

MINUTES of the Vernal City PLANNING COMMISSION

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

April 14, 2026

5:30 pm

Members Present: Stephen Lytle, Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft

Members Excused:

Alternates Present:

Alternates Excused:

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

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

Before moving into standing business, Chairman Lytle emphasized that everyone present shares a common interest in and passion for Vernal City, with the goal of supporting what is best for the community, even when opinions differ. Members of the public will have one opportunity to speak on each topic during the public hearing, with a limit of five minutes per person that cannot be transferred or extended. If clarification is needed from staff or applicants, time may be paused to allow for responses. Participants are expected to remain on topic, follow meeting rules, and avoid disruptions to ensure all voices can be heard during the public hearing portion of the meeting. To help manage time and avoid repetition, individuals are encouraged to simply state their name, address, and agreement if a previous speaker has already expressed the same concerns. While public input and opinions are welcomed, any statements presented as fact should be supported by evidence. The commission is required to base its decisions on the evidence provided, the Vernal City General Plan, applicable land use codes, and the overall welfare of the community, and cannot deny an application solely based on its popularity, but rather must determine its consistency with the City's long-term planning goals.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM March 10, 2026: Stephen Lytle Chair asked if there were any changes to the minutes from March 10, 2026. The minutes were approved with there being no corrections, *Samantha Scott moved to approve the minutes of March 10, 2026 as presented. Hailee Todich seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.*

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE FRANCISCO REZONE (REBECCA FRANCISCO) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 356 EAST 100 NORTH, PARCEL #050200075 – 2026-010-REZ

Vernal City Planning Commission Minutes
April 14, 2026

Chair Stephen Lytle noted for the record that written correspondence regarding the rezone request had been received from members of the public.

Braeden Christofferson presented a request from Rebecca Francisco to rezone the property located at 356 East 100 North, Vernal, Utah, from R-4 Residential to Commercial. The request was made to bring the existing business use into compliance, as operating this particular business is not a permitted use within the R-4 zone. Mr. Christofferson noted the property is adjacent to commercially zoned land and that the proposed rezone is consistent with the City's General Plan, which designates the area as appropriate for commercial use. Mr. Christofferson also indicated that parking and site-related concerns could be addressed at a later stage through a site plan review, though written public comment had been received expressing concerns regarding parking, water use, and neighborhood impacts.

Chair Stephen Lytle opened the public hearing to receive public comment.

Aigul Kaufman, 366 East 100 North, Vernal, Utah, expressed concerns regarding ongoing parking issues associated with the existing business. She stated that customers frequently park in front of her residence, limiting her ability to park her own vehicles, place garbage cans, and maintain her property. She also noted concerns related to winter snow removal, irrigation conflicts, and disturbances caused by unfamiliar vehicles affecting her household and pet. Ms. Kaufman requested that parking and related impacts be resolved prior to approval of any rezone.

Rebecca Francisco, 3784 South 1500 West, Vernal, Utah, responded as the business owner. She explained that the business is a low-impact massage therapy practice with limited client traffic, typically involving no more than four vehicles at a time. She stated that parking is managed through use of the driveway, limited street parking, and alternative parking arrangements when necessary. Ms. Francisco indicated efforts have been made to avoid impacting neighboring properties and emphasized that the business generates less utility demand than a typical residential use. She also noted that the surrounding area along 100 North functions as a transitional corridor with a mix of residential and commercial uses.

There being no further public comments, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

The Commission discussed the rezone request, including questions regarding parking requirements and timing of addressing potential impacts. Mr. Christofferson clarified that parking considerations would be evaluated at a later stage and that the current decision focused solely on the appropriateness of the zone change. The Commission acknowledged receipt of written public comment from Aigul Kaufman.

After discussion, the Commission found the request to be consistent with the General Plan and appropriate given the surrounding land uses. ***Samantha Chapoose moved to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council for approval of the Francisco rezone (Rebecca Francisco) for property located at 356 East 100 North, parcel #050200075 – 2026-010-REZ. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch,***

Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE CIVIL SOLUTIONS GROUP REZONE (JAKE BLACK) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 350 NORTH 500 WEST, PARCEL #050220054 – 2026-007-REZ

Chair Stephen Lytle noted for the record that written correspondence regarding the rezone request had been received from members of the public.

Braeden Christofferson presented the rezone request for Civil Solutions Group, located at 350 North 500 West, to rezone approximately 8.66 acres. Mr. Christofferson explained that the property is currently zoned R-3 (Moderate Density Residential), which allows for a variety of residential development types, including single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and other multi-unit configurations at a moderate density level. He stated that the applicant is requesting a rezone to R-4 (High Density Residential), which would allow for increased residential density and a broader range of housing types, including larger multi-family developments such as apartment-style units, as well as the potential for assisted living or senior housing.

Mr. Christofferson clarified that the conceptual plans submitted by the applicant were provided strictly for illustrative purposes and are not binding. He emphasized that the Planning Commission's decision on the rezone should not be based on a specific site layout, as any future development would be subject to additional review processes, including preliminary and final plat approval, site plan review, and compliance with all applicable development standards.

Mr. Christofferson explained that the surrounding area is predominantly residential, with a mix of zoning designations, and includes nearby institutional and commercial uses. He specifically referenced the Uintah Basin Medical Center located directly west of the property along 500 West (Highway 121), as well as churches and other non-residential uses in the vicinity. He stated that this mix of uses contributes to the area functioning as a transitional zone within the City.

Mr. Christofferson also referenced the City's General Plan, noting that amendments made in approximately 2014 and 2018/2019 designated portions of the area for a combination of commercial, medium-density residential, and high-density residential uses. He explained that this reflects an overall vision for a mixed-use area, with higher intensity uses generally located closer to major roadways and lower density transitioning toward established neighborhoods.

Mr. Christofferson further explained that, regardless of zoning designation, any development on the property would be required to meet access requirements established by City Code and State regulations. He stated that developments exceeding a certain number of units would require multiple access points and that access could be provided either directly from 500 West (subject to UDOT approval) or through connections to existing streets within the surrounding neighborhood. He acknowledged that several dead-end streets currently exist adjacent to the property and could potentially be extended, depending on the design of the development.

Mr. Christofferson emphasized that the decision before the Planning Commission is limited to whether the proposed zoning change is appropriate based on City Code, the General Plan, and surrounding land uses, and that detailed design, infrastructure improvements, and mitigation measures would be addressed in subsequent phases of the development process.

Commissioner Hailee Todich provided detailed comments regarding the proposal. She reiterated that a similar rezone request had been considered in approximately 2013 and was ultimately denied by the City Council due to concerns about traffic impacts and neighborhood compatibility. She expressed that many of those same concerns remain relevant.

Ms. Todich stated that the current R-3 zoning already allows for a substantial level of development, estimating approximately one hundred three (103) units could be constructed under existing code, with the potential for additional units depending on future code amendments. She emphasized that R-3 zoning already provides flexibility for a mix of housing types, including duplexes, fourplexes, and townhomes, which she believes are more consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner Todich discussed the existing character of the area, noting that surrounding properties are predominantly single-family homes, with some smaller-scale multi-family units. She expressed concern that allowing R-4 zoning would introduce a higher level of density that is not compatible with the existing development pattern.

