

MEETING MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:30 PM TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026

Approved February 17, 2026

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

Commission Members Absent: None.

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

Members of the public present: Michael Cohen

1. C. Watkins started the meeting at 5:32 PM.

- M. Cohen had an issue that would be discussed in the priorities section of the agenda. Some other members of the public might join in that discussion.
- No changes to the agenda.

2. Chair and Vice Chair Elections (Part 1)

- With Denise Smith leaving as Chair, there would be a new election of Chair and Vice Chair. R. Stahl asked for clarification on the duties of the chair and vice chair positions. C. Sawyer clarified how they function and their duties.
- There was a conversation about who was interested in being chair and vice chair. The Planning Commission decided to table this election until later on in the meeting so people could think about whether they'd like to nominate themselves.

3. Update on the City Plan

- C. Sawyer updated the Commission members on some changes to the city plan that were presented with the full draft for the City Council. Some of these changes were last-minute requests by the members before it would enter the adoption process.
- The Commission members generally agreed with these changes.

4. Chair and Vice Chair Elections (Part 2)

- R. Stahl nominated himself for the position of Chair (or Vice Chair)

- M. Nicholas nominated himself for the position of Vice Chair.
- **M. Gawne motioned that the commission vote to name R. Stahl as the Chair of the Commission and M. Nicholas as the Vice Chair of the Commission, with great thanks to C. Watkins for the support. Seconded by J. Appel. The motion passed with all in favor.**

5. Priorities for Regulatory Amendments

- C. Sawyer and M. Cohen introduced an adjustment to the zoning to add his newly purchased property which is a nonconforming duplex, to turn it into a triplex.
- After the introduction, the Planning Commission discussed whether they would even entertain the idea of shifting the zoning, once the city and M. Cohen could work out some of the details.
- There was an additional discussion about the parking; M. Gawne and C. Watkins were familiar with the neighborhood (C. Watkins lived next door), and what would need to be provided for the Commission to vote for this zoning change.
- M. Cohen would meet with C. Sawyer and other city staff to see what needed to be done in order for the property to get as close as possible to conform with the zoning. Then the Planning Commission would reapproach it. This will be a top agenda item for a future meeting.
- **M. Cohen left the meeting at 6:35.**

6. Additional Planning Priorities

- Next, the Planning Commission discussed an additional change to the Service Industrial District. A future applicant wants to add an animal rescue/kennel to the old City Pool location on Aldis St. The Planning Commission was curious about the usage of the property, its proximity to the school and playground, and when people would be dropping off dogs. C. Sawyer would give more information about this proposal in the future.
- The Planning Commission then examined the spreadsheet of priorities. The highest priority would be updating restrictions for first-floor residential buildings downtown. But the Commission discussed which priorities would be next. J. Appel wanted C. Sawyer to list the priorities from top to bottom, and the Commission members would agree or disagree. The highest priorities would include the Cottage Courts development, M. Cohen's building renovations, Lake Street and Fairfield Street developments, and the priorities that might halt development. C. Sawyer wanted to also discuss zoning standards required for Act 250, ensuring the town and city were evenly affected by Act 250 regulations.

- R. Stahl wanted to know more about how the city felt about population growth downtown and in the neighborhoods. J. Appel wanted data about rentals from homeowners vs. landlords outside of the city.
- M. Gawne was still opposed to the DRB's ability to use "similar use" zoning when a property didn't fit into any of the defined uses. This would be added to the priorities list for discussion.

7. Other Business

- **M. Gawne motioned to approve all three sets of minutes as written (October, November, and December) and to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by R. Stahl. The motion passed with all in favor. No additional discussion.**