



INTERIM PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 29, 2025 at 4:30pm

Commission Members	Position														
						05/29/2025	06/05/2025	07/03/2025	08/07/2025	09/04/2025	10/02/2025	09/04/2025	10/02/2025	11/06/2025	12/04/2025
Dennie Stephenson	Chair					1									
Kimberly Welzenbach	Vice Chair					1									
Daniel Brooks	Commission Member					1									
Roger Gravgaard	Commission Member					1									
David Nordel	Commission Member					1									
Amber Parish	Commission Member					1									
Josh Sayer	Commission Member					1									
John Staley	Commission Member					1									
Jim Ronquillo	Commission Member					1									
Wyeth Friday	PCSD Director					1									
Anna Vickers	Planning Div Manager					1									

Please note: "A" stands for excused absence, "1" stands for present, "V" stands for Zoom participation, "C" stands for cancelled

Call the Meeting to Order:

Wyeth Friday, Planning Division & Community Services Director called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Introduction of Planning Board Members and Planning Department Staff

Wyeth Friday called for introductions of the members of the Interim Planning Commission and Planning staff.

Attending Staff: Wyeth Friday, Planning & Community Services Director; Anna Vickers, Planning Division Manager

1. Others in Attendance. Elizabeth Shumaker, White Lotus Realty

2. Approval of Agenda. No discussion required.

3. Approval of Minutes. No discussion required.

4. Public Comment. The meeting was publicly advertised. No members of the public were in attendance.

5. Disclosure of Outside (Ex-Parte) Communication. Not applicable to this meeting.

6. Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest. Not applicable to this meeting.

7. Old Business - There was no Old Business.

8. New Business

The Planning Commission held its first meeting to establish its structure and procedures. Wyeth Friday, the Director of Planning and Community Services, and Anna Vickers, the Planning Division Manager, led the meeting. The agenda includes adopting bylaws, electing a chair and vice chair, and setting future meeting dates.

a. IPC Background and Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

The planning commission discussed their role in the new consolidated land use planning process. They will be responsible for reviewing and making a recommendation of the future land use plan and future land use map, reviewing and making a recommendation on changes in the zoning code and subdivision regulations – associated with the future land use plan and map, and reviewing and making a recommendation on any other legislative land use planning document the City Council designates as part of the initial development of the land use plan and map.

The commission reviews draft bylaws that outline their duties and authority based on state law and city council resolution.

Interim Planning Commission Composition and Appointment

- The Interim Planning Commission shall consist of nine (9) members, seven previously appointed by the City Council to the County Planning Board: five (5) members from each City Ward.
- Two (2) members being the chair of the City Zoning Commission (ZC) and the chair of the City Board of Adjustment (BOA).
- Two additional members – Executive Director of the Home Builders Association; Executive Director of Billings Association of Realtors.
- Since all of you have agreed to serve, move ahead with Commission and only follow appointment process if vacancies occur.

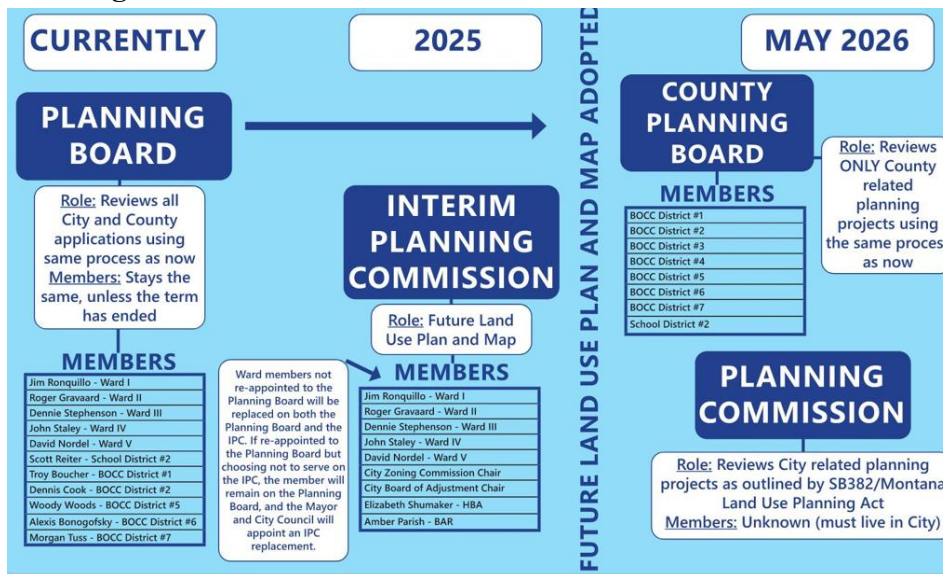
Duties of Interim Planning Commission

- The Interim Planning Commission **shall review and make recommendations** to the City Council regarding development, amendment, review, adoption, and approval or denial of the following documents:
- Development of the land use plan and future land use map as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 2;
- Changes to zoning regulations and the zoning map as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 3;
- Changes to the subdivision regulations as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 4; and
- Any other legislative land use planning document the City Council designates as part of the initial development of the land use plan and future land use map.