Commissioner Todich further stated that the General Plan designates the area primarily for medium-density residential use, and she expressed concern that approving R-4 zoning, which allows higher density and taller buildings, would be inconsistent with that designation. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the General Plan as a guiding document for land use decisions.

Commissioner Todich additionally addressed traffic concerns, noting that traffic volumes along 500 West have increased since the prior proposal and that the area already experiences congestion. She expressed hesitation in supporting a rezone without first understanding the results of a traffic study and how potential impacts would be mitigated.

Commissioner Todich concluded by stating that she did not see a demonstrated need to increase density beyond what is already allowed under R-3 zoning and expressed concern that the proposal represents a significant departure from both the General Plan and the established character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Ryan Balch questioned whether traffic concerns identified in the past had been addressed, noting that traffic conditions on 500 West have likely worsened since the earlier proposal.

Commissioner Todich also raised concerns regarding building height, noting that R-4 zoning allows for structures up to four (4) stories. She expressed concern that taller buildings would impact surrounding properties, including privacy and neighborhood character.

Commissioner Brittany Young stated that, while the developer indicated flexibility, it is reasonable to assume that the increased allowances would be utilized if granted.

In response to questions regarding traffic, Braeden Christofferson explained that 500 West is a Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)-controlled highway, and that the City does not have direct authority over traffic capacity or roadway modifications on that corridor. He stated that any proposed development would be required to complete a traffic impact study, which would be reviewed by UDOT to determine whether roadway improvements are necessary. He provided examples of potential mitigation measures, such as acceleration or deceleration lanes, that could be required depending on the findings of such a study. He emphasized that these requirements would be determined through the development review process and are not part of the rezone decision itself.

Mr. Christofferson acknowledged concerns about existing traffic conditions and stated that while the roadway experiences higher traffic volumes at certain times of day, it is designed and intended to function as a major transportation corridor. He reiterated that UDOT continuously evaluates and manages traffic conditions on the highway and would play a key role in determining what improvements, if any, are required to accommodate additional development.

In response to questions regarding building height and zoning standards, Mr. Christofferson confirmed that R-4 zoning allows for taller structures than R-3, including buildings up to four stories. However, he clarified that approval of the rezone does not guarantee that the maximum height or density will be utilized, as the final design would be subject to additional review and compliance with other development standards, including parking, landscaping, and site layout requirements.

Mr. Christofferson also explained differences between R-3 and R-4 zoning in terms of development standards. He stated that R-4 allows for increased flexibility, including reduced landscaping requirements and adjustments to parking and site design standards, which can allow for a higher number of units depending on how the project is designed. He emphasized that while a theoretical maximum number of units could be calculated based on zoning, the actual number of units achievable on the site would be constrained by requirements such as parking, roadway access, landscaping, and other infrastructure considerations.

Jake Black, Applicant/Developer, 286 West 590 North, Vineyard, Utah, responded to questions from the Commission. Mr. Black stated that the project is still in early stages and that the rezone request is intended to allow flexibility in development. He explained that the goal is to provide a mix of housing types, including one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, as well as potential senior or assisted living components. He stated that this mix would better meet community needs and allow for more effective absorption in a smaller market.

Mr. Black stated that while development could occur under R-3 zoning, the flexibility provided by R-4 would better support a mixed-product approach and allow for adjustments in unit types, landscaping, and site design. He acknowledged that the project may not proceed if the rezone is denied, depending on feasibility and contractual considerations.

Mr. Black further stated that the property is a key infill site within Vernal City, with existing infrastructure including roads, water, sewer, and utilities on or near the property. He emphasized that the site has direct access to a major arterial roadway (Highway 121), which makes it more suitable for higher-density development compared to interior neighborhood locations. He also stated that higher density could be concentrated near the highway, with lower density transitioning toward surrounding residential areas.

Mr. Black emphasized that the project would still be subject to multiple levels of review, including traffic studies, geotechnical reports, infrastructure analysis, and City approvals, and that the rezone is only the first step in a longer process.

Chair Stephen Lytle opened the public hearing to receive public comment.

Leon Hoyt, 336 North 300 West, Vernal, provided detailed concerns regarding site conditions, specifically the historically high groundwater table in the area. He explained that past developments, including nearby institutional properties such as the medical center and adjacent church, required the importation of several feet of fill material to make construction feasible. He stated that many homes in the surrounding neighborhood rely on sump pump systems due to persistent groundwater intrusion and noted that basements are generally not constructed in the area for that reason. Mr. Hoyt also referenced historical irrigation practices, indicating that while flood irrigation has decreased, runoff from properties north of the site continues to impact the area. He expressed concern that these conditions could create complications for higher-density development and suggested that these issues be thoroughly evaluated during project planning.

Sherry Gross, 405 West 400 North, Vernal, reiterated concerns previously raised during a similar rezone request approximately 13 years prior. She emphasized that the proposed development would directly border her property and expressed significant concern regarding loss of privacy due to the potential for three- and four-story structures overlooking her backyard. She also discussed traffic concerns in detail, stating that access to 500 West is limited and controlled by UDOT, and that previous discussions indicated additional access points may not be feasible. She expressed concern that traffic would instead be diverted through surrounding residential streets, increasing congestion and safety risks. Ms. Gross further noted that children in the area are not bused and must either walk or be transported, and she expressed concern that increased traffic would create unsafe conditions. She also stated that there are already multiple apartment complexes in the vicinity and questioned whether additional high-density housing is necessary or appropriate for the area.

Tyler Shurtliff, 251 North 500 West, Vernal, described ongoing traffic challenges along Highway 121, stating that congestion is already significant and continues to worsen. He

indicated that it can take multiple vehicles passing before he is able to safely exit his driveway and noted that traffic conditions are particularly difficult during peak hours and events such as the Fourth of July. He expressed concern that additional development would exacerbate these issues. Mr. Shurtliff also raised concerns about infrastructure capacity, including water pressure and aging sewer systems, stating that current conditions are already strained. He added that when he purchased his home, he did not anticipate adjacent high-density development and had expected a lower-impact use for the property. He urged denial of the rezone request.

Harold Garcia, 320 West 300 North, Vernal, explained that his property is located on a dead-end street that could potentially be extended to provide access to the development. He stated that several nearby roads, including 300 North and 350 North, are narrow and were not designed to accommodate through traffic or higher volumes. He expressed concern that opening these roads would significantly increase traffic and create safety concerns for residents. Mr. Garcia also discussed the scale and intensity of potential development, noting that multi-story apartment-style housing would introduce a level of density inconsistent with the existing neighborhood. He expressed concern about increased vehicle ownership associated with higher-density housing and the resulting impacts on parking and congestion. He also noted that taller buildings would impact views and alter the overall character of the area.

