



PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 5:30 PM
1 Benjamin Franklin Way Franklin, Ohio 45005
www.FranklinOhio.org

CLERK'S JOURNAL

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Dr. Sarah Nathan, Paul Ruppert, Christine Pirot, David Hopper, Mayor Brent Centers, Jason Hall, Brain Rebholtz

Staff: Jonathan Westendorf, Liz Fields, Eric Damian, Cindi Chibis

Guests: Jacqueline Almanza

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr Sarah Nathan.

4. APPROVE THE CLERK'S JOURNAL AND ACCEPT THE TAPES AS THE OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Clerks' Journal was approved, and the tapes were accepted as the official minutes of the September 10, 2025, meeting. Written minutes to be revised to note Mayor Brent Center's absence at the September 10, 2025, meeting.

Motion made by Pirot, Seconded by Hall

Voting Yea: Doctor Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Chair Hopper, Hall, Rebholz

Voting Abstaining: Mayor Centers

5. OATH OR AFFIRMATION

The Oath was issued to all guests.

7. OLD BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

PC 25-23 Amendments to Municipal Code

The City of Franklin is requesting amendments to the City's Municipal Code Chapter 1103 Definitions, Chapter 1107 District and Land Use Standards, Section 1109.05 Planned Unit Development Overlay District, Section 1109.06 Planned Residential Conservation Overlay District, Section 1111.04 Parkland Requirements and Standards, and Chapter 1115 Process and Procedures

Liz Fields introduced PC 25-23 explaining that the proposed text amendments are aimed at consolidating and modernizing the Planned Unit Development regulations, clarify the parkland requirement standards, and include use specific standards for “Large Equipment, Retail, Rental, and Repair. She then moved to provide a brief overview of the following proposed changes

Chapter 1103 Definitions:

1. Removed the definition for “Conservation Development (or Planned Residential Conservation Overlay District).”
2. Modified the definition for “Development Plan” to remove reference to the Planned Residential Conservation Overlay District and removed “overlay” from “Planned Unit Development Overlay District.”
3. Modified the definition for “Large Equipment” to remove trucks from the use and clarify that the definition does not include semi-trucks.
4. Included definition for “Planned Unit Development.”

Chapter 1107 Districts and Land Use Standards:

1. Updated the use permissions in Table 1107.04-2 Nonresidential Districts Use Table for “Large Equipment, Retail, Rental, and Repair” from permitted in the I-1 and I-2 Districts to permitted with standards in the I-1 District and conditional with standards in the I-2 District.
2. Included use specific standards in Section 1107.10 Industrial Use Standards for “Large Equipment, Retail, Rental, and Repair” pertaining to the minimum lot size, development requirements, and performance standards.

Section 1109.05 Planned Unit Development Overlay District:

1. Renamed the Section “Planned Unit Development District” to reflect the transition of the PUD from an overlay district to a base zoning district.
2. Consolidated all PUD regulations from Chapter 1115 Process and Procedures to this Section.
3. Updated and modernized the general regulations for a PUD.
4. Included the requirement that a Zoning Map Amendment for a PUD contain proposed zoning regulations for the district.
5. Modified the procedure for a Final Development Plan to only require Planning Commission approval instead of Planning Commission and City Council approval.
6. Split modifications to a PUD into administrative, minor, and major and provided examples for what constitutes each modification type.
7. Included specific reference that a developer’s agreement is required as part of the Final Development Plan submittal.

Section 1109.06 Planned Residential Conservation Overlay District:

1. This Section was removed from the UDO.

Section 1111.04 Parkland Requirements and Standards:

1. This Section was updated to only apply to subdivisions. All reference to this Section’s applicability to PUD’s was removed.

Chapter 1115 Process and Procedures:

1. The regulations in Section 1115.05 Planned Unit Development and Planned Residential Conservation Developments were removed from this Chapter. The PUD regulations were moved to Section 1109.05 and modified as referenced above.
2. All reference to Planned Residential Conservation Developments were removed.

Fields referenced Text Amendment Standards for Approval found on page 146 and 147 of the packet.

