

MEETING MINUTES
ALTA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
and PUBLIC HEARINGS
Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 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
Maren Askins
David Abraham
Paul Moxley (virtual)
Roger Bourke, Town of Alta Mayor

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Cawley, Town Manager
Molly Austin, Assistant Town Manager
Cameron Platt, Town Attorney

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

NOT PRESENT:

1) INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Planning Commission Chair Jon Nepstad called the March 25, 2026 meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

2) PUBLIC HEARING: RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT ON A PROPOSAL BY OWNERS OF THE SHALLOW SHAFT PROPERTY TO MAKE AMENDMENTS TO THE TEXT OF THE TOWN OF ALTA ZONING ORDINANCE

Catie Robinson introduced herself as a resident and employee in Alta. Robinson expressed her support for thoughtful development but stated her opposition to introducing more lodging into an area of Town where lodging has not historically been allowed. She stated that economic viability is not always the best use of land, emphasizing the need to support community needs over the profits of one single business and cautioned that what may seem like a “micro-adjustment” in development can have long-lasting impacts on small mountain towns, noting the Snowpine as a local example. Robinson acknowledged that times are changing in Alta, but encouraged the

commission to look at the bigger picture and prioritize infrastructure that will support the increase of visitors to Alta. To conclude, Robinson stated that she is not anti-development, but pro-community.

Neil Howard introduced himself as a longtime Alta community member and former employee in the canyon. Howard echoed Robinson's sentiment — this proposal is asking to change a very specific zoning for a very specific area, which only consists of two buildings. Howard quoted Planning Commissioner Askins' comments from the November Meeting in which she stated her hesitation to allow a new use--kitchens in hotel rooms—for one business, when there are other existing hotels in the area that may also want to add kitchen units that are restricted from doing so. Howard shared Askins' view that it could be problematic to have a zoning definition so specific to one building. Howard expressed concerns about the tone that decision would set for the Town. He continued that the site sizing restrictions may prevent the zoning change from having a meaningful impact.

Planning Commission Vice Chair Niermeyer moved to close the public hearing. Planning Commissioner Askins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the public hearing was closed.

3) GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Haik introduced himself as an Alta resident and shared concerns from a fellow citizen (Draper) regarding wildfire risk in Albion Basin. Haik noted a new state fire map and Wildland Urban Interface code that could have a significant impact on property insurance rates. Haik also noted the risk imposed by the exposed power lines in Albion Basin and recommended the Town pursue a path to have the lines buried for both safety and aesthetic reasons. Haik encouraged the Planning Commission to examine the various uses occurring in Albion Basin, emphasizing the desire for increased water infrastructure. Haik advocated extending sewer lines as well.

Mike Maughan from Alta Ski Lifts ("ASL") provided a brief overview of what the ski resort has planned for this summer, highlighting the completion of the Albion Day lodge expansion, the installation of a trailhead restroom in the Grizzly parking lot, and improvements to ski runs in the Supreme area. Maughan recalled an incident over the winter that resulted in the loss of one overhead power line in the wildcat base, which will be relocated underground. Additionally, there are plans to replace a snowmaking line from top of corkscrew to Watsons shelter and the possibility of installing a Wyseen tower above Devils Castle Road. Maughan also described a project planned to expand the Wildcat parking lot to replace unsafe roadside parking above the parking lot ramp. Responding to Haik's comment, Maughan described that Rocky Mountain Power ("RMP") is actually planning to underground all overhead lines in Alta this summer, including in the Albion Basin. ASL is working with RMP to minimize disruptions on what will be a significant project.

Maughan expressed appreciation for the work that the Town and Planning Commission does to support responsible development. He noted the need to balance the demand of increased visitation with protecting the environment. Maughan described ASL's continued collaborative effort with

UDOT on bussing solutions, sharing that he had sent a letter to UDOT regarding the planned transportation hub.

Mayor Bourke asked if the RMP project would go up Grizzly Gulch. Maughan stated it isn't planned to go up the gulch but will impact the Summer Road. Maughan noted that the maps RMP provided are outdated, and ASL is working with them to improve accuracy. The power lines will be buried along the road, not along the current path of the power lines.

Nepstad asked about the Wildcat parking lot project and Maughan clarified that it is not going to add any additional parking spots but the project will replace the number of spots to be removed from roadside parking.

4) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 25, 2026 MEETING

Planning Commissioner Jeff Niermeyer motioned to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2025 meeting. Planning Commissioner David Abraham requested a modification on page 8 to clarify the discussion of the red line text amendments, particularly McLean's response to Abraham's question during the meeting, and stated that the current version doesn't accurately reflect the discussion.