Dan Dilsaver, 201 North 1500 West, Vernal, questioned the feasibility and safety of access to the proposed development. He stated that, based on the conceptual information provided, access appears limited and could result in significant congestion, particularly during peak traffic periods. He expressed concern that left-hand turns onto 500 West would be difficult or unsafe, potentially forcing drivers to travel north to find safer turning opportunities. He encouraged the Commission to carefully evaluate traffic patterns and access design before approving the rezone.

Rex Howe, 675 North 500 West, Vernal, expressed concerns regarding infrastructure capacity and long-term planning. He compared the potential impacts of the proposed development to experiences in other Utah communities, such as Vineyard and Spanish Fork, where rapid growth has led to congestion and infrastructure challenges. He stated that he does not want to see similar conditions develop in Vernal and emphasized the importance of ensuring infrastructure keeps pace with growth. Mr. Howe also expressed concern about the visual impact of higher-density, multi-story buildings, stating that such development could alter the character of the area and diminish the views currently enjoyed by residents.

Aigul Kaufman, 166 East 100 North, Vernal, asked questions related to livability and design considerations for higher-density housing. She inquired whether the development would include designated safe play areas for children and whether there would be adequate accommodations for pets, such as dog-walking areas. Ms. Kaufman's comments reflected concern about how quality-of-life elements would be incorporated into a higher-density residential project.

In response to public questions regarding amenities and site design, Mr. Christofferson stated that specific elements such as open space, play areas, and pet accommodations would be addressed during the site plan review process and are not determined at the rezone stage. He

emphasized that all developments, regardless of zoning, are required to comply with City standards related to safety, infrastructure, and livability.

Michael Spackman, 342 North 300 West, Vernal, stated that his property is located near a potential access point and that increased traffic would likely pass directly by his residence. He acknowledged that the property will likely be developed but expressed concern about the intensity of development under R-4 zoning compared to R-3. He stated that existing streets are not designed to accommodate significant increases in traffic and that congestion would likely result. Mr. Spackman also sought clarification regarding the differences between R-3 and R-4 zoning, specifically asking what additional allowances R-4 would provide. He summarized that R-4 would allow higher density, reduced landscaping requirements, and increased flexibility, and questioned whether those changes justify the potential impacts.

Scott Gross, 405 West 400 North, Vernal, raised concerns regarding water availability and long-term sustainability, particularly in relation to agricultural water rights and current drought conditions. He stated that, based on his understanding and conversations with local farmers and canal companies, there are concerns that the City may already be utilizing more culinary water than originally allocated, potentially drawing from water sources traditionally designated for agricultural use.

Mr. Gross emphasized that much of the water in the Uintah Basin is historically deeded to farmers rather than municipalities, and he suggested that agricultural users have been working to conserve water through improvements such as piping canals to reduce loss. He expressed concern that, despite these efforts, there may be increasing pressure on those agricultural water resources to support municipal growth.

He questioned the accuracy of projections indicating a 30-year water supply, stating that current conditions—particularly low snowpack and reduced reservoir storage—suggest a more immediate concern. He described the current year as not only drought-impacted but indicative of a potential ongoing shortfall in water availability. He urged the Commission to further verify water supply data and to consult directly with water companies and agricultural stakeholders to better understand the full scope of available water and existing obligations.

In addition to water supply concerns, Mr. Gross expressed opposition to the scale of potential development under R-4 zoning. He specifically referenced existing multi-story developments in Vernal, noting that taller buildings can overlook neighboring properties and diminish privacy. He stated that allowing up to four-story buildings in this location would be incompatible with the surrounding single-family neighborhood and would negatively impact residents who purchased their homes based on the existing character of the area.

Mr. Gross concluded by urging the Commission to consider the broader, long-term impacts of the rezone, including both water resource limitations and neighborhood compatibility, before making a recommendation.

Regarding water availability, Mr. Christofferson clarified that Vernal City has conducted long-term planning for water resources and has identified sufficient capacity to support approximately 30 years based on 1.6% growth. He explained that this projection is based on engineering studies and water resource planning conducted by qualified professionals. He acknowledged that current drought conditions have resulted in lower-than-normal water availability in recent years but stated that such conditions are considered anomalies when compared to long-term averages. He reiterated that the City's planning efforts are based on long-term data and projections rather than short-term fluctuations.

In response to additional questions, Mr. Christofferson clarified that the water projections referenced apply specifically to Vernal City's municipal water system and service area. He also noted that issues related to agricultural water rights and private water companies are separate from the City's culinary water system, although he acknowledged that water is a shared and important resource within the region.

There being no further public comments, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

Samantha Chapoose moved to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council for approval of the Civil Solutions Group rezone (Jake Black) for property located at 350 North 500 West, parcel #050220054 – 2026-007-REZ. Ryan Balch seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

*Commissioner Chapooseaye;
Commissioner Allredaye;
Commissioner Youngnay;
Commissioner Balchaye;
Commissioner Todichnay;
Commissioner Bancroftaye;*

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE EVERBUILT REZONE (JACOB SPEIRS) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1315 WEST 500 NORTH, 1189 WEST 400 NORTH, AND 381 NORTH 1250 WEST, PARCEL #'S 050060012, 050060013, 050050029 – 2026-012-REZ

Chair Stephen Lytle noted for the record that written correspondence regarding the rezone request had been received from members of the public.

Braeden Christofferson presented a request to rezone approximately nine acres located at 1315 West 500 North in Vernal, Utah, from R-1 Residential to R-3 Residential. The applicant indicated a potential intent to develop townhome-style housing on the property; however, no formal site plan or development layout was submitted with the application, as such plans are not required for a zoning amendment. Mr. Christofferson clarified that the request is limited solely to a change in zoning designation and does not constitute approval of any specific development proposal.

Mr. Christofferson explained that the R-1 zone is intended to accommodate low-density residential development, while the R-3 zone allows for moderate-density residential uses. The subject property is located along 500 North, which functions as a UDOT corridor providing regional connectivity. Surrounding land uses include a mix of single-family residential properties, agricultural land, institutional and open space areas, and low-intensity commercial uses located across 500 North within Uintah County jurisdiction.

Commission Hailee Todich disclosed that she resides within the broader neighborhood of the subject property but not on the immediate street. She stated she would not recuse herself but wanted to acknowledge her proximity to the area.

Commissioner Todich then presented a detailed analysis referencing Vernal City Code Section 16.58.120(A), which requires subdivision layouts to conform to the Vernal City General Plan. She directed attention to specific sections of the General Plan, including results from a public visual preference survey indicating that residents favor non-urban environments, preserved open space, and lower-density development patterns, while expressing dislike for high-density housing, traffic congestion, and large-scale urban features.

She further referenced the Future Land Use section of the General Plan, which emphasizes growth within city limits while maintaining compatibility with existing development patterns and preserving the open and rural character of areas on the outskirts of the community.

Commissioner Todich noted that the subject property is located on the outer edge of Vernal City, where the plan encourages lower-density or cluster-style development rather than higher-density residential forms.

