeting

(00:02:05)

The commission reviewed two sets of meeting minutes. Chair Nancy Tosta began with the minutes from the November 18, 2025, regular meeting.

MOTION: *Commissioner Tina Karlsson moved to approve the November 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes. Commissioner Nick Vincent seconded.*

VOICE VOTE: *All in favor. None opposed.*

RESULT: *APPROVED unanimously*

For the September 16, 2025, minutes, Chair Nancy Tosta apologized for submitting her revisions just before the meeting, acknowledging that other commissioners may not have had time to review them. She explained her edits were primarily to simplify redundant wording without changing the content's meaning.

Commissioner Elena Hughes attempted to access the comments but indicated she hadn't seen them after they were submitted at approximately 5:20 PM.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson expressed comfort with approving the minutes with Chair Nancy Tosta's suggested edits, trusting they were editorial in nature.

MOTION: *Commissioner Tina Karlsson moved to approve the September 16, 2025, regular meeting minutes with Chair Nancy Tosta's editorial suggestions. Commissioner Colleen Thompson seconded.*

VOICE VOTE: *All in favor. None opposed.*

RESULT: *APPROVED unanimously*

5. Public comments on agenda items - 3 minutes per person

Mark Nelson expressed concern about the commission's ambitious agenda. He cautioned that, with discussions beginning tonight and continuing into next year, substantial work appeared to be planned. He urged the commission to proceed with caution and restraint when making significant decisions about changes to the general plan and addressing major ideas that may arise. He wished the commission luck with their work.

No other public comments were offered from those present in the room or via Zoom.

6. Town Council Liaison Report

Town Council Liaison John Veranth indicated he had nothing to report.

7. Staff Reports

Elizabeth Julian provided the staff report.

- Noted that a detailed staff report, along with a summary of the verbal report given at the December 2nd Town Council meeting, had been emailed to all planning commissioners on Wednesday, December 3rd. These reports were also included in the meeting materials folder and posted on December 3rd.
- Announced that, based on feedback from the Planning Commission and administrative department, staff had decided to separate application reporting into its own distinct monthly report. This new reporting format would be implemented starting with the regular Town Council meeting in January.
- Reported that Zoning Administrator and Land Use Authority Erin Smith anticipated being able to attend meetings starting in January. Her inability to attend before January was due to preexisting commitments established before the meeting schedule changed from Thursdays to Tuesdays.

Chair Nancy Tosta commented that Erin Smith mentioned maintaining a spreadsheet during the administrative meeting. Chair Nancy Tosta expressed the hope that this spreadsheet will be shared with the commission. The intent is to provide more comprehensive information about development activity in Boulder, including details on who is proposing what and when, allowing the commission a better understanding of the overall scope of development, property improvements, and subdivision work taking place in town.

8. Continued Discussion of Economic Development and Commercial Use in the Boulder Town General Plan

Chair Nancy Tosta introduced the topic by sharing details about commercial results from the community survey and reminded commissioners of the community forum results on the general plan, which asked explicit questions about commercial development and community interests.

She shared a quote from a webinar she had attended through the Utah League of Cities and Towns, stating that "the general plan is intended to be a practical guide to the future based on the unique characteristics of each community." She emphasized the importance of recognizing Boulder's

unique qualities and incorporating them into the general plan to help define the desired future.

Chair Nancy Tosta noted she had asked commissioners to consider specific questions about commercial development: Do you want more commercial development in Boulder? If so, where and what kind? She explained that while awaiting direction from the Town Council in January or February regarding the general plan, this discussion would help draft another memo outlining the commission's ideas.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson began the discussion by suggesting that current ordinances should remain part of any commercial approach. She expressed concern about moving away from conditional use permits, believing people would develop various business ideas to sustain themselves in Boulder. Rather than listing every possible business by name, which had proven difficult in the past, she preferred to examine the standards for commercial development to clarify them and make them less subjective. This would allow evaluating any business against established standards to determine whether it meets the requirements for commercial business in town. She felt commercial development should occur organically and supported potential rezoning to clarify the distinction between the middle of town and the northern/southern areas.

