



# INDEPENDENCE ★ MISSOURI ★

A GREAT AMERICAN STORY

## Planning Commission Minutes

January 27, 2026 6:00 PM

City Hall, 111 E. Maple Avenue (Ground Floor), Council Chambers

### CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Planning Commission was held at 6:00 PM on 1/27/2026, in the 111 E Maple Avenue, Independence, MO 64050. The meeting was called to order.

### ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following members were present - Laurie Dean Wiley, Eric Ashbaugh, Edward Nesbitt, Dan O'Neill, Jose Torres, Michael Young. Absent - Virginia Ferguson.

### CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consists of routine items of business to be acted upon by the Planning Commission with little or no public discussion. The staff or committee recommendation for each item is included in the Planning Commission packet. Any item may be removed by a commissioner or staff member to become part of the regular agenda.

1. **Planning Commission Minutes — January 13, 2026**

### Motion

Commissioner Edward Nesbitt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Dan O'Neill seconded the motion. The motion was approved Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

### CASE WITHDRAWN (INFORMATION ONLY - NO ACTION REQUIRED)

1. **Case 26-400-02 – Short-Term Rental – 3701 S Scott Avenue** – A request to operate a Short-Term Rental at the property.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. **Case 25-200-09 – Special Use Permit – 1304 S. Maywood Avenue** - A request by Janet Higgins for a Special Use Permit for a Bed and Breakfast.

### **Staff Presentation**

Brian Harker presented the case. Mr. Harker presented the Commission with a vicinity map, noting the area and surrounding zoning. He presented the Commission with an aerial map indicating the project area and explained the surrounding land uses. Mr. Harker reviewed the conditions of approval.

In response to Commissioner O'Neill's question, Mr. Harker stated the driveway is paved.

### **Applicant Comments**

Janet Higgins, 1304 S. Maywood Ave, appeared before the Commission regarding a Special Use Permit to operate an Airbnb/bed and breakfast at her residence. Ms. Higgins explained that she has owned the home for approximately four years and was drawn to sharing the historic property, which is over 120 years old. She described the home's character and her desire to host visitors as a way to contribute positively to the community.

Ms. Higgins stated she has hosted guests from across the United States and internationally, including Germany and Japan. Guests typically visit Independence for church conferences, sporting events, or other local attractions. She noted the property's proximity to major venues and shared that she actively encourages guests to support local businesses in Independence rather than traveling elsewhere.

Chairwoman Wiley asked about the length of time the applicant had been operating prior to licensure. Ms. Higgins acknowledged that she had operated without a license due to a lack of awareness of the City's requirements. Upon receiving notice from the City, she stated she immediately blocked bookings on the Airbnb platform while maintaining her account to avoid penalties.

Chairwoman Wiley also asked about the on-site swimming pool. Ms. Higgins confirmed the pool would not be used by guests and stated she would secure it with a locked gate. She noted that she lives on-site and is present during guest stays.

### **Public Comments**

Michelle Dowell, 20902 E. 15th Street S, spoke in favor of the application. She described Ms. Higgins as a responsible host who takes great pride in her home and provides a positive experience for guests while supporting the local community.

Rebecca Wright, 1301 S. Maywood Ave, spoke in favor and noted that Ms. Higgins has been a positive addition to the neighborhood, maintaining the property well and contributing to the overall appearance and value of the area.\

### **Motion**

Commissioner Edward Nesbitt made a motion to approve the case. Commissioner Michael

Young seconded the motion. The motion was approved Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **Case 26-175-01 – UDO Amendment #78 – Accessory Buildings & Structures – A** request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance relating to accessory buildings and structures.

### **Staff Presentation**

Mr. Arroyo presented proposed amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The amendments include clarifying existing regulations for accessory buildings and structures by improving language and readability while maintaining long-standing standards such as setbacks, height limits, and lot coverage requirements.

Mr. Arroyo also presented the addition of new definitions for private, semi-private, and public swimming pools to clearly distinguish between pool types and ensure consistent application of development standards.

He explained that the purpose of the amendments is to provide clearer, more user-friendly regulations for property owners, developers, and City staff; reduce ambiguity and inconsistent enforcement; and ensure swimming pools are properly classified and regulated for zoning, placement, and safety.

Mr. Arroyo noted that the proposed amendments do not substantially change existing development standards but modernize language, reflect established practices, and align definitions with common industry usage. Staff reviewed the amendments for consistency with other City regulations and identified no conflicts with existing policies.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments.

### **Motion**

Commissioner Dan O'Neill made a motion to approve the case. Commissioner Jose Torres seconded the motion. The motion was approved Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

2. **Case 26-175-02 – UDO Amendment #79 – Temporary Signs – A** request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance relating to temporary signs.

### **Staff Presentation**

Mr. Arroyo presented a proposed amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance related to temporary opinion signs. He explained that the amendment allows temporary signs expressing the opinion of the property owner or occupant on matters of public interest, subject to specific time-based standards. Signs may be installed no more than sixty (60) days prior to an election

and must be removed within ten (10) days following the conclusion of the election.

Mr. Arroyo stated that the amendment provides clarity and predictability for residents, businesses, and enforcement staff by establishing clear temporal limits rather than relying on subjective determinations. He noted that the regulation is content-neutral and focuses solely on the timing of sign display rather than the message conveyed. Staff reviewed the amendment for consistency with other City regulations and found no conflicts with existing policies.

In response to Commissioner Nesbitt's question, Mr. Arroyo stated that the City reviewed surrounding jurisdictions and found that a sixty (60) day timeframe is the standard. Commissioner Nesbitt indicated a preference for a thirty (30) day period instead. Mr. Arroyo also noted that Code Enforcement removes signs located within the public right-of-way.

In response to Chairwoman Wiley's question, Mr. Arroyo stated this amendment is for all temporary signs and not just election signs.

**Public Comments**

No public comments.

**Motion**

Commissioner Edward Nesbitt made a motion to approve the case. Commissioner Eric Ashbaugh seconded the motion. The motion was approved Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

**ROUNDTABLE - NEXT MEETING FEBRUARY 10, 2026**

**ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.*