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City of Ashland, Wisconsin
601 Main Street West Ashland, WI 54806 www.coawi.org

PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 21st, 2025 at 6:30PM at the City Hall Council Chambers and via Go To Meetings

The meeting can be joined in person or by using a computer, smartphone or tablet at

<https://meet.goto.com/775025133>

**The meeting can also be joined by phone at
1 866 899 4679 using Access Code: 775-025-133**

Present: Jeff Beirl, JoAnn Erickson, Ana Tochterman (late), Shawn Brede, Mayor Matt Mackenzie, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director), Terri Erickson (Assistant Planner)

Absent: David Eades (excused), Laurie Gregor (excused)

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
Mayor Mackenzie called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm and a quorum was declared present.
2. Approval of Agenda
Ms. Erickson made a motion to approve the agenda and Mr. Beirl seconded. Motion Carried 4-0.
3. Mackenzie asked for approval of the minutes from the August 19th, 2025 Plan Commission meeting. Mayor Mackenzie moved to approve as proposed and Mr. Beirl seconded. The motion carried 4-0.
4. Identify potential conflicts of interest
None
5. Citizen Participation (non-agenda items)
None
6. Action Items:
 - a. Public Hearing: Review and approval of a Request to acquire City-owned land, (a portion of parcel 201-01886-0000), zoned Single and Two-Family Residential (R-2). Applicant: Travis Franek

Steven Wiley presented on the topic. He described the location as former railroad property on Willis Avenue and described the site with an Aerial view. He reviewed the existing and surrounding land uses and recommendations. He noted the applicant provided us with Certified Survey Map which was reviewed by staff. He stated that the mayor and staff have discussed returning former railroad properties to the adjacent owners to make them conforming again which has been done with a few other property owners already. Public works has weighed in. (Ana Tochterman arrived 6:41pm) He reviewed the standards for review for a

land transfer. He noted the land is now tax exempt and this would return it to the tax roll. Staff recommends approval with conditions noted. Public hearing notice was acknowledged and discretionary mailings. Mr. Wiley reviewed comments received. 1) Frederick Vande Venter: 410 Willis Ave, stopped in and sent a letter; is supportive of transfer to Mr. Franek, who he believed would care well for the parcel. 2) Mary and Sarah Grubisic: Spoke with Mr. Wiley in person Tuesday Sept, 23rd. They have property at 413 Willis Ave and are supportive of transfer and that Mr. Franek is a good neighbor and keeps up property well. 3) Patrick Foley: 617 4th St E.; letter received Sept 17th, Opposed to request. He would like to purchase the land next to his house and build home and has submitted a proposal to purchase. He noted he has asked to buy it for years and told it was not for sale due to legal issues with the railroad. He feels the land should be put up for auction and sold before it is given away to someone who works for the city and therefore has preferential treatment.

Motion to go into public hearing by Ms. Erickson. Second by Mr. Beirl. Roll call vote carries 5-0.

- 1) Susan Peterson; 409 7th Ave E, neighbor to Mr. Franek. All for the transfer and putting property on the tax roll and property being maintained.

Motion to go out of public hearing by Jeff Beirl. Second by JoAnn Erickson. No discussion, carries 5-0.

Motion to approve and move forward with transfer request by Mr. Beirl. Second by Mr. Brede.

Discussion: Mr. Beirl initiates discussion regarding Mr. Foley. Is he wanting to buy the same property that the city is giving away? Is it true that this is a non-buildable lot on its own so how would Mr. Foley be able to do this? Mr. Wiley noted that Mr. Foley wanted the entire north portion where the alley cuts through. City Staff/Mayor wants to see lots restored where-ever possible. The portion adjacent to Mr. Franek's lot, by itself, would not be buildable. Public Works wants to maintain the alley, as it currently contains utilities, so the parcel would remain split regardless. Mayor Mackenzie further described how the western portion would go to the Franek's, who's property is the only one that can be supplemented with this section of the easement. The city is looking at dividing the easement on the east side into a conforming lot to sell on the north end and giving the remainder on the south end to the adjacent neighbors to make their lot conforming. They have been approached and are not sure they are interested in it so then it could be sold along with the northern lots. This would be a buildable lot so it would be dealt with differently than the section proposed to be being given to Mr. Franek. Mr. Foley has started to process of purchasing these northern lots on the east side (lots 23/24) but has implied he's not interested unless he also is offered the western lots (lots 11/12). Mr. Beirl stated that returning as many lots as possible to conforming status, as noted as a goal by the city, takes a high priority. It was reiterated that if that if the subject lots were sold separately they could not be built on. Mayor Mackenzie noted it would only serve to block the adjacent owner from doing anything on the property and that has no value to anyone else, in his opinion. Ms. Erickson recollected that there was talk earlier in the year about getting lots appraised for selling and it would not apply to the subject property because it is only a partial lot? Mayor Mackenzie responded this was true and the city wants to start marketing as many properties as possible, prioritizing those that have utilities. Ms. Tochtermann remarked about what the precedent has been and expressed concern about fairness in regards to transferring land versus pursuing a sale. Mayor Mackenzie feels that the city has been consistent and fair with the process being used and explained some of the criteria and strategy the city has used and resources available. He reviewed some of the past transfers and current that are in the works. He noted the goal is not to make money but also not to spend money on these land transactions. Some buildable lots have been transferred at fair market value and gave an example of one close to the Ore dock. He noted the railroad ROW did come to the city at no expense.