Overview of Land Plan and Future Land Use Map Process to Date

- City must adopt Land Use Plan (FKA - Growth Policy) and Future Land Use Map (FLUM) per State Statutes
- West Billings Neighborhood Plan and Heights Neighborhood Plan scoped to support overall Plan and FLUM for areas of City
- Effort covers City Limits and Limits of Annexation Area
- Must Address – Housing, Economic Development, Infrastructure
- Completed RFP and Selection of Consultant Team – Orion Planning and Design, SB Friedman, [Kittelson and Assoc.](#)
- City Council approved Contract with Consultant Team
- Initial internal coordination with Orion Team
- IPC set up and schedule (today)
- Monthly IPC meetings
- Kick Off of overall project in June
- Target completion is May 2026

Planning Commission Timeline Illustration



Duties Of the Permanent Planning Commission

- The Planning Commission **shall review and make recommendations** to the City Council regarding amendment, review, adoption, and approval or denial of the following documents:
 - Amendments to the land use plan and future land use map as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 2;
 - Changes to zoning regulations and the zoning map as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 3;
 - Changes to the subdivision regulations as provided in Title 76, Chapter 25, Part 4.
- Hear and decide appeals for land use decisions made by the planning administrator pursuant to the adopted regulations noted above.
- Any other legislative land use planning document the City Council designates related to the land use plan and future land use map.

Questions

Questions were raised about the specific issue this plan is intended to address. Ms. Vickers explained that the primary goal is to streamline the review process to support the development of more affordable housing. This framework was established by the legislature in 2023. Under the new guidelines, when projects are submitted in compliance with the community's growth policy, associated zone changes and subdivisions are expected to be approved within a faster time period, allowing housing to reach the market more quickly.

Mr. Friday added that an interesting aspect of the legislation is its limited applicability. While some communities are subject to the new requirements, others will continue to operate under the existing laws. He noted that the legislature initially intended for the changes to apply to all cities and counties exceeding a certain population threshold, but counties ultimately opted out and were not included in the final version of the legislation.

Mr. Friday provided additional context, noting that while some jurisdictions, such as Lewistown, chose to opt for the new legislative framework, not all did. He was asked whether state funds accompanied participation. Mr. Friday explained that, for the most part, no direct funding was provided. However, the Department of Commerce was authorized to administer a grant program, through which the City successfully applied for and received a \$30,000 grant to conduct housing-related analysis. Beyond that, the City had to allocate and budget its own resources for the development of this plan.

Ms. Vickers added that the project is a large and comprehensive undertaking, and the \$30,000 grant barely scratched the surface of the economic analysis and associated costs. She emphasized that the plan must be updated every five years, with projections extending out 20 years.

A question was raised about how the plan can include a 20-year outlook if the County is not participating. Ms. Vickers explained that the City must show projections within its surrounding area, which anticipated for future growth over the next two decades.

Mr. Friday noted that the effort is beneficial in terms of understanding the community's future needs, capacity, and ensuring appropriate zoning categories are in place.

Mr. Staley expressed concern that the county is not participating, questioning whether the City is making assumptions about county actions. Mr. Friday responded that while there are no formal commitments from the county, communication is ongoing to establish expectations and anticipate future development. The Planning Commission will be a well-rounded, engaged, and informed body, equipped with the expertise necessary to navigate the process and make appropriate recommendations.

Mr. Nordel commented that while the intent is to streamline the administrative process, he questioned whether outcomes are already predetermined. He noted that the definition of affordable housing varies across communities and evolves year by year.

Ms. Vickers clarified that the process is not predetermined. The committee's role is to guide the planning process, and substantial public input will be sought. She shared that outreach efforts will include billboards and direct engagement with a broad range of nonprofits. The focus is on shaping the community's future growth along designated corridors, not in response to a single developer. While Planning staff will implement the structure of the plan, it will need to go before the Planning Commission for recommendation.

Mr. Brooks stated that while zoning designations will be included, the plan will allow for greater zoning flexibility. Multiple development options within a given zone will help accommodate population growth and integrate with the broader fabric of the city.

Mr. Staley expressed concern that the Planning Commission might be an unnecessary layer in the process. He noted that developers dissatisfied with the Commission's recommendations could still appeal to City Council for deviations from the plan.

Mr. Friday responded that the Commission brings specialized expertise in evaluating zoning, growth plans, and community needs. In this way, the Commission plays a crucial role in ensuring a balanced and well-informed approach to growth management.

b. IPC Draft Bylaw Review and Adoption. Action

The Interim Planning Commission established its bylaws. Mr. Friday stated the bylaws are based on State code for forming the Planning Commission and the Resolution adopted it by City Council. The commission reviewed the bylaws, as well as the regular meeting time and day for adoption. The Commission selected to hold its meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in City Hall, 5th Floor, or at another time and location as publicly advertised. Regular meetings of the Commission are open to the public and testimony or correspondence may be received from citizens. Regular and special meetings shall be recorded, and all records shall be available according to the Planning Divisions adopted Public Participation Policy.

Motion

Motion made by Dennie Stephenson to adopt the Bylaws and Regular Meeting to be held the first Thursday of the month at 4:30pm, seconded by David Nordel. The vote was unanimous, motion carries.

c. Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Nomination

Dennie Stephenson was nominated to serve as Chair.

Motion

Jim Ronquillo moved to elect Dennie Stephenson as Chair, with a second by Josh Sayer. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Nomination

Kim Welzenbach was nominated to serve as Vice Chair.

Motion

Amber Parish moved to elect Kim Welzenbach as Vice Chair, with a second by John Staley. The motion carried unanimously.

d. Setting Regular Meeting Calendar

The commission will meet on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 PM, to be held at City Hall. The meetings are expected to last 90 minutes, from 4:30 to 6:00 PM, with some flexibility for longer sessions when needed. The bylaws include a remote attendance option for members who are traveling or have other commitments.

e. MLUPA Consultant Team Overview

Anna Vickers provided a brief overview of the consultant team from Orion Planning & Design, noting their extensive experience in land use planning nationwide. She explained that the city has shared economic analysis data and GIS layers to support their work.

f. Next Steps

Mr. Friday announced that the next meeting is scheduled for July 3, 2025. An agenda outlining the discussion items will be provided to the Commission in advance.

9. Other Business – There was no Other Business.

10. Future Agenda Items

Adjournment: 5:50 pm

Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk