

DRAFT

Planning Board Meeting 4/26/2026

Meeting called to order: Teresa called the meeting to order at 7:35pm

Attending: Maria Skogen, Teresa Saari, Ken Huff, Shaun Jones, David Papadopoulos

Missing: Jeni Perry, Austin Bryington

Minutes: David makes a motion to approve the minutes, Maria seconded, all in favor

Visitors & Open Forum: Sidney Wiley (mayor), Jerry Grebenec for zoning presentation

Town Council Report: No updates

Old Business:

January minutes - Maria makes a motion to approve the minutes, Ken seconded, all in favor

New Business:

Jerry Grebenc presentation and Q&A about zoning -

- Montana league of cities & town land use directory. Available to provide free land use recommendations to all municipalities in the state. 27 years experience.
- Teresa "Why would a small town want or not want to have zoning?" It's a give and a take, you give up some property rights in order to protect some property rights. Most zoning ordinances in a small community provide predictability and provide property rights. From a development perspective you can easily see what and where you can build whereas without them it's an extremely unpredictable process. Downside of zoning is that it's unpopular, people do not like to be told what to do with their property. Jerry argues that many people hate zoning until a subdivision opens next door to them.
- Teresa "Can our city codes protect us? Or is that not as effective as zoning?" Jerry says, we have minimum lot sizes and uses in our town codes. He is not an attorney but suggests that without municipal zoning we are on shakier legal ground.
- Maria "If we were to adopt zoning, what are the high impact zoning codes you'd advise we start with?" Simple is the goal but easier said than done. You need the time, resources and political will to make it effective or it doesn't matter and is ignored or only enforced when a controversial project comes up (a savvy attorney can fight unfair enforcement). He suggests a simple map, with residential and commercial areas, permitted/prohibited/conditional uses, and maybe building size restrictions. But the challenging part is having the administrative provisions. Without that it's not worth pursuing.
- Shaun "With a limited amount of land in town, and existing business, how would we even define commercial vs residential zoning?" David follows up "How do you deal with existing businesses?" You would need to inventory what there is in town, how many residential, residential/commercial, commercial are there already. Zoning can be flexible, you could create a commercial core for main street and make other things mixed use. Any existing businesses would be considered 'pre-existing' use and be grandfathered in.

- Shaun "Is there anything you've seen in a town about our size that would make you nervous to only have our ordinance and not zoning codes?". Jerry says adult book stores our town is probably too small for, meat packing plants we probably don't have enough water. Residential and commercial pressure is the bigger issue. Is it ok for someone to build an RV park or mobile homes on any empty lot in town? David brought up campers on lots in town.
- Suggests starting community conversations should be framed "What are your land use concerns?" and not "We're thinking about starting a zoning code". Suggests using the growth policy 5 year benchmark for public outreach to figure out what we'd even want in zoning if we decided to do it. Our growth policy document would need to include language about zoning before we could adopt it, it's required they are in alignment.
- Shaun "Do you know of a town about our size that has a reasonable example of a zoning code we may want to look at for reference?" Jerry suggests the Town of Cascade (population 600), but says we're going to be surprised by how complicated the administrative side of the zoning laws is. Cascade is dealing with short term rentals. Jerry says we could use the administrative part almost verbatim, but the district provision is where you'd consider how to make it specific to our town.
- Sidney "Where does annexation come in?" Annexation is a completely separate but related process. Before we could annex anything we would need an extension of services plan which we currently do not have. Jerry suggests anytime we annex a piece of property we also cover that property in zoning concurrently (if we have zoning). He suggests you adopt both the annexation and zoning resolutions at the same meeting. The most common form of annexation is by petition (landowner comes to request annexation).

Swear in members of board - Ken moves we table until next month when all board members are here, Shaun seconds, all in favor

Discuss by-laws - David makes a motion to discuss the date of the week we meet on next month's agenda, Ken seconds. All in favor. Teresa plans to make a copy of the by-laws and deliver them to everyone next week.

Discuss Next Agenda: May 19th, swearing in, zoning, by-laws, and possibly discuss the Jones subdivision if an earlier meeting can't be figured out

Visitors & Open Forum: Nothing

Meeting adjourned: David moves we adjourn the meeting, Ken seconds. Meeting adjourned at 8:36pm