Commissioner Todich discussed definitions within the General Plan, noting that medium-density residential development is generally defined as two (2) to four (4) units per acre, while moderate density ranges from four (4) to eight (8) units per acre. High-density residential development is identified as ranging from eight (8) to sixteen (16) or more units per acre. She pointed out that the current R-1 zoning allows approximately four (4) units per acre, which aligns with the medium-density classification described in the General Plan. In contrast, the proposed R-3 zoning allows up to twelve (12) units per acre, which more closely aligns with high-density development rather than moderate density.

Based on this analysis, Commissioner Todich expressed concern that the proposed zoning change is inconsistent with the General Plan and represents a significant increase in density beyond what is envisioned for the area. She further stated that the proposal could be considered spot zoning and raised concerns regarding potential impacts to surrounding properties, including increased traffic, reduced privacy, additional noise, possible decreases in property values, and strain on existing infrastructure systems such as water and sewer.

Commissioner Todich further stated that the subject property is one of the few remaining parcels in Vernal City currently zoned R-1 and expressed concern that rezoning the property would

reduce opportunities for low-density, single-family housing within the community. She indicated that there are only a small number of remaining R-1 areas within the City and that preserving those areas is important for maintaining housing diversity.

Commissioner Todich also provided historical context, explaining that similar proposals for the same general area had been brought before the Planning Commission and City Council multiple times between 2007 and 2008. According to the records reviewed, those proposals were repeatedly denied due to concerns regarding density, incompatibility with the General Plan, and traffic impacts. It was noted that approval was only granted in the past when a development proposal was revised to maintain low-density residential use and limit connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods in order to reduce traffic impacts. She emphasized that many of the concerns identified in those earlier discussions remain relevant today and that the primary difference in the current application is the presence of a new developer rather than a change in surrounding conditions.

Chair Stephen Lytle acknowledged community concerns while highlighting broader housing challenges in Vernal. He noted that a frequent concern expressed by residents is the lack of available and affordable housing, particularly for single-family homes in R-1 zones, which are increasingly out of reach for many families. As a result, many residents are compelled to live in higher-density housing, such as apartments, despite a preference for single-family living.

Chair Lytle stated he understands concerns related to increased traffic, privacy, and neighborhood impacts, and acknowledged he would share similar concerns if directly affected. However, he emphasized the need to consider the issue from a community-wide perspective. He explained that opportunities for new development within City limits are limited, and that directing growth away from areas like the subject property would likely push development into surrounding County lands, potentially resulting in the loss of agricultural land and long-standing homesteads.

Drawing from personal experience living near a multi-story apartment building, Chair Lytle noted that impacts can be mitigated through measures such as landscaping and buffering. He expressed that the City faces a difficult balance between preserving its current character and accommodating future growth. Chair Lytle concluded that the decision presents challenges on both sides, as maintaining the status quo limits housing availability, while approving higher-density development may alter existing neighborhood conditions. Ultimately, he indicated that given the City's limited space and continued growth projections, such developments may be necessary, though the decision is not clear-cut.

Commissioner Brittany Young drawing on prior experience in real estate, expressed agreement with earlier comments regarding the challenges of housing affordability and availability in Vernal. She explained that many individuals and families desire traditional single-family homes, such as three-bedroom, two-bath residences on larger lots within city limits; however, such housing options are no longer attainable at lower price points. Commissioner Young noted that

homes meeting those expectations are not realistically available in the current market for under \$200,000, highlighting a significant gap between housing demand and affordability.

Based on this experience, Commissioner Young acknowledged that there is a clear and growing demand for higher-density housing options, as these tend to be more financially accessible. She stated that while she had not conducted as extensive a historical review as others, she had given considerable thought to the issue and recognized that the subject property has remained undeveloped despite multiple past opportunities. She suggested that the continued R-1 zoning may be a contributing factor, as it limits the type of development that can occur and may make projects financially unfeasible, resulting in the property remaining vacant. Commissioner Young also noted the possibility that maintaining the property as open space may align with community preferences, but questioned whether that outcome supports the City's broader growth needs.

Commissioner Young expressed general support for development and community growth, emphasizing the benefits of increasing population, expanding the tax base, and supporting additional commercial activity. However, she also acknowledged broader economic trends, both statewide and nationally, which have made traditional R-1 single-family housing increasingly unattainable for many residents. As a result, she indicated that accommodating growth may require the inclusion of higher-density housing options.

At the same time, Commissioner Young recognized that higher-density development is not universally supported within the community, as some residents prefer to maintain the existing small-town character and limit population growth. She personally expressed a preference for preserving that character and stated she is not in favor of large-scale or high-rise developments. However, she reiterated that without incorporating some level of higher-density housing, many individuals and families may be unable to afford to live in Vernal.

Commissioner Young further observed that many existing R-1 neighborhoods are occupied by long-term residents or individuals with greater financial resources, reinforcing the idea that such housing is not broadly accessible. While she expressed some hesitation regarding the proposed R-3 zoning, particularly given the absence of a conceptual development plan, she suggested that the lack of development on the property to date may be directly tied to the limitations imposed by its current R-1 designation.

Commissioner Todich responded to earlier comments regarding the lack of development on the subject property, providing additional context based on personal knowledge and past efforts to acquire portions of the land. She explained that the property had only recently been subdivided and was previously held as a large parcel by an out-of-state investor who was unwilling to divide or rezone the land. As a result, potential buyers were unable to purchase smaller portions for development. She noted that the size and configuration of the parcel, combined with its ownership and pricing, made it financially unattainable for most local buyers, which contributed to the lack of development rather than a lack of interest in R-1 projects.

Commissioner Todich further stated that the timing of prior development efforts coincided with the 2008 economic downturn, which significantly impacted the housing market and likely prevented planned R-1 development from moving forward. She suggested that under different market conditions, such as those present several years ago, development of the property as single-family housing may have been more feasible.

Commissioner Todich also expressed concern about the broader trend toward predominantly higher-density housing, including townhomes and apartments. While acknowledging the need for additional housing, she questioned whether focusing primarily on higher-density development could limit future opportunities for single-family homeownership. Commissioner Todich emphasized that developers may favor higher-density projects due to greater financial returns, but cautioned against allowing market pressures to eliminate options for traditional housing types.

Commissioner Todich raised the concern that an overreliance on higher-density development could result in a lack of housing diversity, potentially leaving future residents with limited choices. She also noted uncertainty regarding long-term market conditions, questioning whether current demand for higher-density housing would remain stable or whether a future economic downturn could lead to an oversupply of such units. She concluded by expressing concern that continued shifts toward higher-density zoning could eventually reduce the availability of land for single-family homes, limiting housing options for future residents.

Braeden Christofferson provided additional information obtained from a local real estate professional, indicating that the median income in Vernal is approximately \$70,000 per year. Based on current market conditions, homes priced around \$250,000 would result in monthly mortgage payments near \$1,750, though homes at that price point are largely unavailable. Rental rates for apartments average approximately \$1,600 per month, while affordable housing is generally considered to be closer to \$1,100 per month. It was also noted that housing inventory within lower and mid-range price points is extremely limited and tends to sell quickly when available.