When Chair Nancy Tosta asked for clarification on commercial development standards, Commissioner Tina Karlsson referenced the conditional use permit process standards, including parking requirements, building size, and location. She suggested using state standards as a starting point, potentially modifying or adding to them as needed.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson agreed with Commissioner Tina Karlsson's approach. She expressed difficulty looking into the future, noting Boulder's 200-person population and her long-time observation of businesses coming and going, including mechanics. She emphasized that the small population cannot support many businesses, and while tourists help, businesses still struggle to succeed. Many business owners need multiple income streams to survive. She wanted direction from the Town Council before making changes.

Commissioner Elena Hughes supported starting with commercial development standards and the table of uses to ensure relevance. She expressed interest in being more favorable toward cottage industry, home businesses, and agriculture, while less favorable toward big-box stores and chains. While acknowledging Utah's difficulties with banning certain business types, she wanted to explore ways to support Boulder's

entrepreneurial spirit by favoring small businesses over chain stores owned by out-of-town interests. She also wanted to research how other towns balance agricultural development with measures to curb undesirable developments, noting that no one wants "a stinky feedlot in the middle of town."

Commissioner Nick Vincent agreed with previous comments. After reviewing forum results, he noted the community's apparent preference for locally run businesses over out-of-state operations, chains, or large infrastructure such as hotels. He observed that existing parking lot restrictions provide some protection against large developments. Vincent expressed skepticism about the viability of many new businesses, given the difficulty of year-round operations in Boulder's small population, which requires tourism or seasonal operations to offset costs. He found it hard to imagine many established businesses emerging, given the limited clientele and opportunities, suggesting any new businesses would likely be creative and unforeseen.

The discussion then turned to location and zoning for commercial development. Chair Nancy Tosta raised the question of creating commercial zones and referenced Castle Valley's general plan, which explicitly states that no commercial or industrial development is desired. She noted Castle Valley's population of approximately 330 and its agricultural focus similar to Boulder's.

Chair Nancy Tosta explained the trade-off: allowing commercial zones means the town cannot deny a nonlocal person who wants to start a permitted business in those zones. This creates tension between promoting desired home-based, locally owned businesses and discouraging outsiders from establishing businesses that don't serve locals.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson responded that the fear of big box stores coming to Boulder seemed minimal, given the city's population. She noted that the property would need to be sold to outsiders, likely only happening if current landowners need business income to stay and must sell. She also emphasized that allowing business opportunities helps people stay in the community. Given Boulder's aging population, encouraging businesses that provide income opportunities might attract people interested in joining the community.

Chair Nancy Tosta added that the aging demographic creates demand for handymen, field plowing, and other services, reflecting aspects of the local economy. She mentioned Tamarisk and Bree Russell's successful

regenerative farming business in Lower Boulder as an example of land-based businesses locals have developed.

When asked about the specificity of commercial zoning, Commissioner Tina Karlsson stated she didn't think commercial zoning should be more specific than it currently is. She suggested that mixed-use zoning, allowing business-oriented activities through conditional use permits, might work. However, she acknowledged the current emphasis on moving away from conditional use permits toward permitted or prohibited uses.

Chair Nancy Tosta proposed that the town could maintain zoning allowing some commercial use, but require rezoning for commercial endeavors, providing discretion through the legislative process to evaluate whether proposals that align with the general plan's vision for Boulder. Commissioner Tina Karlsson clarified that she wasn't opposed to rezoning, noting that Highway 12's long corridor could accommodate different uses. She suggested revisiting Lee Nellis' earlier suggestions for a village center area with more housing and businesses.

Commissioner Elena Hughes expressed uncertainty about the need for commercial zones, suggesting that if rezoning is required, the town could maintain greater discretion about what fits the general plan rather than automatically allowing commercial uses if not prohibited in the table of uses. She agreed that Highway 12 seemed the logical location if commercial zoning were implemented, but wanted to learn more about actual discretion levels to avoid another situation like conditional use permits, where expected discretion doesn't materialize.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson expressed concern about commercial development in Lower Boulder, given significant residential growth and road constraints. She couldn't imagine additional commercial growth there. She requested more information on the mechanics of mixed-use zoning. Thompson also discussed small-town branding as crucial to business development and growth, noting that Boulder's largest business generates significant economic activity based on its successful branding. She emphasized the growing importance of branding for entrepreneurs and commercial ventures.

