

MEETING MINUTES
ALTA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Wednesday, December 17, 2025, 3:00 PM
Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

ALTA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING – 3:00 PM

PRESENT: Jon Nepstad, Chair
Jeff Niermeyer, Vice-Chair (virtual)
Maren Askins
David Abraham
Paul Moxley (virtual)
Roger Bourke, Town of Alta Mayor

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Cawley, Town Manager
Molly Austin, Assistant Town Manager
Polly McLean, Town Attorney

ALSO PRESENT: John Guldner, Cottonwood Lands Advisory (virtual)
Andrina Hougham, Shallow Shaft Property Owner
Jay Springer, Shallow Shaft Attorney
Hans Hoffman, Shallow Shaft Architect (virtual)

NOT PRESENT:

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Planning Commission Chair Jon Nepstad opened the December 17, 2025 meeting at 3:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Connie Marshall introduced herself as a former Alta employee and shared her interest and excitement about today's agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 19, 2025 MEETING

Planning Commissioner Jeff Niermeyer moved to approve the minutes from the November 19, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. Planning Commissioner David Abraham seconded. All were in favor, and the minutes were approved.

4. PRESENTATION and DISCUSSION: SHALLOW SHAFT PROPOSED ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

Chris Cawley expressed gratitude towards the representatives of the Shallow Shaft (the "Applicant") as well as the Planning Commission for their participation, communication, and engagement over the last few weeks, especially as this is a busy time of year when we don't typically hold meetings.

Cawley introduced the main agenda item as a carryover from the November meeting and thanked the Applicant for creating and sharing revised text amendments and the requested massing renderings. Cawley described that the renderings are very helpful but observed that since height and setbacks are individually determined by the Planning Commission in BFZ Zone C, the renderings do not necessarily illustrate what is possible on the property; only what the Applicant proposes. Cawley explained that the updated code amendments are a step in the right direction, but don't necessarily answer the primary question before the commission of whether the proposed changes are good for the Town and in the public interest.

Planning Commission Chair Jon Nepstad invited the Applicant to present.

Andrina Hougham introduced herself as owner of the Shallow Shaft property and introduced Jay Springer as their legal counsel, and Hans Hoffman, the project architect. Hougham stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review progress from the November meeting regarding their application to define and allow a new use in Town of Alta Base Facilities Zone (BFZ) Zone C, , as well as amendments to Town code section 10-6D-8 lot area, lot width, and slope requirements.

Hougham stated that her team met with Town representatives to work on updating the language in the proposed text amendment. Hougham then shared the definition of "Boutique Hotel" that was presented at the November meeting and compared it to the updated version presented today of a "Compact Hotel Facility." The new term was created following feedback from the commission and the Town around concern that "Boutique Hotel" could cause confusion with the other lodging properties in the area. The new definition is similar to the definition presented in November but changes the name and removes the requirement that a Compact Hotel Facility be under independent ownership:

"Compact Hotel Facility": A small lodging facility located only within the Zone C of the Base Facilities Zone, containing no more than eight (8) guest-rooms, including any on-site worker housing units as may be required by Alta Code. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in Alta Code, guest-rooms in a Compact Hotel Facility may include in-room or shared kitchens and kitchenettes for guest use."

Jay Springer described that the red line version was provided in the meeting packet. He acknowledged it is still a work in progress, and they are open to suggestions.

Nepstad asked about the question of whether the town could require independent ownership. Polly McLean shared that it is not common for staff to engage with applicants on the level the Town had engaged with the Shallow Shaft, and clarified that the Town is not supporting one way or another, but wanted to engage in a productive process and provide the Applicant with constructive feedback. Mclean summarized that the Base Facilities Zone (BFZ) doesn't allow residential uses and stated concern about the "boutique hotel" definition being confusing given the boutique nature

of all of the hotels or lodges in Alta currently. McLean explained the desire to have the definition be clearly unique to BFZ subzone C, and described that more research would need to be conducted to understand if the Town could regulate or limit ownership, so it was preferred to avoid that possibility.

Hougham then compared the proposed new allowed use to what was presented in November. The new proposed definition provides a simplified, but similar method to allow the additional use only in Zone C of the BFZ; removes the unnecessary provision for “living quarter for persons employed...” as that use is already allowed in the BFZ; calls back to other requirements of the Alta Code; and provides an optional subsection to allow a small retail space, which would not require additional parking. Generally, the updated text amendment differentiates Base Facility Zone C from the rest of the BFZ. Springer shared that the previous draft was a little lengthy and the goal of this revision was to achieve the same result with only one or two sentences.