Quentin Daniel, co-owner of Everbuilt, addressed the Planning Commission and introduced himself as a lifelong resident of Vernal. He provided his business address as 2727 West 1500 North, Vernal, Utah. Mr. Daniel emphasized his personal connection to the community, noting that both he and his business partner returned to Vernal after living elsewhere in order to raise their families locally.

Mr. Daniel explained that through both personal experience and professional work, he has observed that many individuals in Vernal, including those with stable employment, are unable to afford homeownership, particularly following market changes after the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that this challenge motivated Everbuilt to pursue attainable housing projects.

Mr. Daniel referenced a recently completed subdivision project consisting of thirty-two (32) townhomes, which had been approved by the Planning Commission in 2023. He reported that the

project was successfully completed and described it as one of the most rewarding experiences of his career. He highlighted that the homes were purchased by a range of local residents, including teachers, retirees, young families, and first-time homebuyers. Mr. Daniel emphasized that these homes provided opportunities for individuals who otherwise may not have been able to enter the housing market.

Mr. Daniel urged the Commission to consider not only the concerns of developers or neighboring property owners, but also the needs of individuals and families seeking affordable housing opportunities. He stated that the decision would significantly impact those who may or may not have the opportunity to purchase a home in Vernal.

Jacob Spears, co-owner of Everbuilt, then presented additional details regarding the rezone request. Mr. Spears provided his address as 493 East 2900 South, Vernal, Utah, and clarified that he resides in Uintah County. He acknowledged the value of public input and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in a public process where differing opinions can be shared.

Mr. Spears explained that the proposed rezone is intended to support development similar to the previously completed townhome project. He stated that townhomes provide a more affordable housing option due to their smaller size and construction efficiency, as well as their appeal to individuals seeking lower-maintenance living.

Mr. Spears indicated that the proposal had been discussed with Vernal City staff and that R-3 zoning was determined to be more appropriate than higher-density alternatives such as R-4 or mixed-use zoning. He expressed his belief that the proposal aligns with the City's long-term goals and would contribute to increasing the housing supply.

Mr. Spears provided broader housing context, noting that the average age of first-time homebuyers has increased significantly, indicating growing barriers to entry into the housing market. He stated that increasing housing supply within City limits would support affordability and help prevent development from shifting into surrounding County areas, where agricultural land may be impacted.

Mr. Spears also emphasized the importance of local development, stating that Everbuilt is a local company invested in the long-term success of the community. He expressed a desire to contribute positively to Vernal's growth and housing availability.

As part of his presentation, Mr. Spears shared data from their previous townhome development, noting that approximately 78 percent of units were owner-occupied, with a majority being first-time homebuyers. He stated that this demonstrates the effectiveness of townhome developments in meeting local housing needs.

Mr. Spears further explained that the proposed location is well-suited for higher-density housing due to its proximity to schools, including Uintah High School, Ashley Elementary, Uintah Basin

Technical College, and Utah State University campuses, as well as nearby parks and existing infrastructure. He also noted that the property is located along a UDOT corridor, where higher-density development is more typical than single-family housing.

In response to questions, Mr. Spears provided pricing details from the prior development, stating that townhomes ranged from approximately \$245,000 to under \$300,000, with typical layouts consisting of three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, and approximately 1,400 square feet.

Mr. Spears explained that construction of single-family homes at similar price points is not financially feasible due to the cost of land, infrastructure, and development requirements. He stated that higher density is necessary to distribute those fixed costs and make housing attainable.

Chair Stephen Lytle opened the public hearing to receive public comment.

Alan Hacking 306 North 1250 West expressed significant concern regarding the City's aging sewer infrastructure. Drawing on decades of personal experience working on local sewer systems, he stated that the existing lines—some installed in the 1950s—are already strained and incapable of supporting additional high-density development. He noted that nearby systems are currently experiencing surcharge issues and warned that adding more demand could result in system failures, including potential sewage backups into streets or homes. He emphasized that major infrastructure upgrades would be required, potentially costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, and questioned whether those costs would fall on taxpayers. He urged the Commission to prioritize infrastructure analysis before approving additional density.

Chris Cummings 474 North 1500 West opposed the rezone, emphasizing the importance of preserving the existing R-1 zoning and neighborhood character. He highlighted that the surrounding area is predominantly composed of single-level homes, which provide unobstructed views of surrounding mountains. He expressed concern that higher-density or multi-level developments would negatively impact these views and alter the established character of the neighborhood. He recommended maintaining R-1 zoning and limiting development to single-story residential homes.

Mitch Phillips 1215 West 250 North raised concerns about the loss of agricultural land and questioned the consistency of repeated rezoning attempts. He noted that the property has historically been used for flood irrigation and agricultural purposes. He also expressed concerns about traffic congestion along Highway 121, particularly during peak school hours, and pointed out the proximity of industrial uses such as a propane facility, which could present safety risks with increased population density. He suggested that single-family homes would still sell successfully in the current market without requiring a zoning change.

Mike Robinson 288 North 1500 West stated that there are already multiple high-density housing developments within close proximity and felt that the area has reached its capacity for such projects. He supported maintaining the R-1 designation.

Tammy Brusto 348 North 1250 West emphasized the impact on privacy and property expectations. She explained that when purchasing her home, she relied on assurances that the surrounding zoning would remain R-1 and was told that a change would be highly unlikely. She expressed concern that higher-density development would overlook her property and diminish privacy and views. She also questioned the developer's plans if the rezone were denied, highlighting uncertainty about future land use.

Julie Harris 379 North 1150 West provided detailed concerns about traffic and safety. Having lived in the area for decades, she described a significant increase in traffic volumes, particularly during school hours, with congestion, limited visibility, and frequent near-accidents. She explained that turning onto major roads has become increasingly difficult and that drivers often reroute through residential streets to avoid congestion. She also raised concerns about parking overflow from higher-density housing and its impact on surrounding streets. Additionally, she cited ongoing sewer maintenance issues in the area and expressed fear of potential backups affecting homes with basements.

George Lambroff 1211 West 250 North reiterated that the proposed homes were expected to fall within a price range of approximately \$200,000 to \$300,000 and noted that, based on prior statements, a household would need to earn over \$70,000 annually to reasonably afford such housing. The speaker used this point to question the true accessibility of the development, suggesting that these homes may not be attainable for many residents despite being framed as "affordable."

Mr. Lambroff continued by citing a recent personal review of housing listings on Zillow, stating that a number of homes are already available on the market. This observation was used to support the argument that the current housing situation is not solely defined by a lack of supply. Expanding on this, he referenced broader economic cycles, describing housing trends as subject to "ebbs and flows" and suggesting that the current conditions represent a temporary phase rather than a permanent crisis. Mr. Lambroff also referenced a statistic, reportedly obtained through a general online search, indicating that the average age of a homebuyer is currently 59 rather than 40, further emphasizing the belief that the housing market is in an atypical period.

Drawing from personal experience, he shared that he had relocated from Atlanta and described his initial impression of Vernal as resembling a Norman Rockwell painting—highlighting its small-town charm, sense of community, and aesthetic appeal. This comparison underscored a central concern: that increased growth and higher-density development could fundamentally alter the character of the community. Mr. Lambroff posed rhetorical questions to the Commission about the ultimate goals of growth, asking where expansion would end and cautioning against allowing Vernal to evolve into a larger, more congested metropolitan area like Atlanta.

