

The special joint meeting of the Petersburg City Council and the Planning Commission was held on February 3, 2026 at Petersburg Public Library. Samuel Parham called the meeting to order at 4:20 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/373930>

1. **ROLL CALL:**

Present City Council:

Samuel Parham, Mayor -- Ward 3
Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor -- Ward 2
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 4
W. Howard Myers, Councilor -- Ward 5
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor -- Ward 6
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 7

Absent:

Marlow Jones, Councilor -- Ward 1 (Late)

Present Planning Commissioners:

Marshall Ford
Dr. Diane Harley
Kristen Katzenbach
Dr. James Norman
Fenton Bland

Absent:

Tony McDaniel
Dr. Alvin Cannon (Late)
Aku Reinhardt
Thomas Hairston

Present from City Administration:

City Manager John "March" Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
Clerk Tangi R. Hill
Interim Planning Director Jared Crews

2. **DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:**

A quorum was present.

3. **PRESENTATION**

a. Presentation on Proposed Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance - Berkley Group

Ms. Tori Haynes of the Berkley Group provided a presentation on the Proposed Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to City Council. She reviewed the progress to date, the draft Ordinance, and the next steps for this project. She summarized that their general direction on the project was to create a form-based framework with clear, consistent standards and definitions, user-friendly text, expand housing options, particularly missing middle housing, and clarify standards to match specific sites to their surrounding context. Individual articles were presented to staff and the Planning Commission from April to September 2025. Any comments received from staff, Planning Commissioners, or the City Attorney were incorporated into a revised full draft presented to the public at the open house held in November. The version presented today had been updated since the open house with additional comments incorporated from staff and the City Attorney.

Ms. Haynes explained that in terms of revisions, a document was included in the packet that highlighted each article and the major revisions they had made. Footnotes throughout the Ordinance explained where changes had been made and why. Over the course of the project, they had done a general reorganization of the currently existing articles, organizing them into an 11-article structure, all categorized by administrative provisions, district standards, and use standards. This was intended to be easy to follow and user-friendly. They had also ensured State Code compliance, updated references if they were outdated, and referenced the new numbering system instead of the former state code numbering system. They had also incorporated new State Code requirements that had gone into effect in July and clarified permitting processes, compiling them into one place for citizens and applicants to easily access.

Ms. Haynes said that finally, they had aimed to create a form-based code, although it was more of a hybrid approach. They had incorporated form-based code elements, particularly in urban cores, to better support the City's urban character and facilitate compatible design for new development. She then provided an overview of the articles in the Ordinance and the changes made. She encouraged Council and the Commission to read through the draft Ordinance and provide comments and questions, which would be incorporated before the final version was presented at a public hearing.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, clarified that this was the first time he had seen this draft Ordinance, so he had not reviewed it or commented on it.

Ms. Haynes apologized for the misunderstanding; she believed they had received comments from the City Attorney that were incorporated into the draft Ordinance.

March Altman, City Manager, stated that some comments had been received from Council Members and he was setting up a meeting for the Berkley Group and Planning staff to address those. He asked Council and the Commission to submit any additional comments or questions to himself or Mr. Crews, and they would work through those prior to the public hearing. He commended staff and the Berkley Group for all of their hard work, especially considering this was the first comprehensive update since the Zoning Ordinance was adopted in the 1970s.

Mayor Parham asked the City Manager about the noise regulations. He asked if the updates would adequately address issues with late-night noise downtown.

City Manager Altman replied that it addressed noise, but if they were to make any changes, they should be made within the City Code as well, not just the Zoning Ordinance. He noted that however, his recollection was that the noise downtown had been determined to be consistently within the limits defined in the City Code.

Jared Crews, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development, explained that the specific section being referenced was unique to the Casino Entertainment and Resort District. This was due to the district's character, which required specific noise levels. As a result, that regulation was adopted at the beginning of last year.

Council Member Cuthbert asked the City Manager if there were any specific items he would like the Planning Commission to pursue.

City Manager Altman asked Mr. Crews if the Crater Road Overlay was part of this draft document.

Mr. Crews replied yes, the Highway Corridor Overlay District designation would cover the route coming from Wagner, heading south on Crater, and ultimately returning to the Wythe Street intersection in downtown.

City Manager Altman stated that one of the things he added to their discussion was the overlay to help guide development in relation to the casino and the area around Wagner and Crater. He said that he would recommend to Council that the Planning Commission should examine the area immediately around the casino and consider what rezoning may be necessary to prepare for potential redevelopment. He noted that they had properties in that area currently zoned residential that may not be suitable for residential use in the long term. He said that he believed it would be beneficial to have the Planning Commission bring a recommendation back to Council regarding potential rezoning of these properties.

