



MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026 AT 5:30 PM

COUNCIL ROOM AT THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 450 S. MAIN STREET, RICHLAND CENTER, WI 53581

CALL TO ORDER Chair Jarvis called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Oliphant affirmed proper notice. Members present: Karin Tepley, Ryan Cairns, Chris Jarvis, and Ray Wilson. Members absent: Mark Jelinek (excused) and Duane Welte.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES *Motion by Wilson, second by Cairns to approve the June 24, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Consider and Report on Proposed Conveyance of City-Owned Property Located at 929 W Seminary St (Tax Parcel 276-2012-0900) to Lydia's House Ministries: Administrator Oliphant provided an overview of the proposed conveyance of city-owned property at 929 W Seminary Street to Lydia's House Ministries (LHM). The City acquired the parcel when SWCAP recorded a quit claim deed on August 27, 2025. LHM has since requested conveyance, and the terms are under consideration by the General Government Committee.

Oliphant reported that LHM has operated the property as a 60- to 90-day transitional housing shelter since 2014, continuing residential services at the site dating to at least the 1980s. The parcel is designated "Residential" on the Future Land Use Map and zoned R-2, One and Two Family Residential District; transitional housing is not listed as a permitted or conditional use in Chapter 403. Staff determined the use qualifies as legal nonconforming under § 400.04(3)(a), as it predates June 14, 1990 and has continued without a six-month discontinuation, and that no additional zoning action is required for continued operation.

Oliphant asked the Plan Commission to review the proposed conveyance and continued use for consistency with the comprehensive plan and Future Land Use Map.

Motion by Jarvis, seconded by Cairns to issue a favorable report and recommendation to the Common Council regarding the proposed conveyance of city-owned property located at 929 W. Seminary Street (Tax Parcel 276-2012-0900) to Lydia's House Ministries, finding that:

- 1. Comprehensive Plan Consistency: The proposed conveyance and continued operation as a transitional housing shelter align with the 'Residential' designation on the City's Future Land Use Map.*
- 2. Zoning Compliance: The historical and continuous operation of the property as a residential transitional shelter predates June 14, 1990, and has continued without interruption, constituting a legal nonconforming use pursuant to Chapter 400.04(3)(a) of the Municipal Code; therefore, no further zoning action or re-zoning is required prior to transfer.*
- 3. Statutory Referral: This action shall serve as the official consideration and report of the Plan Commission as required by Wis. Stat. § 62.23(5) for referral to the Common Council for final disposition.*

An Ordinance Amending Chapter 485: Authorizing Electronic Message Center Signs on Public Property:

Administrator explained that the Community Center (1050 N. Orange St., R-1 district) currently operates an electronic message center sign and the Brewer Public Library has expressed interest in installing one, but Chapter 485 does not affirmatively authorize such signs in residential districts, leaving the existing sign arguably nonconforming and the Library's proposal without a clear authorization pathway.

The proposed new § 485.04(14) would authorize one electronic message center sign per lot on public property in any zoning district, subject to performance standards, rather than relying on the content-defined "Government Sign" classification in § 485.03(34). Authorization is limited to property owned by the City of Richland Center, Richland

County, the State of Wisconsin, the United States, a school district, or a public library; private businesses, churches, private schools, and nonprofits are excluded and would continue under existing § 485.04(7).

Oliphant summarized the standards: exempt from the zoning permit requirements of § 485.04(3); one sign per lot; 75 square feet per surface, maximum two surfaces; 12 feet above grade; static messages only with an eight-second minimum dwell time; 5,000 nits daytime and 500 nits nighttime with automatic photocell dimming; default to static or off upon malfunction; no electronic operation between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in residential districts; and no sign within 50 feet of a residential dwelling on an adjoining lot. Existing lawfully installed signs would be deemed legal nonconforming signs under § 485.07.

Motion by Tepley, seconded by Cairns to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance amendment to Chapter 485 relating to electronic message center signs on public property as written and forward it to the Common Council for consideration and final action.

Draft Ordinance Review: R-1/R-2 District Consolidation: Administrator Oliphant presented the revised draft ordinance for continued discussion and reiterated that it consolidates the R-1 and R-2 districts into a single R-1/2 district to increase housing supply through accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and two-family use, simplify standards, align with the Comprehensive Plan's direction toward infill and missing-middle housing, codify a voluntary-compliance posture, and correct legal citations. Oliphant reviewed the revisions made since the January 2026 draft, including removal of neighborhood commercial uses, non-owner-occupied ADUs by conditional use permit, and the short-term rental CUP and cap as preempted by Wis. Stat. § 66.1014, and addition of a 45-foot building height and nonconforming provisions corrected to Wis. Stat. § 62.23.

Oliphant posed a series of policy questions, which elicited discussion and the following direction:

- **Short-term rentals.** Compare regulation through zoning versus licensing before selecting a mechanism and determine whether the City may legally require an owner or responsible agent to be within a specified distance of, or response time to, the property.
- **ADUs.** Do not limit the number of ADUs per parcel provided all other standards are met; allow single-story ADUs by right, with anything taller requiring a conditional use permit.
- **Fences.** Retain the 30-inch front-yard fence limit, citing the impact on fire response.
- **Impervious surface.** Apply the limit as written, with staff to report back on any issues identified.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: None.

REPORTS/UPDATES: Attorney Windle affirmed that the process for appointing the Committee Chair was executed properly in a prior meeting. Zoning Administrator Unbehaun introduced himself and provided a brief overview of department activities and projects undertaken since assuming his role on July 6, 2026.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting was scheduled for August 26th at 5:30PM.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Tepley, second by Cairns to adjourn at 6:46PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Ashley Oliphant