Hopper asked for clarification about the significance of the multiple colors used to note proposed changes.

Fields stated that all non-red text represents recommended revisions, while black text reflects the current language.

The Commission discussed the recommendation and approval process for the Planned Unit Development (PUD) District recognizing that preliminary approval does not guarantee final approval.

Pirot asked about the feedback loop between City Council and the Planning Commission. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that any feedback received from City Council during the Preliminary Plan stage is communicated to the Commission before they are asked to act on the Final Development Plan.

Westendorf responded that Final Development Plan will not be presented to Planning Commission until all changes required by City Council have been satisfied.

Westendorf stated that the process changes will give the City greater control and will accelerate the overall timeline. He added that the revisions will ensure clarity for applicants at the beginning of the process and bring City procedures in line with industry practice.

Motion to recommend approval as presented to City Council made by Ruppert, Seconded by Doctor Nathan
Voting Yea: Doctor Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Chair Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall, Rebholz
Motion carried

9. DISCUSSION

Westendorf noted that this is Dr. Nathan's last Planning Commission meeting and thanked her for service. He expressed appreciation to Dr. Nathan and the entire Commission for the significance of their contributions. He introduced and welcomed her replacement, Jackie Almanza.

Almanza introduced herself and provide a brief overview of her education, job history, and community volunteer experience.

Dr. Nathan reminded community members to encourage high school seniors to apply for scholarships through the Middletown Community Foundation, with applications due by February 1, 2026.

Westendorf reported that the City has received requests to build data centers in Franklin. He reminded the Planning Commission that data centers are not currently addressed in the UDO and therefore are not permitted. He asked the Commission for input regarding their perspectives on data centers.

A discussion followed regarding related concerns including significant electric and water consumption; increased wastewater volume; infrastructure strain; carbon footprint concerns; potential negative effects on nearby residential properties; and limited long-term local job creation.

Potential benefits were also noted, including economic growth (jobs and tax revenue), support for digital services (cloud, AI), and scalability.

Fields confirmed that McBride, Dale, Clarion, is seeing similar requests in cities throughout Ohio.

Westendorf acknowledged that as society becomes increasingly data dependent, data usage and processing demands will continue to grow.

Hopper asked how statewide efforts to eliminate property taxes, if successful, might impact Franklin's NCA (New Community Authorities) arrangement. He also asked whether the increased electricity and water use associated with data centers would directly affect infrastructure costs for Franklin residents.

Westendorf reassured her that electric and water costs for residents will rise regardless. He noted continued movement away from renewable energy and ongoing reliance on fossil fuels. He stated availability is less of a concern in Franklin. He also highlighted a very recent development in sewer services to transition away from a private provider (Violia) to Warren County, creating savings that will be invested in modernizing the Sewer Plant over the next three years.

Westendorf further noted that there are numerous ongoing legal challenges and regulatory disputes concerning whether and how data centers should be treated as public utilities that could affect local decision making.

Pirot asked if there are known examples of communities where Data Centers have been successful.

Westendorf cited the New Albany Data Center campus that houses three hyperscale data centers. He explained that new Albany attracted these businesses through strategic city planning and the use of NCA's and CRA's (Community Reinvestment Areas).

Westendorf then provided a brief definition and overview of NCA mechanics. He also explained SIDs (Specific Improvement District) noting that businesses or homeowners pay an additional fee (e.g. 1%) on their property taxes to fund improvements and services beyond what the City could normally provide. This mechanism could be used to support high caliber public utilities and infrastructure. He emphasized that NCAs can overcome limitations of traditional tax structures and that Franklin created a unique NCA by incorporating the entire City into the NCA boundary, primarily benefiting the downtown/riverfront district.

He cited the annexation of Camp Chautauqua as an example of the NCA in action. As part of their annexation agreement, Camp Chautauqua joined the NCA to help offset City costs associated with the annexation, such as emergency-service provision.

Mayor Centers stated that he currently has no opinion on data centers and plans to conduct independent research before commenting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 PM.