Hougham then shared proposed amendments to Alta Code 10-6D-8 Lot Area, Lot Width, and Slope Requirements, which provide an exception to the lot area and lot width requirements of the BFZ on Zone C properties only. The update addresses concerns raised by Commissioner Askins in the previous meeting about which Zones of the BFZ the amendment would affect as well as McLean’s observation that the previous version didn’t mention slope requirements. Hougham stated it is essentially the same as what was proposed in November, but with updates for clarity. The presentation concluded and the meeting turned to a discussion amongst the commissioners.

Jeff Niermeyer opined that this could fit into a broader dialog of a general plan update but conceded to put that aside for now. Niermeyer then shared that he had a conversation recently with someone familiar with Alta who inquired about the status of the Shallow Shaft building. He said that something productive on the parcel is preferred, but not sure if it is worth it at the risk of setting a precedent for other properties in the vicinity. He gave a recent example of the Snowpine Lodge being allowed to build 25 feet above the road, which was perceived to be a new standard, as evidenced by the recent Shrontz Estate proposal. He also stated this proposal has brought to light the inclusion of residential units in other hotels, which one could argue is reason enough to allow them in this instance. Niermeyer expressed the need to ensure the proposed changes would be limited to Zone C, and suggested the issue of waterway setbacks may arise further along in the process but noted that workarounds might be available.

Paul Moxley thanked Cawley for presenting the set of questions and issues for guiding this discussion. Moxley stated that there is a variety of pluses and minuses and any conclusion will be determined by how much weight is given to each. The question he finds himself returning to is: “is something better than nothing?”. Moxley noted that Alta is a unique community with unique factors to consider and suggested Public Hearing as a next step. Moxley stated he finds it debatable if a restaurant is viable up there but recognized it is up to the property owner to determine what type of business they want to conduct on their property.

David Abraham asked for clarity on the lot width requirements in the newly proposed amendment. Springer clarified there was no change to the 100’ lot width requirements, noting that the red line changes didn’t reflect accurately in the presentation. Abraham thanked the Applicant for taking feedback from the commission into consideration, noting his appreciation for the commercial or

retail use on the ground floor. Abraham recognized that we can't wait to make a decision on this application because the Town may update the general plan later. He then summarized some elements of the proposal that he found appealing like the flexibility with the internal layout and the newly proposed definition and term. Abraham then asked a question about parking and an exhibit that seemed to depict some of the parked cars halfway on and halfway off the property, but we were unable to locate the image he was referring to. Abraham stated he appreciates the property owner's desire to change the use, but recognized that the property was purchased as a restaurant. Abraham noted the concern of others about setting a precedent, but the zoning is very specific to this zone of the BFZ, which he sees as clearly distinct from other areas of Alta such as the Albion Basin or Summer Road. The Base Facilities Zone is in the "heart" of town.

Askins said she is trying to weigh the tradeoffs for the community and also asked for clarity on parking, sharing that it was noted the development would result in losing eight public parking spaces. Cawley offered that there is parking along the roadway in front of the property, some of which is on the property and some of which is on the easement for Highway 210, which is USFS land. He acknowledged that public parking has been happening in that area for many years, and while there would continue to be parking in the area, it would be more or less dedicated to the use of the building, which could result in an impact to the parking in that area as we know it. While on the topic of parking, Cawley noted that the proposed amendment would allow for a commercial/retail use combined within a compact hotel facility, but prohibits the Town from requiring additional parking for retail spaces 400 square feet or smaller. Cawley opined that customers of the coffee shop will already have parking elsewhere in Alta and that while the 250 square foot coffee shop may not need its own, he wasn't sure the same could be said for 400 square feet of retail space. Cawley made it clear that this is not how parking has been addressed in Alta in the past and would appreciate public and commissioner input.

Abraham shared Cawley's perspective and lack of concern about available parking with such a small retail space. Hougham noted that there is an additional benefit in the proposal of making 1 covered parking space available to Town officials. She also explained that consent was never expressly given for the Town to rent out parking spaces on their private property, but that they haven't raised issue with it as their business has been closed, so that parking has not been needed. Askins asked if there is dedicated parking for the live-in employee. Hougham explained they are planning to have 5 parking spaces inside the garage and 2 spaces outside, noting that should be ample parking for guests, a Town official, as well as their employee, although that parking space may not be covered. McLean clarified Town code requires parking for the employee as well as at least 2 spots for the 5 available guest rooms.

Askins inquired about the square footage of the current employee unit and how that compares to the proposed new employee housing space. Hougham stated that the current employee housing consists of multiple rooms whereas the new design is intended for a single person, not a family. To summarize her perspective, Askins shared some concerns about the proposal: loss of public parking, smaller employee housing, and lack of job creation. Hougham stated that they believe the proposal would provide job opportunities for housekeepers and property managers.

McLean brought attention to the question of whether or not a retail commercial use should be required or optional.