Niermeyer amended the motion to hold on approval of the minutes pending clarification on what McLean stated during that section of the December meeting. Abraham seconded. All were in favor. Staff will place the minutes on an upcoming agenda for approval.

5) DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE ALTA TOWN COUNCIL REGARDING A PROPOSAL BY OWNERS OF THE SHALLOW SHAFT PROPERTY TO MAKE AMENDMENTS TO THE TOWN OF ALTA ZONING ORDINANCE

Cawley introduced the agenda item, sharing the history of the owners of the Shallow Shaft (the "applicant") presenting their proposal for land use text amendments and their redevelopment vision, which has been ongoing for nearly two years. Cawley commended the applicant on their flexibility to work with the Town throughout the process. Cawley also expressed gratitude to the Planning Commission for their engagement on essential policy questions.

Cawley described how the proposals have the potential to set a precedent for land use regulations in the future, noting that zoning changes don't occur very often in Alta. Following up on a comment from the public hearing, Cawley clarified that the Town doesn't rezone single parcels, noting that this proposal would affect all of Base Facilities Zone C, which is comprised of two parcels. Cawley acknowledged that change like this does not occur very often in Alta and any proposal to change a zoning ordinance could be construed as setting a precedent. Cawley reminded that the role of the Planning Commission is advisory and to weigh considerations and offer a recommendation to the council for final decision.

Cawley introduced Cameron Platt as legal counsel for the Town – attending today’s meeting in Polly McLean’s absence.

Andrina Hougham introduced herself and her husband, Walter Krebsbach, as owners of the Shallow Shaft, Jay Springer, their legal counsel, and Hans Hoffman, the project architect.

Hougham summarized that the purpose of the meeting was to hold a public hearing and review proposed amendments to Alta’s code, which had been updated slightly in response to feedback received during the December 2025 meeting.

Hougham then provided a summary of the proposed amendments.

- (1) New Definition (Alta Code 10-1-6): The definition of a “Compact Hotel Facility” is unique from other hotel definitions in Town Code that is to apply only to BFZ Zone C (no changes to the definition that was presented at the December meeting)

“Compact Hotel Facility: A small lodging facility located only within 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.”

- (2) Permitted Use (Alta Code 10-6D-4): There were three alternatives presented to express options to address the inclusion of a retail space (only change from the previous meeting).
 - (a) Option A – no comment regarding a retail space
 - (b) Option B – *May* include as an accessory use a retail commercial service with no additional parking required.
 - (c) Option C – *Shall* include as an accessory use a retail commercial service – giving the Town Council the option to waive the requirement.
- (3) Lot area, width and slope requirements (Alta Code 10-6D-8). No changes since the December 2025 meeting.

Jay Springer added that more documentation was provided in the meeting packet. He also noted that the proposed amendments to the slope and width requirements is essentially a provision for a non-conforming lot to become conforming, intended to be narrow and have no impact on other regulations.

Springer addressed the recommended changes in the staff report regarding updating language from “kitchen or kitchenette” to “provisions for cooking” as well as removing the phrase “or delegee”. Springer stated he had no issues with those recommendations.

Niermeyer stated that the discussion would be more appropriate in conjunction with a general plan update as it could have impacts across the entire BFZ. Niermeyer recognized that the building has

sat vacant since the pandemic and the property should be redeveloped, noting his struggle between having a broader dialog and moving something forward to make use of the parcel.

Askins shared a similar sentiment, noting her concern with whether or not the exceptions that are being requested in the code will provide community benefit.

Abraham reiterated that Alta is a special place and the commission needs to consider how decisions made today could impact the future. He emphasized that the original intent for the zoning in the BFZ was for commercial use and a key part of any recommendation would be to have a commercial use as a requirement rather than an optional component. Bourke asked Abraham if he did not consider a hotel to be a commercial use. Abraham clarified that inclusion of a *retail* use that is already permitted in the zoning should be required.

Nepstad stated that he is slightly less concerned about precedent setting due to the specific language only applying to Zone C. He noted that a broader discussion about activation and appropriate uses in the BFZ may be a few years away as part of an upcoming general plan update, but the commission is tasked with responding to what is presented today. Nepstad agreed with Abraham that a retail space should be a required element. Nepstad described several questions he was contemplating: Does this proposal help activate Alta into a four-season community? Where will customers park and how will they access the retail space? What if the retail use doesn't work out financially for the owner – should they be required to keep it?

Abraham stated that he is not anti-development but recognized that the applicant bought the building with the zoning as it is, and this proposed amendment is an “ask” for consideration. He continued that the BFZ is in what Alta has identified as the “Commercial Core”, which is perhaps the appropriate area for new development or major renovations.