Mayor Mackenzie: Call to question; a yes vote to transfer the land to combine with applicant's current property. A CSM has been completed and the applicant will need to acquire any required building permits as required for future improvements. Roll call vote: Carried 5-0.

- b. Public Hearing: Review and approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow a fence exceeding 6 feet in height in the side and rear yards at 2501 Golf Course Road (Parcel # 201-04808-1000), zoned Regional Commercial (RC) with Floodplain Overlay (F-O).
Applicant: Scott Wafle.

Ms. Erickson presented on the topic. She noted the CUP request is for an 8-foot high fence and reviewed the subject site and surrounding zoning. She then explained the existing buildings and uses on the parcel. She pointed out the single-family residence adjacent to the project area and described where the new building and fence will be located. Pictures helped clarify that the existing vegetative screening between the two properties is minimal. She explained that the reason for the fence is to protect from theft and vandalism which has been an issue in the past. She noted there is a ten-foot wide landscape buffer requirement for new developments and a less intense adjacent use as well as requirements for adding more trees. Standards for review were touched on with the buffer requirements between different intensity uses being the only item of any concern. Staff recommends approval with the following conditions: 1) up to an 8-foot high fence allowed as shown in the site aerial plan. 2) Supports shall be placed on the interior side of the fence panels. 3) Any changes or additions to the project scope must acquire the required approvals and permits. 4) A permit must be granted before fence installation. 5) Three new trees and two new shrubs shall be planted to further fill in the existing vegetative buffer between the single-family residence and new fence/pole building. A planting plan shall be submitted for review and approval and be installed within a year of building completion. The Class 2 hearing notice was issued as required and discretionary letters were sent out. No responses were received.

Motion to go into public hearing: by Ms. Erickson, second by Anna Tochtermann. Motion Carries 5-0.

Motion to go out of public hearing: by Mr. Beirl, second by Ms. Erickson. Motion Carries 5-0.

Motion to review and approve the CUP for the fence at 2501 Golf coarse road with conditions identified by staff by Mr. Bierl, Second by Ms. Erickson.

Discussion: Jeff Beirl asked if the top half of the fence is allowed to be barbed or razor wire. Mr. Wiley responded that that would not be allowed under this CUP. He asked about requiring privacy cloth (or slats) in the chain link fencing for added visual screening from the residence. Mayor Mackenzie noted that this was a possibility if need be. The question arose of how much deterrent an 8-foot fence would actually hinder trespassing. Mayor Mackenzie noted that the hope is the fence will make it harder for people to take stuff which may be just sitting out in the yard for a period of time before it gets put inside. Ms. Erickson asked if the fence and new building would devalue their home? This answer is unknown, while keeping in mind that if a 6-foot high fence were proposed by the owner there would be no CUP approval required. Mr. Brede noted that he would like to see more trees & shrubs required that what staff has proposed. Mr. Wiley noted the number we suggested is derived from ordinance standards for a CUP approval but we could ask the applicant if he would be willing to plant more. There should also be a clause in the CUP language that they are required to maintain the plantings. Mr. Brady asked about the moratorium on metal buildings. Mr. Wiley responded depending on different factors, such as locations in a more isolated areas and not as visible, there is more flexibility in allowing these siding materials. Mr. Brede suggested the number of proposed trees and shrubs be doubled. The motion is to amend the number of trees and shrubs from the current 3 trees/2 shrubs to 4 trees/8 shrubs. Second by Ms. Erickson. Ms. Tochtermann inquired if the commission has the authority to ask for this kind of increase over and above the base standards. Mayor

