

MEETING MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:00 PM MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2025

Approved January 20, 2026

Commission Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair; Carl Watkins, Vice Chair (Via Zoom); Ray Stahl; Janis Appel; Michael Nicholas; Michael Gawne, Alternate; Dan Rohrbach;

Commission Members Absent: Tanner McCuin

City Staff present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development; Paul Olshan, Minute Taker

Members of the public present: Nora Brown, Regional Planner at NRPC.

1. D. Smith began the meeting at 5:02 PM.

- The PC members introduced themselves for N. Brown who was able to join in person.
- With T. McCuin being absent, M. Gawne was assigned as a voting member.
- No public comment.
- The Commission would take a break around 6:00 PM for refreshments that were provided by the City.

2. C. Sawyer Presented the City Plan Next Steps to the Planning Commission

- For this meeting, C. Sawyer stated that the Planning Commission would go through each chapter and add any final notes or notes for amendments in 2026.
- J. Appel asked about which statutory parties would need to be warned for the plan hearing. C. Sawyer confirmed it was the Town of St. Albans Select Board and Planning Commission and the NRPC.
- C. Sawyer mentioned that any additional input or changes should be submitted by the end of the hearing on December 9. Anything else could be added as an initial amendment in 2026.
- **D. Rohrbach joined the meeting at 5:13.**

3. Presentation and discussion of the current draft of the City Plan chapters

- C. Sawyer started by presenting each chapter of the City Plan. Starting with chapter one, C. Sawyer asked members of the PC for anything to add.

- **Chapter 1.** D. Smith wanted an addition to Chapter 1 about how important this document is to the Planning Commission’s work and the community, reflecting the vision and hopes of the city. J. Appel would also like a mention of the “stressors” the PC is under, and an acknowledgement that they don’t know the impact of some Federal policies and the uncertainty of the future.
- **Chapter 2.** There was a conversation about crime in the downtown chapter, and whether police statistics could be included to show a “perceived” view of St. Albans having more crime downtown. D. Smith brought up changing “magnet” in point 17 to “regional draw” for people outside of the immediate region.
- **Chapter 3.** J. Appel noticed a repeated point in the policy section (3.2.1 and 3.2.6). C. Sawyer would remove the duplicate. There was then a discussion about the various “opportunities” for neighborhoods, as well as discussions about the city’s plan for growth and the different types of housing to achieve that.
- **The Planning Commission took a break at 6:06.**
- **The Planning Commission resumed the City Plan Review at 6:19.**
- **Chapter 4.** When discussing population, D. Smith brought up the age of the population, mentioned in the Wellness chapter. C. Sawyer discussed where this exists in chapter 4, mainly in the “Looking Ahead” section. J. Appel mentioned that some of the services for populations have had their funding cut, and that this might need to be mentioned in the plan. She believed that the public might want more than what’s listed in the chapter. R. Stahl would like Vermont State data listed to compare the data shown on page 7. C. Sawyer would mention something about certain housing agencies being under hardship at the moment. R. Stahl asked for clarification on the different kinds of housing mentioned in the chapter. C. Sawyer would define what workforce housing meant.
- **Chapter 5.** C. Sawyer would make a mention of CHIP and TIF financing, especially in an infographic that shows what’s been paid off. R. Stahl wanted to include St. Albans Town jobs to show who was commuting nearby. There was then a discussion about which jobs were included under “Local Government.” D. Smith wanted to make it clear that the city should encourage recruiting efforts (like at the hospital) to live nearby in Franklin County or St. Albans.
- **Chapter 6.** D. Smith brought up the 2020 Census Population Pyramid for discussion. There was a conversation about the unemployment rate only factoring in people “looking for work,” which might be misleading in the city’s data. M. Gawne advised C. Sawyer to mention the NOTCH in the list of specific health care facilities. J. Appel mentioned that the Community Justice Center and Court Diversion Program were renamed the “Restorative Justice Center.” The Planning Commission discussed adding a mention of transportation to the Wellness and Prosperity chapter.

- **Chapter 7.** N. Brown pointed out some doubled-up text that had yet to be removed. R. Stahl asked about improvements or expansion planned for the water and sewer system capacity. The PC agreed that this could be a good 2026 amendment, depending on how complicated it is. D. Rohrbach wanted to know the timeline for the engineering firm's work on the state of the dam. C. Sawyer would find out more information.
 - **Chapter 8.** There was a discussion about the hazard mitigation plan and a consultant the city hired to complete it. N. Brown brought up a blank spot in the Energy Burden Table being a data quirk and unavailable, where she would input a weighted average to avoid blank spaces. D. Smith wanted a mention of carsharing or carpooling in the section on vehicles and transportation.
 - **Chapter 9.** D. Smith brought up the naming conventions of the zoning, and how the PC could approach this at a later date.
 - **Chapter 10.** The Planning Commission remarked on how good the discussions with the Town Planning Commission have been and how important it is to continue them in the future.
4. The next draft would be completed by November 7, when it would be warned for the public hearing and sent to the PC for review. There was a discussion on whether the PC should meet on November 17, 2025. The PC decided to plan on meeting on November 17 unless no substantial changes were needed.
 5. **The December 15th meeting would be canceled since they were meeting on the 9th of December.**
 6. **D. Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:23 PM.**