Harrisville City Planning Commission Minutes

Harrisville City Offices
363 W Independence Blvd – Harrisville
Wednesday, October 8, 2025 – 7:00 PM

Commissioners:	Chad Holbrook	**Staff:**	Jennie Knight, City Administrator
	Isaac Thomas		Sarah Wichern, City Planner
	Christina Palmer		Cynthia Benson, Deputy Recorder

Excused: Angie Francom, Planning Commission Chair

Visitors: No visitors

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Holbrook called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. Angie Francom, Chair, was excused. With the Vice Chair position vacant due to a resignation earlier this year, Commissioner Holbrook requested consent from the commissioners to chair the meeting. All commissioners agreed. He welcomed Christina Palmer as the newest member of the Planning Commission.

2. CONSENT APPROVAL – of Planning Commission meeting minutes from August 13, 2025.

MOTION: Commissioner Thomas motioned to approve meeting minutes from August 13, 2025, as written. Commissioner Palmer seconded the motion.

Chad Holbrook	**Yes**
Isaac Thomas	**Yes**
Christina Palmer	**Yes**

The motion passed with all voting in the affirmative.

3. DISCUSSION/ACTION/RECOMMEND – to recommend Ordinance 562: Housing Affordability.

The discussion began with the commissioners reviewing the City Council and Planning Commission work session from last month. Commissioner Thomas felt the ordinance, as written, was a good start in meeting the city goals for affordable housing. Commissioner Palmer requested clarification on the timeline for affordable housing implementation. She also asked if the city had specific land areas to apply the ordinance too. Sarah Wichern, City Planner, stated the city is looking at the ordinance as an option for developers to apply to their particular projects. It can be implemented as soon as it is approved. The ordinance is for more affordable housing in our current residential zones. This would not apply to the commercial since the city already has other overlay ordinances in place to apply to those zones.

The commissioners reviewed the recommendations mentioned in the City Planner's memo dated October 8, 2025. The first suggestion was with the Owner Occupied [11.16.010 (e)] definition.

Ms. Wichern suggested the state definition reads as follows: *"Owner-occupier" means an individual who owns, solely or jointly, a housing unit in which the individual lives as the individual's primary residence.* The current language allows for the use of trusts to establish ownership. She suggested changing this definition to match the state definition to limit loopholes trusts create and to make a cleaner ordinance.

Her next suggestion was the lot width and lot frontage [11.16.050 C.3. (c)]. This section outlines the rare exception when a house is on the outside curve of a street right-of-way creating a difference in appearance with the setbacks. The ordinance states *design standards shall be followed unless a developer can present compelling reasoning to deviate from the given standards.* Because the ordinance allows for exceptions on the basis of a "compelling reason" this section on lot width and lot frontage could be eliminated, on the basis of language cleanup, as it would fall under the "compelling reason" exception.

The next suggestion Ms. Wichern addressed was Concept Plans [11.16.060 B.1. (b) & (c)]. The current draft requires developers to submit cost estimates and "expected margins" as part of their concept plans. While well-intended, this approach may create challenges due to every contractor having vastly different pricing. Tying design standards to a developer's self-reported costs could allow applicants to contest requirements based on their individual land and material expenses, rather than community planning objectives putting pressure on the city to compromise our design standards. In addition, requiring disclosure of projected margins may reduce the incentive to present accurate or competitive pricing for the proposed project. She stated the city would rather place this burden on the developer to make the pricing work for the city's requirements and not a negotiation point. These changes maintain the City's authority to establish reasonable affordability expectations and community standards while still giving developers flexibility in their design approach.

Jennie Knight, City Administrator, said the intention of the ordinance expectations is to hold the developer accountable for maintaining the target price. The focus is the affordability factor. The city is currently in a unique situation. With the new state requirements, cities are now being asked to apply development standards to land in order to maintain the affordability factor where, in the past, they were to apply the development standards to the application.

Ms. Wichern read Chair Francom emailed comments. *I agree with the Oct 8 staff report memo and recommendations, both one and two, written by Sarah Wichern.* She had no opinion on recommendation for #3 since she had not read it when she sent her emailed comments.

Commissioner Holbrook asked Ms. Wichern if she felt these changes would strengthen the ordinance and not weaken it. Ms. Wichern replied the language of the ordinance gives a focus for the developers to create a viable product. She recommends the revisions. She reviewed the ways to make the motion for the ordinance.

Commissioner Holbrook asked for clarification on the approval process for the preliminary plat. Currently the ordinance reads, *The Planning Commission will approve the Preliminary Plat after review by the appropriate city departments.* After some discussion, it was decided the word "will" will be removed and the word "may" will be used to soften the sentence.

MOTION: Commissioner Thomas motioned to recommend Ordinance 562: Housing

Affordability, with revisions outline in city planner's memo dated October 8, 2025, with the follow revision to change wording on page 5, before process F, as discussed. Commissioner Palmer seconded the motion.

Chad Holbrook   **Yes**
Isaac Thomas   **Yes**
Christina Palmer   **Yes**

The motion passed with all voting in the affirmative.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** – (3 minute maximum)

No Public Comments were received.

5. **COMMISSION/STAFF FOLLOW UP**

Ms. Knight reported she and the mayor attended the Utah League Cities and Towns conference last week where a presentation was given similar to what the city has completed with the Ben Lomond project in respect of the affordability aspect. The city is hoping this ordinance will be another tool to entice developers to come into the city.

Commissioner Holbrook asked how many parcels meet the requirements of five (5) acres within the city. Ms. Knight replied there are not as many as there used to be. As part of the Moderate-Income Housing report the city identifies the number of housing units are entitled under their current zoning on buildable parcels. Ms. Wichern stated it is possible for developers to purchase more than one parcel. In the ordinance it states, *to be considered for the Housing Affordability Overlay the overall project acreage must be a minimum of five (5) acres.* This does not mean the development needs to be one parcel.

Ms. Knight added this ordinance could be used as an in-fill ordinance. During one of her meetings last week, she was informed about a company who builds rental units at first then turns the units into dwellings once the federal statutes wear off. These developers look for larger acreage to accomplish the affordability aspect. She thanked the commissioners for having an open mind to meet Governor Cox's requirements for more affordable housing.

Commissioner Holbrook asked for an update on Ben Lomond development. Ms. Knight said they are going vertical, and the roads are paved for phase 2A. He asked about Copperwoods commercial progress. Ms. Wichern stated there is nothing new to report with this project but will follow up with the developer.

6. **ADJOURN**

Since there were no other follow-up items to report, Commissioner Holbrook exercised his right as temporary Chair and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Chad Holbrook   **Cynthia Benson**
Temp – Chair   Deputy Recorder