Planning Commissioner Paul Moxley stated that this is a difficult problem that has been under consideration for a few years, but it is ultimately up to the Town Council to decide. Moxley stated his view that something is better than nothing and recognized the applicant as a longtime business owner and community member. Moxley recommended advancing the proposal to the council without taking a position on it. Nepstad noted that even if a neutral recommendation is passed to the council, the perspectives of the commissioners have been clearly expressed in public meetings.

Niermeyer summarized that the commission preferred to have retail activity on the premise as a requirement that cannot be waived and Nepstad questioned how the Town can guarantee it stays in place. Cawley explained that it would be an enforcement issue – if a requirement is not being met, the Town would classify it as a non-conforming use.

Nepstad questioned the viability of a coffee shop in that location but reiterated the interest in having a public-facing retail use. Moxley suggested a “good faith” effort to make the retail space successful should be required and questioned if it should be a year-round or seasonal requirement.

Platt explained that it is difficult to plan for future subsequent to a zoning change, noting that those types of details are sometimes incorporated into a development agreement or other contract. Platt recommended that the Town could offer incentives to make retail more viable. Platt explained that,

while not impossible, it would be difficult to make retail use a requirement in this scenario. He encouraged the commission to determine a stance on the concept, noting that the details can be worked out in a future agreement. Nepstad clarified that a motion could include language to encourage the council to consider a development agreement that incorporates a retail space requirement. Abraham asked for clarification on who would be party to a development agreement. Platt confirmed it would be between the Town and the property owner. Niermeyer brought up that there are other issues to be resolved and clarified that we are not at the stage of approving any particular development – rather, just establishing a lot with a width and depth that matches the current building with a defined use.

Cawley stated that staff typically prefer to find a solution in the zoning ordinance rather than through development agreements because an ordinance is more transparent to the general public and applies to everyone more equally. Cawley asked Abraham about zoning ordinances requiring mixed-use development and Abraham said that it is more common in urban areas with varying levels of success. Nepstad and Cawley weighed the pros and cons of a development agreement versus a change to the zoning ordinance. Cawley advocated for the transparency of a zoning update and Nepstad wondered if that approach may be too rigid and harder to amend in the future.

Niermeyer weighed building something now that adds to the town but doesn't necessarily activate the commercial core versus waiting to build something that would activate the commercial core. Hougham asked for clarification on what it means to "activate the core". Niermeyer explained that activation would be something that is open to the community and the public – a hotel would only be available to the people renting the rooms at the time as compared to a restaurant that anyone could patronize. Nepstad added that an activation would be something that builds off of or adds value to other elements of the community, like skiing or hiking. Nepstad gave the example of a restaurant that could be open to visitors on their way out of the canyon after a hike or a ski day. Krebsbach explained that sort of activation described is what they are striving for and they think it will be more active than the restaurant, which was ultimately unsuccessful. He continued that the concept presented is small enough to be able to operate year-round and during the daytime hours. Krebsbach shared some of the challenges of operating a dinner-only restaurant on that site and iterated that they want to be successful and put in something that the Town supports. Krebsbach explained that the majority of patrons to the previous Shallow Shaft restaurant were from Snowbird, which has now added more restaurants and discouraged guests from leaving Snowbird for evening dining. Krebsbach stated that this proposal represents his vision for the future of Alta with more electric cars and a more year-round economy.

Abraham questioned if there had been sufficient discussion on the lot area, width, and slope requirements, emphasizing that they go hand-in-hand with the other proposed zoning amendments. Springer explained the applicant's original ask when they first came to the Town was just to fix the discrepancy for minimum lot size requirements that don't actually apply to any properties in Zone C. The original intent was to find a way to tear down and rebuild with an expanded footprint by addressing this discrepancy, and the design concept came later. Abraham rephrased his question to address whether or not the lot area, slope, and width requirements can be decoupled from the proposed use amendments, expressing his support for the former but not necessarily the latter.

In response to Springer's comments, Cawley disagreed that it was an oversight when the Town did not change minimum lot size regulations in BFZ Zone C during the last major update to the Base Facilities Zone. Cawley described that in Town Code, the minimum lot size in any zoning district is one half-acre and offered that perhaps the Town considered the very small size of Zone C parcels but declined to change the regulations. He explained that with current regulations, those two buildings are constrained to their existing footprints plus 250 square feet but offered that the Commission can recommend and the Council can approve the proposed amendments if the bodies believe the amendments are in the public interest.