City Manager Altman stated that in his opinion, it would be advantageous to proactively rezone the residential properties. While they may need to make some single-family houses non-conforming, he envisioned redevelopment of the entire area occurring over time. He said that taking a proactive approach would set them up for successful redevelopment, in addition to the zoning overlay district, which could potentially be re-designated as a district once it was incorporated into the Ordinance. By being proactive, they could prepare for the inevitable redevelopment of the area, which was likely to happen given the interest from business owners in the area.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if the City Council needed to direct the Planning Commission to take up that project.

City Manager Altman confirmed that was correct. He explained that there were three ways to initiate a rezoning process: the Planning Commission, the Council, or the individual property owner. He said that in this case, he was not in a position to do so. However, he believed it was a good idea for Council to consider asking the Planning Commission to review that area and provide recommendations, which would be beneficial for the long-term.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to direct the Planning Commission to research and provide recommendations to Council regarding potential rezoning opportunities in the area around the casino, with the goal of facilitating commercial development in the area. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Hill, Parham, Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, and Westbrook; no: N/A; abstain: N/A; absent: Myers, Jones.

Council Member Cuthbert asked the City Manager if there was anything else he would like the Planning Commission to explore, such as the extension of Wagner Road to the west.

City Manager Altman stated that he had been studying a map lately, particularly in the area of the casino. One of his thoughts had been considering the possibility of extending Wagner Road over to Flank Road. He said that this would achieve two main goals. Firstly, it would provide a more direct connection between people staying at the casino hotels and facilities in the surrounding area, as well as opening up an 80-acre area that could be utilized. He explained that to the north of where he envisioned the road, a church was planning to build a new development. He said that he believed that if they examined this possibility and presented it to the Planning Commission, they could amend their Transportation Master Plan and Comprehensive Plans to include this extension. If future development occurred, they would be in a better position to acquire right-of-way dedication as part of the development, which would help them further their goals. This extension would also open up development property in that area for them.

Vice Mayor Hill emphasized that they must be sensitive to what was allowed to be developed on Medical Park Boulevard, keeping in mind the commercial development in the area.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to direct the Planning Commission to research and provide recommendations to Council regarding the potential expansion of Wagner Road west towards Flank Road. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Jones, Hill, Parham, Cuthbert, Myers, Smith-Lee, and Westbrook.; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

Mayor Parham thanked the Planning Commission for all their work. He expressed his gratitude for having the Commission at the table to help guide the way of the City.

Dr. Diane Harley, Planning Commissioner, asked when Council expected the Commission to provide their recommendations.

City Manager Altman stated that Council was the authority on that timeline.

Mr. Crews stated that a group of graduate students from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) was currently analyzing that corridor. They were due to return with the results of the analysis in May, but they could begin formulating recommendations in the meantime.

Dr. Harley said that she supported the proactive approach Council was taking with this matter.

Dr. James Norman, Planning Commissioner, stated that he was excited about the productivity and proactiveness, but as a citizen of Petersburg, he knew where Petersburg had been. He said that he did not see them looking outside of Petersburg for assistance in this process. He acknowledged that the Planning Commission was composed of professionals who could certainly do their own research, but there were also many experienced individuals who could help them. He suggested that Council set aside funds to assist the Commission in this process, allowing them to bring in consultants with experience in the area.

Vice Mayor Hill suggested that the Planning Department and Economic Development Department leadership work together to find an appropriate avenue. He agreed with Dr. Norman and asked that staff please let Council know if additional funding was necessary to get things done.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that in regards to Dr. Harley's question about when Council would like to hear back from the Commission, he personally would like to receive a report from the Commission in time for Council to consider at the Council's March business meeting.

Mayor Parham asked the Planning Commission if they felt they had sufficient time to provide feedback to Council in March.

Marshall Ford, Chair of the Planning Commission stated that it was a tight timeframe, but they would do their best to provide their recommendation by the second Council meeting in March.

Mr. Crews asked for clarification. He asked if Council was not seeking a public hearing for a rezoning and rather was asking for a recommendation on potential rezoning they should be considering moving forward. If it was the latter, he did not think it would be an issue to provide recommendations as soon as March, but in the case of the former, they would need more time in order to schedule a public hearing.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to direct the Planning Commission to provide a recommendation regarding rezoning to facilitate commercial development in the casino area in time for Council to consider the recommendation at the March City Council business meeting. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Jones, Hill, Parham, Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, and Westbrook.; no: Myers; abstain: N/A.

Council Member Jones expressed doubt that outside consulting was necessary for this project. He said that he felt Petersburg had enough in-house expertise to make solid recommendations. He asserted his complete faith and confidence in their elected and appointed officials, as well as the rest of the citizens of Petersburg.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Samuel Parham made a motion to adjourn. All members of the Council and Planning Commission present voted in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned.

The City Council adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



Planning Commission Chair



Date