Mr. Lambroff acknowledged that some level of growth is both inevitable and beneficial, particularly in supporting local businesses, noting that he personally owns three businesses within the Vernal community. However, he stressed that growth must be measured and

intentional. He expressed concern that the proposed rezoning represents a step too far, potentially initiating a level of development that could become difficult to control.

Addressing the concept of “affordable housing,” Mr. Lambroff challenged its effectiveness and sustainability. He shared an anecdote involving an acquaintance who resides in a local housing development referred to as Pheasant Glen, which was characterized as low-income or affordable housing. The individual recently experienced a rent increase to approximately \$2,000 per month, prompting Mr. Lambroff to question whether such developments truly remain affordable over time. This example was used to argue that projects initially presented as affordable may not continue to meet that objective in the long term.

Mr. Lambroff also raised concerns about density and its associated impacts, particularly traffic and parking. Referring to an image presented during the meeting, he noted that a depiction of two homes appeared to include approximately eight vehicles, suggesting a higher occupancy rate than anticipated. He extrapolated this observation to the full scale of the proposed development, which includes a significant number of units, and warned that such density could lead to substantial increases in traffic congestion, overflow parking, and strain on surrounding neighborhoods. He emphasized that existing residential streets, where children currently live and play, could be adversely affected by increased traffic flow.

In discussing broader housing issues, Mr. Lambroff pushed back against the notion that rising home prices are driven solely by a lack of available housing. He argued that multiple factors contribute to housing costs and cautioned against oversimplifying the issue. Additionally, he expressed frustration with the framing of the “American Dream,” interpreting some arguments in favor of affordable housing as implying that current homeowners are unsympathetic or opposed to others achieving homeownership. Mr. Lambroff countered this by sharing his own experience, stating that it took him over four decades to purchase his home, and suggesting that delayed homeownership is a reality many individuals face.

Mr. Lambroff further emphasized concerns about infrastructure, referencing comments made by a previous speaker regarding the potential demands that the development would place on existing systems. He argued that approving the rezoning without fully addressing infrastructure needs would be akin to “putting the cart before the horse,” expressing concern that the community would ultimately bear the consequences of insufficient planning after the fact.

While acknowledging the importance of allowing families to grow and individuals to pursue homeownership, Mr. Lambroff maintained that the proposed development is not appropriately located and may not achieve its intended goals. He reiterated that there is a time and place for such housing initiatives but expressed strong belief that this particular proposal does not align with the best interests of the neighborhood.

Mr. Lambroff firmly stated his opposition to the rezoning request. He urged the Commission to carefully weigh the long-term impacts of their decision, emphasizing the need to preserve the

character of the community, protect existing neighborhoods, and ensure that growth is approached in a deliberate and sustainable manner.

Lisa McDonald 474 North 1500 West emphasized the importance of maintaining the existing low-density character of the neighborhood. She expressed concern that increased density would lead to congestion, safety issues, and a decline in quality of life. She noted that the area already experiences frequent emergency vehicle activity and believed additional development would exacerbate these issues.

Helen Stewart 57 North 1250 West highlighted roadway limitations, describing 1250 West as extremely narrow and often reduced to a single lane due to on-street parking. She warned that increased traffic from higher-density development would create unsafe conditions, particularly for residents and children. She also noted that the road is likely to be used as a cut-through route, further increasing traffic volumes in an already constrained area.

Scott Gross 405 West 400 North questioned whether adequate studies had been conducted to assess the capacity of sewer, water, gas, and electrical systems. He expressed concern that decisions were being made without sufficient data regarding infrastructure limitations and impacts on downstream users.

Dan Dilsaver 201 North 1500 West reflected on historical housing challenges and emphasized that affordability issues are not unique to the present. He expressed concern that increasing density may compromise the community's character and stressed the importance of measured, sustainable growth that aligns with infrastructure capabilities.

Robert Wilkins 401 North 1500 West described severe traffic congestion along nearby roadways, particularly during school hours, noting long delays and difficulty navigating intersections. He stated that additional density would worsen already problematic conditions.

Cindy Dilsaver 201 North 1500 West referenced past community planning efforts that emphasized preserving Vernal's small-town character. She expressed concern that continued high-density development could erode the qualities that make the community desirable, including neighborhood identity and lower-density living.

Larry Anderson 1264 West 250 North raised safety concerns related to nearby schools, noting heavy pedestrian traffic from students walking to and from school. He emphasized that increased vehicle traffic in the area would heighten the risk of accidents and negatively impact student safety.

Richard Case 317 North 1250 West stated that he purchased property in the area based on its R-1 zoning and quiet residential character. He expressed concern that rezoning would introduce traffic and disruption inconsistent with the expectations of existing homeowners.

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Michael Spackman 292 North 300 West raised broader planning concerns, questioning whether repeated up-zoning could undermine the City’s long-term land use plan. He also asked about the permanence of zoning changes and whether properties could revert back if development proved infeasible.

Karen Hatch 1245 West 150 North opposed the rezone, expressing concern that approval could lead to further increases in density over time. She emphasized the interests of existing homeowners who invested in the area under current zoning expectations and noted the presence of existing higher-density housing nearby, arguing that the neighborhood has already contributed to housing diversity.

Jill Seitz 289 North 1250 West reiterated safety concerns, particularly for children walking to nearby schools and recreational areas. She described existing traffic issues and near-accidents, stating that additional density would significantly increase risks.

Overall, public comments reflected strong opposition to the proposed rezone, with recurring themes including inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion and safety concerns, preservation of neighborhood character, protection of property values and views, and skepticism about the long-term benefits of high-density housing in this location.

There being no other public comments, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Young emphasized that members of the Planning Commission are also residents of Vernal City and are personally invested in the community. She expressed frustration at the implication that the Commission is not contributing to or caring about the City, clarifying that her service on the Commission is part of her civic duty and commitment to Vernal’s well-being.

Commission Young explained that while the rezone decision is significant, the Commission’s role is limited. Their responsibility is to evaluate whether the proposal complies with zoning rules and is reasonable or feasible—not to decide who deserves housing, assess infrastructure capacity, or determine broader impacts like traffic or utilities. Those considerations will be made by the City Council.

Commissioner Young reinforced that the Planning Commission is working in the best interest of Vernal City and will make a decision based on that responsibility, including opposing the rezone if they believe it is not beneficial for the community. She stated that she is not sure how to vote and asked if she could abstain.