Guldner agreed with Cawley that the zoning regulations in BFZ Zone C are not an oversight, adding that the applicant could tear down rebuild and add 250 square feet as well as benefit from 65% lot coverage so long as they don't make the nonconformity any worse. Guldner clarified that the minimum lot size is for a single-family residential property is a half-acre, whereas commercial property is 1-acre. Guldner explained that the two properties in BFZ Zone C have lot sizes smaller than the 1-acre requirement because they were grandfathered in by the USFS before any Town zoning regulations were put in place, and he emphasized that they are anomalies within the Town. Cawley disagreed that they can expand to 65% lot coverage. Hougham explained that the current building has a 44% lot coverage and asked how, under the current regulations, they could expand to 65%, as Guldner suggested. Guldner responded that coverage includes everything, including all pavement and parking, and they can't expand to 65% coverage if it would amplify any other nonconformities such as encroaching on a waterway. Guldner stated that the image shown appears to depict greater than 44% lot coverage. Niermeyer and Hougham clarified that their *existing* building takes up 44% and the proposed new building would be 51%. Cawley explained that the proposal is subject to change between now and if/when a building permit application is received. Niermeyer reiterated that the commission is not approving or recommending a specific project, but rather just the proposed text amendments to the zoning ordinance that would allow a new development. Guldner expressed concern that the applicant is basing their zoning requests off of the design concept presented, which he implied would not be feasible even if the proposed amendments are approved. Hoffman clarified the proposed design is projected to be 51% lot coverage and that the design rendering does not show the back of the building, which is mostly open space.

Platt added some clarifying context that if or when a zoning ordinance is passed, there is a presumption that the Town will approve a building permit as long as conforms to the zoning ordinance and the general plan. Platt reiterated that the commission is tasked with making a recommendation which may or may not be finalized by the council. Nepstad summarized that while a formal motion has yet to be determined, the direction the commission seems to be going is to make a neutral recommendation to the Town Council that may include a set of concerns to be taken under consideration.

Before proceeding with a motion, Askins asked if all three amendments would be combined into one motion or if they could be separated into three distinct recommendations. Platt explained that either approach will work, it is up to the commission to decide. Askins stated her preference for a negative recommendation on the proposed use and definition amendments but a neutral one for the lot size amendments. Abraham described that the commission has different opinions on various aspects of the Applicant's proposal and has mixed opinions on the proposed allowed use in

particular. Niermeyer explained again that there are essentially two amendments to make a recommendation on:

1. The proposed use of a “Compact Hotel Facility” and the associated proposed definition, and;
2. The proposed amendments to Alta Code 10-6D-8 that would change the lot configuration requirements.

Mike Maughan asked if instead of changing the zoning if the applicant could get a variance to carry out their design concept. Cawley stated that variances are very narrow and specific and could not be applied in this case.

Mark Haik commented on the concept of activating the commercial core. Haik stated that many commercial properties in the BFZ restrict the public from entering, highlighting the need for additional commercial retail spaces that are open to the public. Haik noted the Snowpine is an exception.

Commission Vice-Chair Niermeyer moved to forward a neutral recommendation to the Town Council for the proposed amendments to the Town Code Sections 10-1-6, 10-6D-4, and 10-6D-8 as presented in the proposal presented by the Applicant dated March 5, 2026 including the requirement for a retail component as described in option C, but without the ability for the council to waive the requirement, *and* with the recommendations provided by staff to change the language in the proposed definition of “Compact Hotel Facility” to refer to “provisions for cooking” instead of “kitchens or kitchenette”, and to remove “or designee” from the provision for relief by the Town Council.

Commission Chair Nepstad seconded the motion.

The motion passed with a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Askins voting against.

6) NEW BUSINESS

Cawley shared that the Town was awarded a grant from the Wasatch Front Regional Council Transportation and Land Use Connection (TLC) program to fund a general plan update. He also stated that the Town is going to be entering a busy period with the simultaneous plans to build a new building.

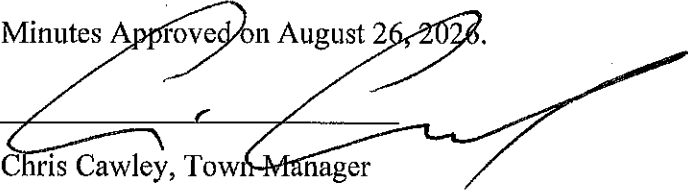
7) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2026

8) MOTION TO ADJOURN

Planning Commissioner Askins motioned to adjourn the meeting. Planning Commissioner Abraham seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes Approved on August 26, 2026.


Chris Cawley, Town Manager

