

## **Gastonia Planning Commission August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

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The Gastonia Planning Commission meeting commenced at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in the Council Chambers at City Hall, located at 181 S. South Street, Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Kristie Ferguson, Vice Chair Chad Ghorley, Commissioners Megan Chapman, Carl Harris, David Wilson, Jeff Howe, Julie Coffey, and Glenn Silverman.

Absent: None

Staff Members Present: Charles Graham, Quentin McPhatter, Sushil Nepal, Joe Gates, Maddy Gates, Rebeca Mintz, and Brent Ratchford.

### **Item 1a: Role Call / Sound Check**

Chair Kristie Ferguson declared a quorum for the meeting.

### **Item 1b: Calls/Contacts to Planning Commission Members**

No Commissioners were contacted.

### **Item 1c: Oath of Office**

Gastonia Planning Technician, Rebecca Mintz, administered the oath of office for reappointment of Commissioners Jeff Howe and Glenn Silverman.

### **Item 1d: Approval of July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Silverman made a motion to adopt the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 meeting minutes as presented and Vice Chair Ghorley seconded the motion. The motion to approve the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 meeting minutes was unanimously passed (8-0).

Chair Kristie Ferguson read the rules of procedure and the time limitation policy.

### **Item 2: Public Hearing – 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update**

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized the consultant Demetri Baches, Metrocology Inc., for the presentation. A PowerPoint presentation was displayed. Mr. Baches provided a brief recap of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan presentation from July's Planning Commission meeting, including the timeline for adoption, individuals involved in the process, purpose, and community outreach. He described the city's vision and the guiding principles, which form the base of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Baches noted that feedback was received from the Planning Commission and staff and that a revised draft was provided on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Mr. Baches described why a Comprehensive Plan is needed and shared how city staff, developers and residents can use the document. He noted that the Planning Commission will use the Comprehensive Plan frequently and that it will provide the needed tools for determining land use decisions. He presented projections of population growth from the year 2025 to the year 2100, which reflected primary growth in eastern and central Gastonia. Mr. Baches discussed the overall direction of growth from the region's hub, Charlotte, to surrounding communities, noting that Gastonia is the next corridor of focus with a projection of 36,000 new residents in the next 25 years.

Mr. Baches noted that the 2050 Comprehensive Plan will introduce Place Types and Place Based Planning. He discussed the concepts of corridors, wedges, districts and centers. Mr. Baches explained the place types that will be utilized in the Comprehensive Plan, which include three types of residential, three types of commercial centers, and four types of employment centers. He discussed how the place types would correspond with current zoning in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Lastly, Mr. Baches discussed the implementation and investment chapter and the action plan of the proposed 2050 Comprehensive Plan. He noted that the document could be and should be amended and expanded as needed to ensure that investments and action plans remain relevant and up-to-date.

Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. Baches what the next steps in the adoption process would be. Mr. Baches stated that the draft has been completed and that a recommendation to City Council is needed. He noted that some minor changes to the draft would likely occur but that the content will remain the same.

Vice Chair Ghorley commended the work of staff, the consultants, the advisory group and the residents for the work and participation that was done to complete this project. Chair Ferguson stated that she was thankful and proud of the effort and collaboration that resulted in the 2050 Comprehensive Plan document.

Commissioner Howe asked staff about the timing of the future UDO update and what the process would entail. Mr. Nepal discussed the differences between a Comprehensive Plan and the UDO, noting

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that the Comprehensive Plan is futuristic, high level and involves policy while the UDO is more detailed and includes the law and rules of development. Mr. Nepal stated that City Council had approved the UDO update funding in the recent budget. He discussed the overall timing and process of the project stating that it would likely take one year or longer. Lastly, Mr. Nepal stated that it would be a collaborative effort including Planning Commission and would be advertised through a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Vice Chair Ghorley made a motion to recommend adoption of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan as presented to City Council. Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. The motion to recommend adoption of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan as presented was unanimously passed (8-0).

