

Sanpete County Planning Commission Work Meeting

June 24, 2026 5:30 P.M.

Sanpete County Courthouse, 160 North Main, Room 302, Manti, Utah

Attendees: Planning Commission Chair Cody Harmer, Board Members: Claudia Jarrett, Gene Jacobson, Justin Atkinson, Jo-Anne Riley and Rick Allred. Also in attendance Sanpete County Commissioner Mike Bennett, Sanpete County Zoning Administrator Heidi Sorensen. Sanpete County Deputy Clerk Heather Pyper and Board Member Dallin Carter have been excused. Planning Commission Vice Chair Pro-Tem. Claudia Jarrett calls meeting to order.

Before officially addressing the scheduled agenda items, Ms. Jarrett addressed a crowd of citizens who had gathered under the impression that a data center project was up for public review. The Ms. Jarrett corrected this rumor, explaining that the night's session was strictly a work meeting with a fixed agenda meant solely for the commission to hammer out specific ordinance language. She directly addressed the misinformation, stating explicitly that nobody has formally or informally approached Sanpete County regarding the construction of a data center, making the rumors entirely false.

Discussion of Solar Farms.

The commission dedicated the largest block of the work meeting to refining a master draft of the county's solar regulations, which combined a previous draft by Commissioner Mike Bennett, an AI-generated layout via Gemini, and formatting updates from Microsoft Copilot. The Commission agreed to change the working title of the document from "Solar Farm Ordinance" to "Solar Energy Facilities Ordinance." This adjustment ensures the legal language covers comprehensive industrial energy infrastructure beyond just the solar arrays themselves, explicitly wrapping in commercial battery storage systems, substations, and major transmission lines. The commission debated a disparity found between various source materials regarding safety buffers. They agreed to keep a baseline setback of 500 feet from property lines and 200 feet from public roads. At Mr. Jacobson's recommendation, the road clause was tightened to specify "public right-of-way" to prevent developers from exploiting legal loopholes regarding road shoulders. To heavily protect local homeowners, Mr. Jacobson introduced a mandatory minimum setback of 750 feet from any adjacent residential property line or existing dwelling. He noted that while defining a "dwelling" in rural areas can occasionally lead to debates over old structures, a strict 750-foot buffer is vital. The

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board unanimously voted to ban traditional, industrial-style security fencing around solar projects. The ordinance strictly prohibits the use of chain-link fences, razor wire, and barbed wire. Instead, any approved facility fencing must consist of agricultural-style split-rail or post-and-rail structures backed by high-tensile, wildlife-permeable wire mesh, such as standard farm weave or deer fencing. To protect local ecosystems, the bottom edge of the fence must clear the ground by a minimum of 6 inches to allow unobstructed small mammal passage, while the top rail must feature clear, visible markings to prevent avian collisions. The decommissioning clause was verified to guarantee that developers are legally forced to entirely remove all panels, mounting systems, underground cabling (down to a depth of 3 feet), and all sub-surface concrete foundations and metal poles. Furthermore, developers will be required to submit a pre-construction engineering assessment of all county roads on their transit routes and post a specific Road Performance Bond. This bond must cover 100% of the cost to entirely repair or repave any road damage caused by heavy construction vehicles. Additionally, developers must pay a one-time Emergency Response Mitigation Fee to the local volunteer fire district covering the project area. This fee will directly fund specialized training and the purchase of suppression equipment needed to combat high-voltage electrical infrastructure fires and lithium battery thermal runaway events. To prevent massive energy projects from totally destroying the local farming footprint, the ordinance mandates an agrivoltaic layout. Developers must grant local agricultural producers residing or operating within Sanpete County boundaries a 60-day first right of refusal for all vegetation management, beekeeping, and livestock grazing rights on the project site at prevailing market rates. This ensures local sheep and goat herders get first access to the land before outside companies bring in their own mechanical landscaping solutions. Mr. Jacobson noted that enforcing grazing underneath the panels naturally eliminates the need for chemical weed killers, preventing dangerous runoff into neighboring water tables.

Discussion of updates to Land Use Matrix and Definitions

The board pivoted to reconciling structural differences between the Planning Commission's alphabetical land use matrix and the County Clerk's numerical business license matrix to ensure all county systems coincide seamlessly. Ms. Jarrett pointed out that the "Sensitive Land zone, which requires a strict 40-acre minimum parcel size, was completely left out of