Mackenzie responded that it is a reasonable request to meet the screening requirements for allowing another metal-faced pole building to be constructed on the site. Mr. Beirl questioned again if we are exceeding our authority Terri Erickson noted that the ordinance language refers to the requirement for a screening buffer between higher and lower intensity uses and it was the intent to help satisfy this by having the landscaping installed along this partially buffered area. Mr. Beirl asked if they fail to add the additional vegetation, do we have the authority to come back and mandate this, and based on what? Can we leverage the lack of a buffer for an additional landscaping requirement? Mr. Wiley asked if the buffer width was verified to not be 10-feet wide he and noted this is determined by the green space. Usually the landscaping requirement ties into ground area disturbed or new building area. Generally, it doesn't tie into cases where they want to have more fence height. The buffer width would be what we considered the 10 feet or whatever the width of the green space is between the property line and the disturbed area. Beirl asked, so based on that how many bushes and trees can we ask for? The numbers in the recommendation staff determined are based on the area of the new building which is the minimum requirement. If we want to ask for more we can propose it the property owner but he doesn't know if he'd have an issue with this. Mr. Beirl commented if it is put into motion it could be a deal breaker and he would rather us ask them if they are willing to incorporate the additional plantings and have staff negotiate the final number. Mr. Wiley agreed we could discuss with him that the commission is recommending approval but are asking for this.... Mr. Brede added that if there are not enough trees we can come back and look at it later which generally never happens so this is a way to front load it. Mayor Mackenzie asked for a vote on the amendment and clarified that it will ask for the four trees and eight shrubs with the understanding that they would do no less than three trees and two shrubs. Motion carries 5-0.

Mayor Mackenzie called to question the approval of the amended motion. Motion carried 5-0.

7. Discussion Items:

- a. Update on Property Maintenance Enforcement
- b. Update on Building Permits
- c. Update on Miscellaneous Planning and Development Items

Mr. Wiley conveyed that Vision, Inc, the developed for the Roffers site, closed on the property with the city for purchase on October 7th. They have submitted to DSPS for early start approval which was granted. Still working on submitted grant applications to WEDC to offset some costs.

Alex Vickroy is moving ahead with his development plans for the Beaser School development for market rate units.

In regards to removing problem properties, the 114 2nd Ave E property was demolished. 513 7th Street W. currently has a raze order to be demolished at end of month or early November. A clean-up is taking place over by Beaser Park under a court order.

8. Announcement/Reports/Comments/Questions

Mayor Mackenzie noted that there has been a request related to deer hunting within the city with a bow. Currently our ordinance doesn't allow it on city owned property, only private property with police department approval. It may be something the city would consider allowed in some areas and help to control the deer population.

There continues to be effort to deal with empty buildings, get them cleaned up, and hopefully getting them back in to use. There's hope to turn the property of the demolished yellow house into a green space for use by the adjacent commercial property owners. This is an ongoing effort. The city has been approached about selling the property for parking which does not seem like the best use.

Most of road work in the city is about done.

Mr. Beirl asked about the timeline of the Beaser Ave project. Mr. Wiley responded the developer wants to get going this Fall and finish next year. There was a delay with the closing that shift the schedule. Plans are drawn up for the Beaser School project and he is ready to get going. The library needs to move out first. In discussions regarding possible TIFF assistance with city assessor. Project will likely be running later than the Vision, Inc. Project. He is also applying for tax credits. Library should be ready for occupancy on Dec. 19th, ahead of schedule. Actual move-in date is under evaluation by the library board. The schedule was shortened in one part due to joists running a different direction that thought which simplified the construction and saved some money. The brickwork on the west exterior wall required more remediation than planned. Project is still on budget.

Ms. Erickson asked about the status of the homeless shelter. Mr. Wiley noted a letter has been written regarding the landscaping that needs to be done on the site per the CUP agreement. Property maintenance made a visit because there was stuff starting to pile up outside. Ms. Erickson asked if there is supposed to be someone at their desk 24 hours in order to give residents access to their living spaces. Mr. Wiley does not believe it is in the actual CUP resolution.

Mr. Brede asked for an update on the marina ramp. Mayor Mackenzie responded they are looking at next year to have it done. There have been some funding gap setbacks the city is working on.

The city is working with the DNR to acquire the two coal docks that are privately owned. Hope to do something with those that would benefit the waterfront. DNR looking to assist. Referenced a couple example projects: Superior and Sturgeon Bay. The owner needs to be motivated to sell – wants city to be responsible for clean-up costs which could be a possibility with assistance from grants.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Erickson, Second by Ms. Tochtermann. Carried 5-0.

Meeting closed at 7:48 pm

Recorded by:
Terri Erickson
Assistant Planner

It is possible that a quorum of members of other governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information or speak about a subject, over which they have decision-making responsibility. Any governmental body at the above stated meeting will take no action other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice. The City of Ashland does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, age or disability in employment or provision of services, programs or activities. NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, the City of Ashland will accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through auxiliary aids or services. For additional information or to request this service, contact the Planning & Zoning Dept. at (715) 682-7041.