PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES

October 26th, 2026

The Plan met in council chambers with the following members present: Mayor Robert Stocks, Alderperson Ken Berg, Nick Krueger, Kerry Kneser, Joe Ditmann, City Engineer Andrew Beyer, Zoning Administrator Brian Zirbes.

Others in attendance: Hunter Lien of FHC, Holly Merson of Payne & Dolan, Steve Board, Ryan Wegner, Michael Blonien & Sonja Kruesel fo Vandewalle & Associates in attendance virtually.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting began at 4:30pm

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Review and take action: Site Plan Review Committee minutes dated September 14, 2026

B. Review and take action: Plan Commission minutes dated September 14, 2026

A motion was made by Kneser to approve the Site Plan Committee minutes for October 12th, 2026 & Plan Commission minutes for September 28th, 2026, seconded by Krueger & approved unanimously.

3. BUSINESS

A. Review and Discuss Draft Zoning Code Updates: Exterior Building Design Standards – Vandewalle

The Commission reviewed the draft zoning code updates and exterior building design standards. Sonja broke down building materials into 4 categories which are Class 1: masonry & glass; Class 2: decorative masonry; Class 3: siding & architectural panels; and Class 4: utilitarian materials. Class 1 is the highest quality and is combination of brick, stone or glass whereas Class 4 is lower quality building materials. She noted multi family can use Class 1,2 or 3 materials. Commercial, Institutional and Mixed Use primarily use Class 1 or Class 2 components with up to 50% Class 3 building materials. Also, a façade facing the street needs to be Class 1 materials. She noted that downtown there is not a lot of change proposed here due to Historic Preservation standards currently in place. She said there is a lot of interest in metal materials for buildings, roofs, sheds and garages in Watertown. Kneser asked if commercial or franchisee businesses can override our standards or requirements where the business may have certain colors or materials as requirements. Sonja stated they cannot override our standards. Beyer stated he likes the 40" durable base materials for multi family and commercial requirement. She noted we can modify the requirement to apply only on the street side of the building to save money and not be overly restrictive.

On this draft zoning code update and the building design standards eventual ordinance, it needs to go to public hearing, soon in order to ideally have it ready for January 1st of 2027. Krueger suggested a public hearing in front of Plan Commission on November 23rd, knowing we will get a draft of these proposed changes by Nov 9th. He made motion to that effect which was seconded by Kneser. Krueger felt that December for going to the Council for a more formal public hearing could still happen to move this new zoning ordinance forward without much delay. The motion passed 4 to 2 with Berg and Stocks voting no.

B. Review and set public hearing date at Common Council – Chapter 550 Zoning Code Rewrite

This item was put on hold w/ Public Hearing at Plan Commission instead on Nov 9th.

C. Public hearing: 1911 Gateway Drive Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request for Group Development under §550-68A(1) and §550-68A(3)

Stocks opened Public Hearing & Hunter Lien spoke in favor of the CUP. He represents the River Crossing Apartments Project. He said there would be 274 apartments, with 22 buildings comprised of 8 unit, 12, 15 and 18 unit structures, along with an attractive, spacious club house

situated on 22 acres of buildable land and 11 acres of wetland they propose to show off and make accessible with trails and a pond. There will be a mix of 1 bed/1 bath up to 3 bed/2 bath units and sizes ranging from 600 sq ft up to just under 1,500 sq ft. All will have washer/dryers and most will have private entries. Hunter said the Club House will have fitness center and tenant access for community use of this facilty for special events along with pickleball courts outside. He stated a main reason for doing this project is that Watertown has a massive housing shortage with occupancy rates approaching 99% while a normal vacancy rate is 5 to 7 percent. He noted that the new apartments by YMCA are renting up well and that they expect to fully leased by end of this year. Jefferson County is a desirable place for living and Watertown has great location for living here and working here or elsewhere within convenient traveling distance. Hunter stressed the benefit for surrounding businesses and industries and felt vacant commercial and industrial lots would be incentivized for development.

Kneser asked about noise concerns with the pickleball courts since our Park & Rec is dealing with that issue currently on north side of town. Hunter said he does not foresee any problems but they will regulate this issue where it is warranted, based on the map orientation of their site. Stocks then closed Public Hearing at 5:19pm.

D. Review and take action: 1911 Gateway Drive Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request for Group Development under §550-68A(1) and §550-68A(3) Brian stated that this was a site plan review and conditional use permit request for group development. Any two structures on same lot require a group development CUP. He said this applicant meets all the site plan review standards but city is still waiting for the lighting & photometric map from applicant & would need to obtain a stormwater erosion control permit along with some waiver of landscaping requirements identified as 69B5H & 69B5K. Krueger made the motion to approve with the following conditions, seconded by Ditmann:

- Waive Sections § 550-69B(5)(h) & 550-69B(5)(k).

-Provide a code compliant landscaping plan with calculated landscaping points.

-Provide a code compliant lighting plan with a photometric map.

-Obtain required Stormwater and Erosion Control Permits.

The motion then passed unanimously.

Brian commented with approval today, the applicant will have satisfied all requirements with a developer's agreement & pending TID 10 yet to be satisfied. Berg commented he supports this project because it gives every appearance of being a quality residential development and we need more housing, especially when it is located near vacant industrial and commercial land that would more likely be developed and built out for benefit of our community. Berg pointed to the value of this new housing for our public schools within Watertown, which are declining in numbers last several years. He stressed the benefit this project would likely have for other businesses and investors to look at our city favorably for other types of investment. Hunter said they would like to break ground by May of next year since it will take a couple of years to fully build out these units.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Krueger, seconded by Kneser and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Alderperson Ken Berg

All materials discussed at this meeting can be found at: https://files-backend.assets.thrillshare.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/5330/Cow/9cbd0afb-1f33-4889-b094-eacee9cd3a07/October-26%2C-2026-Plan-Commission-Meeting-Packet.pdf?disposition=inline