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multiple columns in the current land-use matrix, effectively banning simple home occupations there. She argued that if a citizen legally builds a home on a 40-acre sensitive land plot, they shouldn't be barred from running a low-impact business out of their house. Mr. Jacobson provided an example, noting that a local hunting outfitter or wilderness guide using their mountain home as a baseline dispatch office fits this zone perfectly. The commission agreed that home occupations should be permitted in the SL zone under a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Staff reported a noticeable influx of citizens applying for business licenses to run quiet, modern tech setups, like commercial 3-D printing arrays, directly out of their homes. Currently, "Light Manufacturing" is barred entirely in residential agriculture zones, specifically RA-1 and RA-2. The commission agreed to modify the master matrix to allow light manufacturing as a Conditional Use Permit specifically in the RA-2 zone, which features a 1-acre minimum. This keeps small-scale, quiet commercial developments closer to municipal buffer zones without completely upending the peace of rural residential pockets. The board discussed how to handle the sheer volume of "sub-categories" currently muddying up the definitions document. They decided that while detailed text regarding traffic flow and structural heights is necessary for administrative staff to review behind the scenes, keeping them as separate lines on the public matrix makes it unnecessarily long and confusing. The board directed that sub-categories be stripped from the public matrix and re-organized into a clean, alphabetical format.

Discussion of Noise Ordinance and Buffer Zones.

The commission tackled a steady stream of complaints coming from citizens living inside city buffer zones regarding loud, persistent disruptions, namely barking dogs. The commission flatly rejected the idea of writing a sweeping, county-wide noise ordinance, noting that only a couple of highly populated counties in Utah use a blanket noise law, and Sanpete County does not need to follow suit. They determined that noise issues are almost entirely clustered around city buffer zones where homes are packed tighter together. Instead of creating a new standalone ordinance, the commission chose to amend the existing County Nuisance Ordinance. The amendment will state that within a city's designated future annexation buffer zone, the county will automatically adopt and enforce the specific noise

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and nuisance regulations of that adjacent city, such as enforcing Ephraim's noise laws within Ephraim's buffer zone. Commissioner Bennett noted that major municipalities like Manti, Gunnison, Mt. Pleasant, and Ephraim are entirely supportive of this move. While the county code enforcement officer will handle the actual enforcement, they will use the local city's rules as their baseline. While municipal codes rely on decibel readers, typically capping noise at 55–60 dB during the day and 45–50 dB at night, the commission noted that decibel readers can be highly impractical for code enforcement officers to track in real-time. Instead of an arbitrary decibel cap, the barking dog amendment will rely heavily on a duration-based nuisance standard. To protect the county from neighborhood feuds, citizens lodging a complaint will be required to provide video or audio evidence proving an animal has been barking continuously for an excessive, specified block of time before county officers will step in.

Other business (if necessary)

The board wrapped up the session by reviewing the temporary conditional use permit previously granted to the "Laytona" dirt racetrack operation situated on the south side of Mount Pleasant. Staff reported that the track's recent trial event went smoothly, drawing a large crowd but remaining fully controlled by on-site sheriff deputies, private staff, and staged ambulances. The entire facility was completely cleared out and quiet by 10:30 PM. The track operator is now formally applying to transition from a temporary permit to a permanent Conditional Use Permit to run ongoing seasonal events. The commission agreed to move forward with granting a permanent CUP, but stated they will slap strict, legally binding conditions on the permit to address safety issues that arose during the trial run: Fire Prevention: A camp trailer unexpectedly caught fire and burned to the ground during the trial event. The permanent permit will mandate that the operator owns, maintains, and operates multiple high-capacity water trucks on-site at all times. Dust Control: The operator must submit a rigorous, documented dust-mitigation plan specifying exactly where their water is being sourced to keep the tracks damp. Crowd and Parking Barriers: Following an incident where a race vehicle jumped a barrier into an area where spectators had illegally parked, the operator must install hard, physical barricades. These will completely lock down spectator

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parking zones and strictly isolate the crowd from the track.

The commission officially locked in their next work meeting for Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 5:00 PM. Shifting the start time up 30 minutes ensures the commission can respect staff hours by keeping meetings capped at a tight 1-hour limit. Commissioners were directed to arrive at the July session prepared to finalize language on three specific priority items: the text adding noise restrictions to the master Nuisance Ordinance, the beefed-up Solar Energy Facilities Ordinance, and re-organizing the master Land Use Matrix into a clean, alphabetical format. Commissioner Bennett also provided a concluding update that a six-month moratorium had been officially established at the last commission meeting on any future building development up the Pine Creek Road area. The county is actively working toward a resolution, with the hope that Special Service District 1 (SSD1) will take over management of the area moving forward.

Ms. Jarrett stated on the record that no developer or entity has formally or informally approached Sanpete County regarding data center development, rendering any such reports entirely false. Commissioner Bennett noted that the Sanpete Messenger had published unverified information, which the county required them to publicly walk back on social media.

Ms. Jarrett noted that while data centers are a massive topic of discussion across the state of Utah, the extensive power and water infrastructure they require puts them far down on the county's priority list. Any future local data center ordinance would be entirely reactive, drafted only if the County Commissioners formally dictate the Planning Commission to do so.