Chair Nancy Tosta acknowledged not having answers and spending considerable time thinking about how to preserve, sustain, and protect Boulder's character while accommodating inevitable growth. She noted that Hell's Backbone Grill & Farms has created many jobs and has become a tourist draw, supporting other businesses. She questioned how many such businesses Boulder could have before surpassing the desired quality of life.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson mentioned the farmers market's ebb and flow, observing how people can make money during its limited season. She found it interesting to watch its growth patterns.

Chair Nancy Tosta raised the relationship between tourism and the town budget, noting that the transient room tax, resort tax, and sales tax fund significant portions of the budget. She questioned whether the need for a larger town budget should drive land-use decisions, expressing her personal view that it shouldn't. She asked other commissioners for their perspectives on whether Boulder should pursue more tourism to support the town budget.

Commissioner Nick Vincent responded that, based on forum and survey results, a large percentage of people prefer not to encourage increased tourism. He suggested modifying existing tourism taxes to better capitalize on current tourism rather than encouraging growth to increase the budget.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson emphasized the need for balance in business development to support both business success and community wellbeing. She cautioned that more hotels would require more tourism support, creating a cycle of increasing tourism influence.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson's response varied by season: getting tired of tourists mid-summer but appreciating them when they left after dropping money in October. She emphasized the need for service professionals like electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and well diggers, noting many in small rural communities work both in tourism and provide unrelated services. She wanted to see more repair and service businesses.

Commissioner Elena Hughes reiterated that while tourism plays an important economic role, it shouldn't be the basis for land-use decisions, and that there are other ways to support the budget.

Regarding Boulder's future, Chair Nancy Tosta asked commissioners about their vision for Boulder in 10-15-20 years, acknowledging that external forces would drive growth and change beyond local control.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson expressed a desire for Boulder to grow about 10% in every direction over 10 years - a few more houses and businesses. She noted Boulder's population doubled from just over 100 when she arrived 30 years ago. She wouldn't mind seeing similar growth over the next 20 years as occurred in the last 20, with an increase of 100, citing Hell's Backbone's arrival 20-25 years ago, bringing people and

government workers through the Grand Staircase. She saw untapped potential in archaeological and other projects that could still be developed.

Commissioner Elena Hughes stated she didn't want growth. If she had a magic wand, she'd replace second homes with young families, though that might mean some growth in full-time residents.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson agreed, wanting more families and fewer second-home options, but recognized that growth would happen regardless, so their actions can influence its direction and opportunities.

Commissioner Nick Vincent expressed a desire for more new families in town, acknowledging that it requires some growth and opportunities for families to live there. He expected Boulder to grow, but hoped for a sustainable rate that wouldn't drastically and immediately change the town's feel.

Chair Nancy Tosta summarized the challenge: accommodating inevitable growth while maintaining quality of life, sustainability, nature, and community character that attracts residents.

9. Discussion on Next Steps to Explore Use of Town Property North of Town Hall

Chair Nancy Tosta reminded commissioners that at the last meeting, Town Council Liaison John Veranth informed them they had "dropped the ball" on reporting to the Town Council about the property to the north. The commission had subsequently sent survey results to provide background information.

Survey results were displayed, showing community preferences for property use. Chair Nancy Tosta noted people were asked to identify three options of interest, with results showing fitness and sports facility, arts and cultural center, and maker space as top choices. Many respondents indicated the facility should be mixed-use, given the town's small size and diverse needs.

Chair Nancy Tosta mentioned housing as an alternative, noting it's some of the only land the town owns. While housing was included in the survey options, it didn't rank highly.

She asked for thoughts on exploring this further, emphasizing the question of funding - who would pay for development.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson focused on the funding challenge, asking for ballpark figures for different projects and their costs to the town. She

agreed with a mixed-use approach to serve more people, comparing it to the increasingly utilized community building.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson suggested dreaming before addressing financial concerns, believing that funding would eventually determine which dreams become reality. She viewed the planning commission's role as providing community input through the survey rather than handling finances.