Nepstad asked if UDOT would be involved in terms of the creation of parking (which will be a change of use) and access to the garage. Hougham assured the commission that the Applicant has been in touch with UDOT and would follow their permitting process. Nepstad offered that in a perfect world we would wait to see what comes out of a general or visioning plan process. While he believes a restaurant has more activity than 8 rooms behind a wall, he recognized that we have to respond to the proposal on the table. Further, he shared that he finds the proposed use somewhat boring and questioned whether it would provide a community benefit. Nepstad then reconsidered whether the retail space should be required or optional, stating that he prefers a retail space to a garage door. Abraham expressed desire to have the Planning Commission come to a consensus, sharing his support for the retail use - noting the obvious effort by the Applicant to fit a coffee shop into their proposal.

The conversation turned back to parking, with Nepstad stating that retail customers may feel entitled to a parking space, while conceding that it would have to be a really good cup of coffee to warrant a drive up the canyon simply to visit the coffee shop. Abraham shared that parking here is a challenge already. Nepstad asked Niermeyer and Moxley their opinion on whether the retail should be required or optional – Niermeyer shared his view that it should be a requirement. Moxley and Askins agreed.

Cawley addressed the Town Code requirement for 1 overnight parking stall available for every 8 guest rooms of a hotel, whereas restaurants require 1 space for 2.5 seats or 3 spaces per 100 square feet. Cawley stands by his rationale for supporting the parking as proposed but acknowledged that the proposal would be a big departure from what the code says – which would require 12 parking spaces for a 400 square foot coffee shop. Cawley continued to explain that the code allows for some discretion from the Planning Commission to determine parking standards in ambiguous circumstances.

Mayor Bourke opined that something is better than nothing, and that the Applicant's proposal would be a reasonable use of the property. He continued that the Town's interest is served by enlivening this area. Bourke's view is that it would be heavy-handed to require they have retail space, and that it should be a business decision on the property owners' part as it may not be economically sensible.

Abraham stated that it is quite common for a municipality to have a ground-floor commercial requirement (including in resort communities), while recognizing that Alta is unique and not an urban area. He offered that the Applicant has put something forward that will work for them, but it is the role of the Planning Commission to decide what is in the best interest of the Town.

Nepstad noted Bourke's perspective and summarized the next steps of taking this agenda item into the January meeting, which would include a public hearing. Niermeyer agreed, noting that some more text revisions would be necessary based on the outcome of today's discussion. He also stated that there are still concerns regarding the culvert maintenance and setback requirements. While they don't have to be addressed today, he hopes the applicant understands stream setback requirements won't be waived and they will have to come forward with proposals that comply.

Cawley explained that the Town cannot require the Applicant to come back with different text that requires a retail space, but they could choose to do so. He suggested that the requirement could be incorporated into a recommendation that the commission makes to the Town Council. McLean clarified that it is up to the Town to decide what language to adopt. Springer offered that they could provide multiple versions of the text for consideration and recommendation.

5. APPROVAL OF THE 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

Jeff Niermeyer suggested that the proposed July 22 meeting date be moved up to July 15 to accommodate the Pioneer Day holiday.

Planning Commissioner Maren Askins moved to approve 2026 meeting schedule with the amended July date. Planning Commissioner David Abraham seconded. All were in favor, and the 2026 meeting schedule was approved.

Before moving on, it was requested that we revisit the previous discussion about the plans for the next meeting. The Applicant requested that any further discussion on their application or a public hearing be held in March due to their unavailability on the scheduled January or February meeting dates.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Chris Cawley informed the commission that staff have prepared a text amendment for commission review that is clerical in nature. The Land Use and Development Management Act (LUDMA) was recently recodified into a new chapter of state code and town code references should be updated to match. He stated that if there is no planned public hearing in January, we may perhaps defer this agenda item to a future meeting date. Cawley also shared that there are some additional "housekeeping" type amendments to our land use regulations that could use updating as well and wanted to prepare the commission to expect those in the coming months. Nepstad asked if the LUDMA update was time-sensitive and offered that the commission would be happy to address it in January if there was an urgency to do so.

Cawley also noted that there are some annual tasks, such as Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training and commissioner appointments that typically take place in January, but they could perhaps be postponed to a future meeting date as well.

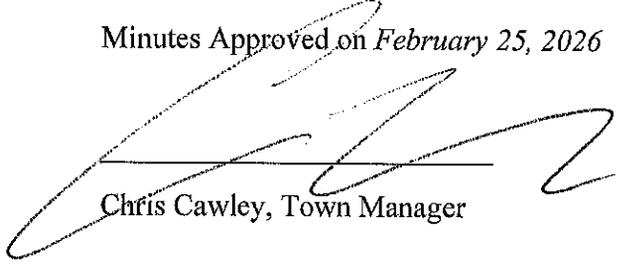
7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28. Agenda items are to be determined.

8. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Planning Commission member Jeff Niermeyer motioned to adjourn the meeting. Planning Commission member Askins seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes Approved on *February 25, 2026*



Chris Cawley, Town Manager