***Hailee Todich moved to forward a negative recommendation to the City Council for approval of the Everbuilt rezone (Jacob Speirs) for property located at 1315 West 500 North, 1189 West 400 North, and 381 North 1250 West, parcel #'s 050060012, 050060013, 050050029 – 2026-012-REZ Ryan Balch seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:
Commissioner Chapoosenay;
Commissioner Allrednay;***

Commissioner Youngabstain;
Commissioner Balchaye;
Commissioner Todichaye;
Commissioner Bancroftaye;

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE QUAIL RUN II PRELIMINARY PLAT (JOSHUA FLAKE) FOR PROPERTIES LOCATED AT 1621 WEST 500 SOUTH, PARCEL #050670044 – 2026-011-SUB

Braeden Christofferson presented a preliminary plat application submitted by JL Construction Development, LLC for a multi-phase townhome-style subdivision located at 1621 West 500 South. The subject property consists of approximately 11.2 acres and is zoned R-3 Residential. The proposal includes the development of approximately one hundred thirty-two (132) residential units (corrected from an earlier figure of one hundred thirty-six (136) units) within approximately thirty-three (33) buildings, subject to final plat configuration.

Mr. Christofferson explained that the application is for a preliminary plat and not a rezone, as the existing R-3 zoning is consistent with the proposed development. The project is being reviewed under both the base R-3 zoning standards and the Planned Residential Unit Development (PRUD) provisions, which allow for flexibility in design and increased density up to twelve (12) units per acre. The proposed density aligns with PRUD allowances.

The preliminary plat was reviewed for compliance with Vernal City Municipal Code Section 16.58.080, including subdivision layout, lot configuration, site organization, and phasing. Mr. Christofferson indicated the plat meets the general layout and design requirements of the Code. It was clarified that the proposal complies with current code requirements, not any potential future amendments.

Chair Stephen Lytle suggested a five (5) minute break. *Samantha Champoose moved to enter into a five (5) minute recess. Brittany Young seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Champoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.* After a five (5) minute recess, the Commission reconvened.

Braeden Christofferson explained the flexibility provided under PRUD standards, particularly regarding setbacks, street design, and infrastructure. He noted that the development is proposed with private roads rather than public streets. Public streets would require thirty-eight (38) feet of asphalt width, whereas private roads may be reduced to approximately thirty-two (32) feet of asphalt, subject to applicable standards.

A question was raised by Commissioner Todich regarding road widths and compliance with fire safety standards. Mr. Christofferson referenced applicable Code provisions and indicated that private roads must meet State standards, including right-of-way widths between forty-five (45) and fifty-five (52) feet, with a minimum asphalt width of thirty-two (32) feet.

The applicant, Joshua Flake, 95 North 500 West, Gunnison, Utah, representing JL Construction Development, LLC, addressed the Commission and provided additional details. He confirmed the development will include a fifty (50) foot right-of-way with thirty-two (32) feet of asphalt, mountable curb and gutter, sidewalks, and utility easements. He stated the road design exceeds minimum International Fire Code (IFC) access requirements, which typically require twenty (20) feet for one-way and twenty-four (24) feet for two-way traffic. The City Building Official, Matt Tate, has reviewed the proposal and indicated compliance with fire access standards.

Mr. Flake described the project layout as simple and efficient, with no cul-de-sacs and a continuation of the existing Quail Run Phase 1 development. He also presented conceptual building designs, describing two-story townhome units consisting of three (3) bedrooms, two-and-a-half (2 ½) bathrooms, and approximately one thousand six hundred (1,600) square feet per unit. Each unit includes a private entrance, garage, and covered porch.

Additionally, Mr. Flake indicated plans to include community amenities such as two (2) pickleball courts, a half (1/2) basketball court, and a clubhouse to serve residents, while maintaining overall affordability.

Chair Stephen Lytle discussed the nature of the application, noting that approval is based on compliance with established Code requirements. Mr. Christofferson confirmed that the preliminary plat meets applicable standards, and that further review of utilities, infrastructure, and detailed design will occur during the final plat stage.

Chair Stephen Lytle opened the public hearing to receive public comment. There being no public comments, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

Ryan Balch moved to approve the Quail Run II Preliminary Plat (Joshua Flake) for properties located at 1621 West 500 South, parcel #050670044 – 2026-011-SUB. Brittany Young seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Champoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL TO AMEND THE VERNAL CITY MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND ZONING CODE SECTIONS 16.04 – DEFINITIONS, 16.26 – OFF-STREET PARKING AND VEHICLE ACCESS STANDARDS, 16.27 – LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS, 16.42 – R-3 RESIDENTIAL ZONE, 16.44 – R-4 RESIDENTIAL ZONE – ORDINANCE #2026-09

Braeden Christofferson began the presentation by clearly stating that the proposed changes were not initiated in response to any specific developer or recent project. Instead, the amendments are the result of ongoing internal discussions among the City Manager, the Building Official, and planning staff regarding how to improve the effectiveness and clarity of the City's development standards.

Mr. Christofferson explained that the existing R-3 and R-4 zones are very similar, with only minor differences in density and permitted uses. This similarity has created confusion for both applicants and staff. Over time, staff has encountered repeated challenges when applying the current code, particularly in calculating density. He described the existing process as overly complicated, noting that developers must convert acreage into square footage and apply layered formulas that include base square footage requirements plus additional square footage per unit. This method has led to frequent questions and inconsistencies.

As part of the proposed amendments, staff has worked to simplify density calculations by transitioning to a straightforward units-per-acre standard. Mr. Christofferson noted that this change would provide greater clarity and consistency, making it easier for both developers and staff to understand and apply the Code. He also discussed the removal of ambiguous terminology, specifically the term “row house,” which has been interpreted in multiple ways. That term is being replaced with “townhome,” which is more clearly defined. Additionally, outdated terms such as “bachelor unit” are being replaced with “studio apartment” to modernize the Code.

Mr. Christofferson further explained that inconsistencies in the current Code have made it difficult for staff to apply standards uniformly across different projects. The proposed revisions are intended to create a more predictable framework for development review. He also addressed updates to landscaping standards, noting that drought conditions and water conservation concerns have played a significant role in shaping these changes. The amendments allow for xeriscaping as an acceptable option, reduce overall landscaping requirements, and lessen the expectation for traditional front-yard lawn areas. These changes are intended to reduce water usage and maintenance burdens for property owners while still maintaining an acceptable aesthetic standard.

Parking requirements were also discussed as a key factor influencing development. Mr. Christofferson emphasized that parking is often the primary limiting factor in determining how many units can realistically be constructed on a site. While density numbers may appear higher on paper, developers must still meet parking, setback, and landscaping requirements, which naturally restrict the number of units that can be achieved. Updated parking standards include maintaining requirements for multi-family housing while allowing reduced parking for fifty-five (55)-and-older communities, reflecting the lower likelihood of multiple vehicles per household in those developments.

Mr. Christofferson then outlined the proposed density changes, explaining that the R-3 zone would increase from twelve (12) to fourteen (14) units per acre, while the R-4 zone would be set at twenty-five (25) units per acre. He reiterated that these figures represent maximum allowable density and that real-world constraints typically prevent developments from reaching those limits. He emphasized that the goal of increasing the density cap is to provide flexibility while still relying on other Code requirements to regulate actual development outcomes.

Chair Stephen Lytle asked for clarification regarding how the proposed changes would apply to projects currently in progress. Mr. Christofferson explained that projects with an approved or submitted preliminary plat prior to a tentative cutoff date of May 6 could be considered vested and may have the option to proceed under either the old or new code, depending on timing and approval status. He clarified that rezones alone do not establish vested rights, whereas projects that have advanced further in the process may retain the ability to proceed under previously approved standards. He also referenced previously approved developments, noting that they would continue under the old Code unless substantial changes require resubmittal.