Chair Nancy Tosta suggested that the results indicate the need for a multipurpose building, noting that there is no overwhelming preference for art over fitness. She proposed describing it as addressing a small town's diverse needs and interests, raising questions about expanding current facilities versus new construction.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson emphasized that the planning commission's role included determining capital fund recommendations for public land use, which would be essential to the process.

Chair Nancy Tosta agreed that this provides background for the general plan's capital projects component, suggesting the town could benefit from a multiple-use facility.

Commissioner Nick Vincent sought clarification on the process sequence and next steps. He confirmed that the Boulder Arts Council initiated the idea to explore potential uses, and the planning commission subsequently held a forum to assess interest. He inquired whether the commission had a definitive count of overall support or if they had instead developed a ranking of preferences among the proposed options.

Chair Nancy Tosta clarified that they asked what people would be interested in, rather than explicitly supporting the arts. The results showed support for the arts and also interest in other uses. She explained this wouldn't necessarily return to the Boulder Arts Council but would go to the Town Council to determine whether there's a legitimate interest in the property's use.

Commissioner Elena Hughes indicated she does not see a need for any development on the property north of the town hall. While housing was an option, it ranked low in priority, leading her to conclude that the property should be left as is.

Town Council Liaison John Veranth suggested that the planning commission's role is to create a vision for allocating the finite space between different uses, including buildings, sports courts, parking, and

dumpsters. He recommended putting this vision in the general plan to support future funding pursuits with clear objectives for building size and use allocation.

Veranth also addressed water study questions, stating he had no objection but noted the town controls no water. Any hydrology study would require an active partnership with Boulder Farmstead, Boulder Irrigation Company, and likely the Forest Service to be effective.

Chair Nancy Tosta responded that understanding water availability is relevant to planning decisions on growth, zoning, and density, particularly if the water table has dropped significantly. She viewed this knowledge as important for land use decision-making.

Chair Nancy Tosta concluded the discussion, noting that the planning commission needs more direction from the Town Council before developing a general plan vision. She preferred hearing the Town Council's reaction to the survey results and understanding their level of interest before discussing facility square footage. Other commissioners agreed they needed direction from the Town Council on these significant topics.

10. Discussion on format for General Plan

Chair Nancy Tosta continued her advocacy for a "leaner, neater, cooler general plan," seeking input on reformatting. She asked whether commissioners support reformatting for clarity and Boulder-uniqueness or prefer updating the existing format with minor changes.

She explained the current plan shows evidence of piecemeal updates since 1996, creating layers of complexity. Other communities' plans often have clearer formats, with a page stating land-use goals followed by 4-5 actions, whereas Boulder's is "denser" and more complex.

Commissioner Tina Karlsson suggested waiting until they know what changes to make before addressing format, recommending they first reach consensus on content changes, deletions, or relocations.

Chair Nancy Tosta encouraged reviewing other communities' plans for comparison, finding it helpful to see different approaches to stating goals and actions.

Commissioner Nick Vincent inquired about utilizing resources from the Five County Association of Governments, which Elizabeth Julian had previously mentioned. He proposed that this information, potentially including time

estimates for the work, be shared when presenting plans to the Town Council.

Elizabeth Julian confirmed that details regarding the Five County Association of Governments' services, specifically outlining their possible assistance with the general plan update process, were available in the meeting materials for the current and prior months. These services are at no cost to the town.

Commissioner Elena Hughes stated that if they reformat, having clear action items would be beneficial. She noted the theme of waiting for Town Council direction and expected to revisit these topics after the new council forms.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson agreed that everything would be new in January and asked the new mayor and council for direction on whether to use the old plan with changes or create a new plan. She noted Boulder's pattern over 30 years of making improvements every 4-5 years and questioned whether to continue that approach or use examples from Torrey and Castle Valley.

Chair Nancy Tosta noted they had previously sent Torrey's plan to the Town Council and could send Castle Valley's as well, acknowledging they would overload them with reading material.

11. Discussion on 2026 PC Workplan

Chair Nancy Tosta outlined items on their plate while awaiting Town Council direction:

- General plan update
- Associated zoning changes, including the table of uses and potentially the entire zoning chapter
- Conditional use permit application revision to address subjectivity not allowed under state law
- Providing input on standards for any form revisions

She asked for other items that commissioners wanted to address.

