

**Wednesday, January 17, 2024
6:00 pm**

1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair White called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

The following members and representatives were present.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT IN PERSON / PHONE / VIDEO

Chair Larry White
Vice-Chair Alisha Meginnis
Commissioner Julia Jewell
Alternate Ryan Benson

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED ABSENT

Commissioner Denise Stanfield
Commissioner Linda Warren

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Commissioner Alan Agundez Castillo

CITY STAFF PRESENT

Catherine Lorbeer, Deputy Director of Planning
Jodie Novak, Development Services Director
Arrianna Ramirez, Administrative Assistant
Stephen Kemp, Attorney
Joshua Orton, Senior Planner
Sandra Freund, Senior Planner
Michelle Simerdla, Senior Planner
Sylvia Willem Marcor, Planner
Cole Hunger, Planner
Marcella Carrillo, City Clerk

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair White called for a motion on the minutes.

Commissioner Benson made a motion to approve the minutes for October 25, 2023; seconded by Vice-Chair Meginnis.

Chair Larry White	Aye
Vice Chair Alisha Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Denise Stanfield	N/A
Commissioner Linda Warren	N/A
Commissioner Alan Agundez-Castillo	N/A
Commissioner Julia Jewell	Aye

Upon Vote, the motion passed 4 to 0.

4. **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

a. **TRAINING WORKSHOP**

Catherine Lorbeer, Deputy Director of Planning for the Development Services Department, provided an informal and interactive discussion to review and train the Planning Commission on their responsibilities. The Planning Commission is a group of volunteers appointed by the City Council and is the second most important board in the City of Avondale because they review and make recommendations to the City Council that influence the built environment that has a long-lasting effect on the Avondale Community. This includes the General Plan, rezoning, text amendments, and conditional use permits.

Jodie Novak, Director of Development Services, stated Commissioners are welcome to contact the Department to ask questions about zoning ordinances, plans, or development in general. The processes are complicated, and all communication, interaction, decisions, and recommendations must follow state and city laws and expectations and guidance adopted by the Mayor and City Council. The public hearing process must follow rules and regulations and is impacted by the decision, vote, and understanding of the Planning Commission, which can have a dramatic effect on a developer's project moving forward because timing is everything. There is a tremendous amount of work that occurs for months upon the filing of an application, such as neighborhood meetings and ongoing communication and guidance with developers and landowners to get the best designed project. Everything is vetted at a high level of detail throughout the process before it is brought before the commission and City Council.

The Development Services Department consists of three divisions — Planning, Building, and Administration — and presently has 19 employees.

- Planning — Determines what can be done today within a zoning district. The zoning processes include researching everything from dirt to doorknobs. Specifically, current, and long-range planning, zoning text amendments, General Plan amendments, and any specific plans. They serve as urban architects.
- Building — Must know codes related to building, life safety, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and construction in general. They partner with engineering and fire as well as the code compliance division for anything tied to zoning use and property rights. They typically do not come before the commission and must follow and enforce international and local codes. They are the first stop when an application is filed, and they communicate and collaborate with all agencies to keep the projects moving forward. Construction planning requires a level of expertise to ensure accurate permitting for Council approval.
- Administration — Provides assistance and guidance as necessary and reviews process improvements and makes recommendations.

Sylvia Willem Marcor, Planner, reviewed urban planning, noting slides presented were from YEP (Youth Engagement Program). Planning, also referred to as urban planning, city planning, or regional planning, shapes cities, towns, regions, and rural areas around us and helps create communities of lasting value, offering better choices for where and how people live and work. It creates visions and goals for the community, identifies current issues, analyzes trends, engages citizens, businesses, and civic leaders regarding challenges and opportunities they may be facing, and helps determine how communities will grow and adjust to change. Planners are professionals who work to enhance the quality of life by shaping city buildings, roads, parks, and more. Specifically in Avondale, they are making lives better by shaping the design and community and creating a great place to live and work.

Land use is the method by which each parcel or piece of land is categorized for its intended use. Specifically in Avondale, the General Plan designates each piece of land for what the land is intended to be used for on a broad scale. The zoning ordinance divides the land into zones in which certain land uses are permitted or not allowed.

Joshua Orton, Senior Planner, reviewed how to be an effective commissioner by knowing the Commission's authority as set forth by the Arizona Revised Statutes and Avondale's Municipal Code. Business pertaining to development is conducted at the meetings, and at least four commissioners must be in attendance to have a quorum to conduct such business and vote on land use recommendations. Resources available for commissioners include Municode, an online library that houses the municipal codes, zoning ordinances, and details of the commission's responsibilities, PDF publications of general and specific plans, and GIS mapping, which includes aerial photographs that show adopted zoning categorization and other pertinent information.

The purpose of the meeting is to conduct the City's business regarding planning and development and the goal is to implement the City's established vision. Commissioners should come to the meeting on time, be prepared, and focus on the item in front of them. Commissioners should study all materials and formulate questions prior to meetings, visit a project site either individually or in groups of three or less to prevent a quorum, have basic knowledge of the surrounding neighborhoods, and be familiar with development clientele. Communication is key to everything you are going to be doing as a commissioner, and staff are here to support you and help you be successful in obtaining information to make an informed decision.