#### **Item 3: Public Hearing – Washington Street Townhomes (File #202500188)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 1.15 acres from RS-8 (Single-family Residential, minimum 8,000 sq. ft. lots) to PD-RRDD (Planned Development – Revised Residential Development District). The subject property is located between S. Washington Street and Hampton Street and is owned by Langston Realty Group, LLC.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Maddy Gates, Senior Planner, for staff's presentation. Ms. Gates stated that the subject property is approximately 1.15 acres and is currently zoned RS-8. She added that the applicant is requesting a conditional rezoning to PD-RRDD to facilitate a residential development with a maximum of eight townhomes. The zoning map was displayed. Ms. Gates discussed the location of the subject property and stated that it is undeveloped. The site plan was displayed. Ms. Gates stated that all townhomes in the development are rear-loaded and served by a public alley to meet road frontage requirements. She explained the required road improvements on Hampton Street and South Washington Street, which included sidewalk, curb and gutter, and right-of-way dedication to make the streets meet current 50-foot standards.

Ms. Gates stated that the site is less than three acres in size and according to Section 8.1.17 in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) would not be required to provide open space, however, a community gathering space has been proposed with a mail kiosk, seating area and sidewalk improvements. She noted that the design of the stormwater pond will include open space features of a walking trail and enhanced landscaping. Ms. Gates referred to the aerial map of the property and stated that there is little vegetation or trees existing on site and that the applicant is proposing a fee-in-lieu for required tree save area. The proposed conceptual elevations were displayed, reflecting a two-story, rear-loaded townhome product. Ms. Gates noted that the applicant has committed to providing a mix of architectural features and materials, including fiber cement siding and stone on the front façade. She discussed the agreed upon conditions as provided in the staff report and noted that a neighborhood meeting was held in June, 2025 but had no attendees. Lastly, Ms. Gates stated that the request is consistent with the 2025 Future Land Use Map and that staff is recommending approval based upon the site plan received and the agreed-upon conditions.

Commissioner Wilson asked staff if the proposed project would have been reviewed differently under the 2050 Comprehensive Plan instead of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Director, Sushil Nepal, stated that the review for this project would have likely remained the same. He explained that the overall design standards that staff is reviewing are included in the UDO and that the Comprehensive Plan would be higher-level policy.

With no more questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Kate Underwood, 165 Brumley Avenue N.E., Suite 2000, Concord, NC. Ms. Underwood stated that she was a civil engineer with Daylight Engineering, and that she was representing the applicant. She noted that she was available for any questions.

Commissioner Harris asked Ms. Underwood what criteria would determine the need and size of the stormwater pond. Ms. Underwood replied stating that the stormwater pond was required due to the project density. She noted that the requirement was challenging to achieve due to the property size. Commissioner Harris asked if the pond was wet or dry. Ms. Underwood responded that the pond is a dry sand filter pond. She further discussed the design of the stormwater pond and the process of collecting water runoff.

Commissioner Harris asked Ms. Underwood if the townhomes would be for sale or for rent. Ms. Underwood replied "for sale". Commissioner Harris asked if the exterior materials would include Hardiboard. Ms. Underwood stated that the applicant committed to a combination of materials. Mr. Nepal stated that vinyl siding would not be allowed.

With no further questions, Commissioner Howe made a motion to close the public hearing. Vice Chair Ghorley seconded the motion. The motion to close the public hearing was unanimously passed (8-0).

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Commissioner Chapman discussed the procedures for holding a neighborhood meeting and asked if virtual meetings were allowed. Assistant City Attorney, Charles Graham, stated that there is not a specific rule in the UDO regulating the type of meeting; however, it requires the applicant to send out notifications and hold the meeting. Mr. Nepal stated that improving procedures would be a topic to review during the future UDO update.

Vice Chair Ghorley made a motion to approve the rezoning request as presented. Commissioner Coffey seconded the motion. The motion to approve the rezoning request as presented was unanimously passed (8-0).

Following, Vice Chair Ghorley made a motion to adopt the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. The motion to adopt the statement of consistency and reasonableness was unanimously passed (8-0).