Commissioner Colleen Thompson suggested scheduling a joint meeting with the Town Council after January to understand the new council's priorities, noting that previous joint meetings were helpful.

Commissioner Elena Hughes agreed that commercial and zoning were the major issues, with commercial potentially the most pressing given the risk

of being caught off guard. She also noted she had reapplied but might not continue serving on the planning commission.

12. Summary of Meeting Actions

The commission agreed to Chair Nancy Tosta transmitting discussion summaries to the Town Council on three topics:

1. Commercial development and economic considerations
2. Use of town property north of the town hall
3. General plan format preferences

13. Potential Business at Tuesday, January 20, 2026 Meeting

- Open Public Meetings Act training (group session)
- Bylaws review and update
- 2026 Workplan development
- Continued discussions pending Town Council direction

Chair Nancy Tosta noted uncertainty about who would comprise the planning commission going forward, with only herself and Commissioner Thompson confirmed, Commissioner Vincent likely continuing as alternate if not appointed as a regular member, and Commissioner Darrell Fuller. She encouraged those continuing to take available training through the Utah League of Cities and Towns.

Chair Nancy Tosta noted they might not receive Town Council direction by the January meeting, given the council's full agenda for their first meeting.

14. Final public comments - 3 minutes per person

Jen Bach shared observations from visiting the Hurricane City Community Center, a converted 1950s elementary school with terrazzo floors and brick walls. She described multiple concurrent activities: their training class, ceramics across the hall, senior fitness down the hall, with yoga mats stacked in rooms for various uses. The facility included an outdoor playground and a splash pad. She emphasized that the multipurpose building served multiple purposes simultaneously, despite not being a huge, impressive facility.

Bach also noted increased events at the museum despite losing their event room, with attendees frequently commenting on the nice ambiance and environment. She urged careful consideration of scale and scope when planning facilities, assessing current building usage and shortfalls, and

avoiding creating facilities that demand more than the community can provide.

John Veranth (speaking as a public member) thanked Commissioner Elena Hughes for her four years of service and Commissioner Tina Karlsson for her terms and willingness to serve on the Town Council. He acknowledged Tina's combined decades of involvement, noting service spanning over 30 years.

Veranth emphasized that Boulder's wonderful character comes from civic-minded people and groups, including the Boulder Arts Council, Boulder Community Alliance, the library committee, parks committee, and church activities. He highlighted the town center facility, located between the school, the church, and the state park, as bringing the community together.

He cautioned against comparing Boulder solely to agricultural communities, noting that Teasdale, Blanding, and Henrieville have more agricultural land but less commercial activity than Boulder. He suggested that what makes Boulder nice is its people and facilities.

Regarding business types, Veranth argued against the fear that commercial development would automatically mean big box stores or gas stations. He listed compatible businesses, including light manufacturing, furniture shops with few employees, services for seniors, construction businesses that need equipment parking, and remote workers (the highest-paid home-based businesses). He noted that current home business rules are restrictive and should be more supportive.

Veranth advocated trusting the free market rather than having the planning commission determine business viability, while ensuring the town addresses concerns such as traffic, sanitation, noise, and visual appearance.

He noted Castle Valley, while having no commercial within town boundaries, differs significantly from Boulder, being 20 minutes from Moab with full services and having two high-end resorts within 5 miles. He characterized Castle Valley as becoming a bedroom community for retirees, which he doesn't want for Boulder, and emphasized that Castle Valley lacks an elementary school.

14. Adjourn

Chair Nancy Tosta thanked Commissioners Elena Hughes and Tina Karlsson for their service and energy, which have contributed to the planning commission's success.

MOTION: Commissioner Elena Hughes moved to adjourn.
Commissioner Colleen Thompson seconded.


VOICE VOTE: All in favor. None opposed.

RESULT: APPROVED unanimously


The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 PM.

Approved by Town Council: January 20, 2026

Recorded by: Elizabeth Julian, Boulder Town Clerk

Notice and Agenda:  2025-12-16 PC Notice & Agenda

Audio Recording:  2025-12-16 PC Regular Audio.m4a

Video Recording:  2025-12-16 PC Regular Video.m4a.mp4

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