In advance of the first Planning Commission meeting, an informational and feedback neighborhood meeting is held to present project details to citizens within 1,000 feet of the project site. Commissioners may attend these meetings individually or in a group of three or less but may not voice any personal opinions about the project.

Upon completion of all research and proper notification, a public hearing is held that invites public comment pertinent to the matter at hand for the Commission's consideration. The Chair manages the meeting, and the Commission shall be welcoming, create a respectful atmosphere, and exhibit proper decorum.

Cole Hunger, Planner, stated that the General Plan is an expression of Avondale's goals for growth and development of the City and is used to assess all land use decisions to determine long-term goals for the City's growth. The municipalities' goals, policies, and standards are crafted to support the Plan's vision for Avondale's present and future growth. The General Plan was adopted in 2012 and updated in December 2023.

Staff reviews all requests for major, minor, or text amendments to the General Plan, evaluates the merits, and determines if it advances the goals and policies of the General Plan. There are four required findings:

1. The development patterns contained in the land use plan provide sufficient sites for the use or change proposed in the amendment.
2. The Amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the 2030 General Plan and is not solely for the good of that particular landowner.
3. The Amendment will not adversely impact the community if it significantly alters the land use patterns, requires larger or more expansive public infrastructure improvements, or adversely impacts the existing land use.
4. The amendment is consistent with the overall intent of the 2030 General Plan.

Michelle Simerdla, Senior Planner, discussed zoning districts and proposed rezoning. Local government has the authority by "Police Power" to adopt and enforce zoning regulations that do not conflict with State law to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the residents. Zoning is adopted by the City Council to prevent incompatible land uses, divide the city into districts, and regulate land use, density, and placement of structures on a site. The most common zoning districts include residential, commercial, employment, and planned area development (PAD). Land use tables and maps are used to show the various permitted uses.

Rezoning changes the land use allowed on a property and must conform to the goals and policies of the General Plan. Staff review applications to determine if changes conform with the goals and policies of the General Plan, how the site will be accessed, traffic data, the relationship to existing land uses in the area, and development standards. Five requirements must be met for a PAD Rezone

1. It is in conformance with the General Plan.

2. It meets PAD requirements of the zoning ordinance subdivision regulations and other city policy documents.
3. Adequate public infrastructure and services exists to serve the proposed development.
4. It must result in compatible land use relationships.
5. Development standards are consistent with the desired character for the area.

After the staff has vetted all issues, they prepare a report that contains all facts, discussions, and recommended findings and schedule a public hearing where the Planning Commission will consider recommending approval.

Zoning code text amendments that improve the useability of the code, enhance customer service, advance city policy, clarify requirements of the zoning ordinance, service the public health, safety, and general welfare, and ensure consistency with State Law are presented to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommended approval.

Sandra Freund, Senior Planner, discussed conditional use permits (CUPs), noting that they are requests for a conditional approval of use as compared to a permanent use by right and allow flexibility because special standards may be required for a desirable use. A CUP also enables the City to control certain uses that could have detrimental effects on the community. The Planning Commission was delegated by the City Council to approve them. Staff prepares a report that evaluates the appropriateness of the proposed land use, including the location, how the use/uses are going to be put into place, and the quality of the project design. There are five findings that must be met for CUP approval:

1. The proposed use is consistent with the land use designation, furthers the city's general guidelines and objectives, and is consistent with the desired character of the surrounding area.
2. The use will be compatible with other adjacent land uses and will not be detrimental to persons residing or working in the area
3. The site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the use, allows safe on-site circulation, and meets all required development standards.
4. The site has appropriate access to public streets.
5. The conditions ensure that any potential adverse effects will be mitigated.

In response to Chair White's inquiry, Mrs. Lorbeer stated the PowerPoint presentation will be emailed to all Commissioners.

5. **COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements made.

6. **PLANNING DIVISION REPORT**

Mrs. Lorbeer stated the commission has a special meeting scheduled for February 7, 2024, and a regular meeting scheduled for February 21, 2024. There is a pending major General Plan amendment that requires two public hearings, with a recommendation being made at the second hearing.

7. **CALENDAR**

- Special Meeting February 7, 2024, at the Avondale Resource Center.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business; Chair White called for a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Jewell made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Vice-Chair Meginnis.

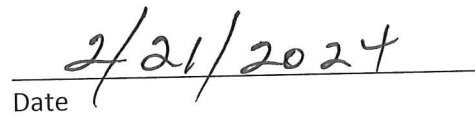
Chair Larry White	Aye
Vice-Chair Alisha Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Denise Stanfield	N/A
Commissioner Linda Warren	N/A

Commissioner Alan Agundez-Castillo	N/A
Commissioner Julia Jewell	Aye
Alternate Ryan Benson	Aye

Upon vote, the motion passed 4 to 0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.


Chair, Larry White


Date