#### **ITEM 4: Public Hearing – 3106 & 3112 Kendrick Road (File #202500235)**

Subject hearing involves a request for annexation and rezoning for approximately 0.5377 acres from Gaston County R-1 (Single-family Limited Residential) to City of Gastonia RS-12 (Single-family Residential, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots). The subject property is located at 3106 and 3112 Kendrick Road and is owned by Preston and Heather McNeil.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Maddy Gates, Senior Planner, for staff's presentation. Ms. Gates stated that the applicant is requesting annexation into the City of Gastonia and assignment of RS-12 general zoning. Ms. Gates noted that the request for annexation is primarily for access to city services and utilities. The zoning map was displayed. She noted that the property is currently zoned R-1 and is surrounded primarily by residential properties in the city of Gastonia. She stated that there are currently four existing structures on the property; two single-family homes, one detached garage, and one accessory structure. Ms. Gates discussed the proposed zoning, RS-12, and stated that it is one of the more restrictive residential zoning districts which serves mainly single-family homes with standard lot sizes and setbacks. She noted that a general RS-12 zoning would permit all uses allowed within that zoning district. Further, Ms. Gates noted that any non-residential uses that are permitted in RS-12 require a one-acre minimum lot size, meaning at this time, it would not be applicable to this property. She shared the annexation plat and discussed the existing structures on site.

In regards to staff's findings, Ms. Gates stated that the subject property would be considered legal nonconforming use in terms of use and structures if annexed. She noted that the ordinance only allows for one single-family home per property, however, this parcel has two. Additionally, she noted that the second nonconformity would be that the existing buildings do not meet current RS-12 setbacks. Ms. Gates read the "Nonconformity" definition from the UDO. She stated that the annexation request would be for the property "as is", and any future development would have to meet all RS-12 standards and any other applicant standards in the ordinance.

Finally, Ms. Gates stated that the request was consistent with the 2025 Future Land Use Map for residential uses and that annexing this property would fill an existing gap in city limits. She noted that RS-12 is consistent with the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and that staff is recommending approval. As a reminder, Ms. Gates stated that this item would be heard at the August 19<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

With no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Preston McNeil, 245 Autumn Wood Trail, Gastonia, NC. Mr. McNeil stated that he is the property owner and was available for questions.

Vice Chair Ghorley asked Mr. McNeil what he planned to do with the property, if annexed. Mr. McNeil stated that the existing houses were going to be renovated and used as rental properties. Vice Chair Ghorley asked staff to further describe the nonconformities. Mr. Graham stated that the structures would be nonconforming, if annexed, as they do not meet the city of Gastonia's ordinance. He stated that the applicant did not have to remove the structures and could continue to use them as is. Mr. Graham added that the property owner could improve the site and meet current code but cannot expand the nonconformity or make it worse.

Commissioner Coffey asked Mr. McNeil why the homes could not be used as rentals in the County's jurisdiction. Mr. McNeil stated that the homes are in need of major repair and updating. Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. McNeil what the benefit would be for annexing into the City and if the desire was for city utilities. Mr. McNeil responded "Yes" noting that the need was for city water.

Mr. Nepal stated that, in general, annexation is mainly driven by access to city services and utilities. He stated that a property being annexed into Gastonia requires an assignment of city zoning, which in this case, RS-12 was the most compatible district. Mr. Nepal clarified that there is no change in use of

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the property and that the existing structures can remain as nonconforming. Lastly, Mr. Nepal noted that any changes to the property would require full compliance with the UDO.

Commissioner Howe asked staff if the existing homes could be expanded. Mr. Nepal replied “No” and stated that the nonconformity cannot be increased. Mr. Graham added to the discussion stating that an expansion of the existing home would require full UDO compliance. He clarified that the request was for water and sewer access, as well as other city services such as police, fire, and sanitation.

Vice Chair Ghorley stated that the Planning Commission has seen similar annexation requests in the past. Mr. Nepal agreed and noted that it was not uncommon but that annexation is required per the city’s policy.

With no further questions, Commissioner Silverman made a motion to recommend approval of the annexation and rezoning request as presented. Vice Chair Ghorley seconded the motion. Chair Ferguson noted that the recommendation motion will close the public hearing. The motion to recommend approval of the annexation and rezoning request was unanimously passed (8-0).

Following, Commissioner Silverman made a motion to adopt the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Vice Chair Ghorley seconded the motion. The motion to adopt the statement of consistency and reasonableness was unanimously passed (8-0).

**Item 5: OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Gates provided City Council updates.

**Item 6: ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Ferguson entertained a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Ghorley made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was unanimously passed (8-0). The meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM.

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Rebeca Mintz, Secretary

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Kristie Ferguson, Chairperson