Commissioner Todich expressed support for simplifying the density calculations and acknowledged that the previous method was difficult to follow. However, she raised concerns about increasing the R-3 density from twelve (12) to fourteen (14) units per acre. She noted that while a two-unit increase may seem minor on a per-acre basis, it becomes significant when applied to larger parcels, potentially resulting in a notable increase in total units, traffic, and parking demand. Commissioner Todich suggested that maintaining the current twelve (12)-unit standard might reduce pressure on both developers and the Commission during project review.

Mr. Christofferson responded by explaining that the proposed increase is largely theoretical, as developments are still constrained by parking, setbacks, and other requirements. He stated that even under the current code, developers rarely achieve the maximum allowable density. Commissioner Todich questioned why the increase was necessary if it is difficult to reach in practice. Mr. Christofferson clarified that the change is intended to improve clarity and provide flexibility, and that the specific number is somewhat subjective because real-world limitations ultimately control development intensity.

Commissioner Todich expressed concern that increasing the base density could encourage proposals that push closer to maximum limits, potentially increasing the burden on the Commission when reviewing projects. Mr. Christofferson responded that the overall burden would not significantly change, as all developments must still comply with infrastructure requirements, safety standards, and code regulations. He emphasized that the preliminary plat process and administrative review ensure that projects meet all applicable requirements, regardless of the maximum density allowed.

Chair Stephen Lytle opened the public hearing to receive public comment.

Joshua Flake, of 95 North 500 West in Gunnison, Utah, spoke in favor of the proposed changes. Drawing on his recent experience developing a subdivision, he explained that increasing density to fourteen (14) units per acre provides practical benefits without significantly altering the appearance of a development. He stated that slightly higher density allows for narrower townhome designs, which can reduce the overall cost of housing. He provided examples from his own project, explaining that while twenty-two (22)-foot-wide townhomes fit within a twelve (12)-unit-per-acre standard, achieving smaller and more affordable twenty (20)-foot-wide units becomes more feasible at fourteen (14) units per acre. He emphasized that this difference can reduce home prices by approximately \$15,000 to \$25,000, which is significant for buyers. He

also noted that other development constraints, such as setbacks and parking requirements, remain unchanged, meaning that the overall layout and appearance of a subdivision would not be drastically different.

Quentin Daniel, of 2727 West 1500 North in Vernal, also spoke in support of the amendments. He stated that he has previous experience working through development processes and found the existing density calculations to be frustrating and unnecessarily complex. He expressed appreciation for the effort to simplify the Code. Mr. Daniel also shared a broader perspective on property rights, emphasizing that property owners should have greater freedom to determine how their land is used. He recounted a personal story involving his father, who supported a neighboring development despite potential impacts, based on the principle that property owners should be allowed to make decisions about their own land. He argued that excessive regulation can be burdensome and that reducing restrictions, even slightly, is a positive step. He concluded by supporting the increase to fourteen (14) units per acre as a move toward greater flexibility and reduced regulation.

There being no other public comments, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

Samantha Chapoose moved to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council to amend the Vernal City Municipal Planning and Zoning Code Sections 16.04 – Definitions, 16.26 – Off-Street Parking and Vehicle Access Standards, 16.27 – Landscaping Requirements, 16.42 – R-3 Residential Zone, 16.44 – R-4 Residential Zone – Ordinance #2026-09. Brittany Young seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MARCELLA MEADOWS SUBDIVISION AMENDMENT (TYLER & MARILEE SHINER) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 715 SOUTH 300 WEST, PARCEL #'S 050540038, 050540332, 050540329 – 2026-013-SUB

The Planning Commission considered a request to amend an existing subdivision by incorporating previously vacated land into the Marcella Meadows subdivision. Braeden Christofferson explained that the subject property currently consists of three (3) lots, with a portion having been vacated from the prior Tyler and Marilee Shiner Subdivision. The purpose of the vacation was to allow this land to be reconfigured and absorbed into Marcella Meadows through a formal subdivision amendment.

Mr. Christofferson clarified that under current City Code, even though a plat has already been prepared, the amendment requires Planning Commission approval before it can be finalized, recorded, and filed with the County Recorder's Office. It was emphasized that this item was not associated with any new development proposal beyond making the parcels legally usable and properly configured.

Chair Stephen Lytle sought clarification regarding the necessity of the subdivision. Mr. Christofferson explained that in order for the land to be considered buildable and usable, it must be subdivided into legally recognized parcels. Without this process, the land would not meet requirements for development. The proposal would result in three (3) parcels: two (2) rear lots would be integrated with an existing parcel to create a larger, functional lot, while the southern lot would be separated and sold for the construction of a single-family home. Chair Lytle acknowledged that the proposal was logical and aligned with standard land use practices.

Commissioner Brittany Young requested clarification directly from the property owner, Marilee Shiner of 595 South 300 West. Ms. Shiner confirmed that she currently owns the property and is initiating the subdivision. She further explained that the adjoining property owners are in agreement with the proposal. Specifically, the Morrisises would incorporate the middle portion into their existing property, and John Sterner is in the process of purchasing the southern lot for future residential development. This confirmation addressed any remaining questions from the Commission.

Mr. Christofferson noted that although this type of application could require a public hearing if there were opposition or multiple ownership complications, it was processed as a standard action item because all affected property owners were in agreement. Notifications were still sent to adjacent property owners and relevant entities as a courtesy, but no public comments were solicited or received.

Hailee Todich moved to approve the Marcella Meadows Subdivision Amendment (Tyler & Marilee Shiner) for property located at 715 South 300 West, parcel #'s 050540038, 050540332, 050540329 – 2026-013-SUB Ryan Balch seconded the motion. The motion passed with Samantha Chapoose, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Brittany Young, Hailee Todich and Aaron Bancroft voting in favor.

Commissioner Todich briefly addressed administrative matters, expressing appreciation to staff for distributing meeting packets earlier than usual, noting that it significantly improved her ability to prepare. She asked whether a more consistent deadline—ideally about a week in advance—could be established for packet distribution to allow for better time management and avoid having to review materials all at once over a short period.

Braeden Christofferson responded that he generally aims to provide packets about a week prior to meetings, often targeting the Tuesday before, though timing can vary depending on the complexity of agenda items. He indicated a willingness to coordinate with the Chair to establish a more defined timeline, provided it does not place undue strain on staff resources. Chair Stephen Lytle clarified that a formal motion was not necessary and that an informal understanding would be sufficient, acknowledging that occasional delays may still occur.

Commissioner Todich also raised a concern regarding the readability of plats included in the digital packets, noting that their small size makes them difficult to review. Mr. Christofferson explained that while the documents are typically provided as PDFs, they could look into options

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for improving accessibility and visibility, such as providing larger or full-page versions. He agreed to work on addressing this issue moving forward.

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

Stephen Lytle , Planning Commission Chair