

Heather Hanover
Chair

James Eshelman
Vice-Chair

Commissioners

Scott Dzurka, Mayor
Eric Hufnagel, Commissioner
Mark Holden
Eric Harger
Brian Mills
Shelley Gunther
Kelly Taylor



PLANNING COMMISSION

DECEMBER 3, 2025 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the St. Johns Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Hanover at 5:31 p.m.

Members Present: Heather Hanover, Mark Holden, Eric Hufnagel, Brian Mills, Scott Dzurka, Eric Harger, James Eshelman, Kelly Taylor

Members Absent: Shelley Gunther

Staff Present: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna; Ethan Senti, McKenna

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel to approve the agenda as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 12, 2025 MEETING

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the minutes as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Chairperson Hanover welcomed our new member.

Commissioner Taylor said she is happy to be here and is excited to learn. She discussed reading some of the master plan.

Mayor Dzurka said we appointed an additional individual, Shelley, who could not make it this evening. He said Kelly and Shelley presented to the city commission last week and both come with a wealth of knowledge. He said he is confident they will get up to speed.

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were no public comments.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. City of St. Johns Master Plan and Parks Plan

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Holden that the public hearing be opened.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 5:36 p.m.

Ethan Senti, McKenna, was present to give a quick overview of the plan.

He discussed:

- The purpose of the public hearing.
 - Present the draft of the Joint Master & Parks Plan.
 - Summarize the key plan process and components.
 - Receive final public comments.
 - Allow Planning Commission to provide feedback.
- Timeline & process
 - Background
 - The process began approximately a year ago.
 - Meetings with staff, planning commission, city commission and downtown development authority.
 - Public engagement
- Key elements
 - Introduction
 - Action Plan
 - Redevelopment and community character
 - Housing needs
 - Mobility plan
 - Parks and Recreation Plan
- Introduction
 - Master Plan Principles
 - Key Findings
 - Action Plan
- Public engagement and survey
- Redevelopment and community character
 - Future land use maps
 - Searles Estates
 - Townsend Road
 - North Downtown
 - Housing analysis
 - Biggest need is high-end housing.

- Projected housing needs in 2024.
- Mobility plan
 - Walkability map
 - Corridor design plan
 - Non-motorized network
- Parks and Recreation Plan
 - Action items included in plan.
- Plan Implementation
- Next steps
 - Upcoming meetings.

City Manager Gamble said Director Schafer is here. He said Ethan provided a parallel path with both plans and asked if Parks and Recreation Director Schafer had anything to add regarding the 2026-2030 City of St. Johns Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan.

Director Schafer discussed the action plan items that were taken out: Fantasy Forest, upgrading park facilities (fall zones). He discussed the depot area.

Mayor Dzurka asked at what level do you want comments and feedback? He said to McKenna, Chad and the team, this document has come a long way, and he was impressed with how far it has come.

City Manager Gamble said if there are any tweaks and comments on spelling, we want to take those. If changes don't structurally change the document, those would be welcome.

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were none.

Mayor Dzurka discussed:

- He said he didn't see a mention of Safe Routes to School.
- He was surprised by the continual use of the Bluewater Highway and said for consistency, we call it M-21 or State Street.
- Page 29, the tree program, we talk about planting trees but didn't catch that we do a tree assessment.
- The map on page 34 might need some explanation.
- Page 81, fix the Mint Festival location.
- He asked about survey results on page 188. He was curious about the methodology.

Ethan Senti discussed the public feedback section, page 184, and starting on page 195 there is further explanation of the more recent efforts.

City Manager Gamble discussed the surveys that were on website and Facebook and the robust effort for public comments.

Ethan said we could put the more recent survey results in front of that.

Chairperson Hanover discussed an appendix.

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Eshelman that the public hearing be closed.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:08 p.m.

B. Rezoning: 815, 817, 901, 905, 907, and 911 N. Lansing Street – MC to R-1

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Eshelman that the public hearing be opened.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 6:09 p.m.

Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna, was present. He discussed the proposed rezoning for the properties on North Lansing Street. He discussed 823 N. Lansing, and we discovered other properties should be rezoned in accordance with the other single application. These are on the west side of North Lansing. MC to R-1. The public hearing notice went out November 2nd. He discussed the difference between MC and R-1; the review criteria; consistent with master plan; their review of the rezoning. He said they recommended the Planning Commission should recommend rezoning to the city commission.

There was a discussion of:

- The drawing provided.

Chairperson Hanover asked if anyone from audience had any comments.

Colleen Smith was present. She asked why it would be municipal in the first place.

Chairperson Hanover said she thinks it was when Gateway North school was built.

Ms. Smith asked if they would make the other people pay the \$700.00 that they also paid. She said they still don't have assurances that they can build a house on it.

Chairperson Hanover explained that it takes a couple of readings of the ordinance for the city commission to approve.

City Manager Gamble said the ordinance will be at the December 8th meeting. He discussed the 20 days with an ordinance taking effect.

There was a discussion of the spot zoning discussion at the November 24th city commission meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the public hearing be closed.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:18 p.m.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

A. City of St. Johns Master Plan and Parks Plan

There was a discussion about seeing a finalized version.

City Manager Gamble said this public hearing recommends the forwarding of both documents to the city commission. The December 8th meeting is for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2026-2030 City of St. Johns Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan) to be approved. He discussed minor changes to the regular master plan document and said it will be circulated in January.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Holden that the planning commission recommend the master plan to the city commission.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

B. Rezoning: 815, 817, 901, 905, 907, and 911 N. Lansing Street – MC to R-1

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the planning commission recommend rezoning of the parcels to the city commission.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

C. Zoning Amendment Discussion: Sidewalk Requirement

Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna, discussed the section of the zoning ordinance regarding waivers of the sidewalk ordinance. He discussed key criteria of the waiver; volume of waiver requests coming in; revisit ordinance; and policy options.

Chairperson Hanover said she is a proponent of sidewalks. She said most waivers are not residential.

Commissioner Hufnagel said the Fred Motz units had an agreement for sidewalks only on one side; and discussed Galaxy Way.

Commissioner Eshelman discussed the new home on Sturgis Street and said the driveway request forced them to put in a sidewalk. He said it is a good strategy, but frustrating at times. Some routes may have to put in a bond issue.

There was a discussion of:

- Safe Routes to School.
- Sidewalks are done as the streets are re-done with the street millage.
- The ordinance language with the reasons a waiver can be approved.
- Different options presented by McKenna.
- The site plan review committee approving waivers.
- Sidewalks in the Industrial Park.
- Cost of sidewalk.
- What requires a site plan?
- Tied to size of the structure.
- Financial hardship.
- Put information in the packet next month regarding what triggers site plan review.
- The sidewalk map.
- Requiring sidewalk when a home is sold.
- Whether you need a sidewalk on both sides of the street.

7. OLD BUSINESS: None

8. COMMITTEE SITE PLAN APPROVALS: None

9. CITY COMMISSION UPDATE – MAYOR DZURKA:

Mayor Dzurka discussed: Todd resigned from the Planning Commission and recognized his service; welcomed two new members; Jimmy and Heather were reappointed; set our regular meeting dates for Planning Commission and ZBA; addressed the rezoning for N. Lansing property and the (3) unzoned industrial parcels.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Taylor said she learned a lot about sidewalks.

Commissioner Hufnagel welcomed Kelly. He said at the city commission meeting he discussed rehashing the feral cat ordinance and someone reaching out regarding the TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release) program and said he thinks there is merit to that. He feels we should be looking at allowing those programs to reduce feral cats.

Mayor Dzurka said he has seen activity at the former Save A Lot space.

City Manager Gamble said he has not heard anything specific from an economic development standpoint. He said he heard Jimmy John's is entering the final building approval phase and should be open hopefully tomorrow.

Commissioner Mills discussed the dates of the planning commission. Kudos to Chad on the "for sale" sign on the Townsend Road property. He said his takeaway on the master plan is people really want economic development. He discussed putting all city property up for sale.

Commissioner Eshelman discussed the parks and partnering with some organizations or service groups for some of the projects.

Chairperson Hanover said welcome to Kelly. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas and said the Santa Parade is on Friday.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Taylor that the Planning Commission adjourn the meeting.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.