

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M., IN THE FLORENCE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA.**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Frost called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**ROLL CALL:**

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Chairman Frost      | Present |
| Vice-Chair DeRosa   | Present |
| Commissioner Proulx | Present |
| Commissioner Leaman | Present |
| Commissioner Wooley | Absent  |

Note: Council Liaison Adam was present.

Staff: Andrew Birkelbach, Maricella Benitez, AJ Monroe, and Cliff Mattice.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Commissioner Leaman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC/COMMISSION RESPONSE:**

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Individual Commission members may respond to criticisms made, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Commission shall not discuss or take action on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

Chair Frost opened the Call to the Public. Seeing no such comment, Chair Frost closed the Call to the Public.

**MINUTES:**

**APPROVAL/APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS/DISAPPROVAL of the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on April 17, 2025.**

On a motion by Vice-Chair DeRosa, seconded by Commissioner Proulx, carried by a 4-0 vote, to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting held on April 17, 2025.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**PRESENTATION/PUBLIC HEARING/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL/APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS of a Conditional Use Permit for a new school building at Desert Rock Church located at 9320 W. Franklin Road, APN 200-24-048A (PZ-25-29).**

Maricella Benitez, Senior Planner, stated that the location for the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is west of Hunt Highway on Franklin Road, and on the site currently a worship center and several small buildings used as offices and as a daycare/preschool. She stated that the CUP would allow a new classroom for a small, private Christian school that would operate Monday-Friday and would have at most 75 students. She stated that the location is zoned R1-R and that public/private schools are allowed in that zoning via a CUP. She stated that this item is only for approval for a building to be placed at the site and that the design review of the building will come at a later date. She stated that the site will have a single access point off Franklin Road and that the surrounding area has a mix of R1-1 zoning and Planned Unit Development zoning. She stated that a neighborhood meeting was held on April 10, 2025, regarding this CUP and that attendees asked about the school's operation, projected attendance, future plans for expansion, and access to the site. She stated that staff recommend approval of the CUP with the conditions listed in the staff report.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if the worship center has a special use permit and if the area should be rezoned to fit the use.

Ms. Benitez stated that the worship center received a CUP and noted that the area could be rezoned, but that the owners themselves would have to apply for the rezoning.

Chair Frost opened the public hearing. Seeing no such comment, Chair Frost closed the public hearing.

Chair Frost inquired if the total number of students includes the preschool students and what grades will be covered at the school.

Joey Bilbrey, Pastor at Desert Rock Church, stated that the number did not include the existing preschool students. He stated that there are 50 preschool students, and the total number of students would be approximately 125. He stated that they will cover preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade.

Chair Frost inquired about plans to address the potential traffic issues caused by parent pick-up/drop-off at the school.

Mr. Bilbrey stated that there is currently adequate space for pick-up/drop-off.

Chair Frost suggested that the applicant come up with a traffic contingency plan in case there are traffic delays experienced with the pick-up/drop-off.

Mr. Bilbrey stated that the parking lot has over 80 spaces and that a traffic flow proposal was submitted to Town staff as part of the application process.

On a motion by Vice-Chair DeRosa, seconded by Commissioner Leaman, carried by a 4-0 vote, to forward a recommendation of approval for the Conditional Use Permit for a new school building at Desert Rock Church located at 9230 W. Franklin Road with the following conditions:

1. The development of the subject site shall be in conformance with any applicable Town Codes, Ordinances, Building Codes, Fire Codes, and engineering requirements.
2. The development must receive Design Review approval prior to issuance of building permit(s). "At-Risk" grading permits may be issued prior to Design Review approval.
3. The development must receive a Variance approval on the reduced side setback prior to issuance of building permit(s).
4. The subject building shall meet all Building Occupancy requirements for this use in accordance with the Town's prevailing building and fire codes, as determined by the Town Building Official.
5. No Conditional Use approval shall be final until all conditions imposed have been met.
6. This Conditional Use Permit may be revoked by the Town of Florence and become null and void if the conditions of approval are not met.
7. All the special conditions shall constitute restrictions that run with the land and that shall be binding upon the owner of the land, successors, or assigns.
8. The special conditions imposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and/or Town Council shall be consented to in writing by the applicant prior to issuance of a conditional use permit.
9. The resolution of the Town Council granting the application, together with all consent forms, shall be recorded by the Recorder of the county.
10. Any additional conditions deemed necessary by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

**PRESENTATION/PUBLIC HEARING/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL/APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS of an amendment to the Town of Florence Development Code Chapter 150 regarding the radius of notification for applicable projects.**

Andrew Birkelbach, Planner, stated that staff researched multiple cities and towns' notification radius and recommended keeping the radius at 300ft for projects less than 20 acres, 600ft for projects greater than 20 acres, and notifying all neighborhood associations (HOAs) within a quarter mile of a project, regardless of size. He stated that changing the notification radius will require changes to multiple sections of the Town Code. He noted that neighborhood organizations are not required to provide notice to all their residents, but are strongly encouraged to, and that the responsibility to notify still falls to the applicant.

Chair Frost opened the public hearing. Seeing no such comment, he closed the public hearing.

Vice-Chair DeRosa inquired if the developer would need to notify residents within a quarter-mile radius if there is no HOA.

Mr. Birkelbach stated that all residents within a 300-600ft radius would receive the notification.

Commissioner Leaman inquired if HOAs are the only types of neighborhood associations in Town.

Ms. Benitez stated that the Town has contact lists for all HOAs within the Town and that some neighborhoods may have small community groups that are not registered as an HOA and not listed by the Town.

On a motion by Commissioner Leaman, seconded by Commissioner Proulx, carried by a 4-0 vote, to forward a recommendation of approval for the amendment to the Town of Florence Development Code Chapter 150 regarding the radius of notification for applicable projects.

#### **WORK SESSION on the Town of Florence's 2022 General Plan.**

Chair Frost inquired why the presentation was for a General Plan Update 2030, but the agenda item was for General Plan 2022.

Ms. Benitez stated that General Plans are meant to be 10-year plans and that the 2020 General Plan was delayed until 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Monroe stated that the slideshow being presented was originally presented to a joint work session of the Town Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission and is being reused for the presentation at this meeting.

Ms. Benitez discussed the timeline of the General Plan from its initial stages in 2019 to its ratification in 2022. She discussed the community outreach done during the creation of the General Plan and how citizen input was received. She stated that state law requires the General Plan to include information on land use, circulation, open spaces, growth area, environmental planning, cost of development, and water resources. She stated that the General Plan also included items on community character, housing, parks & rec, historic preservation, economic development, energy, and infrastructure planning. She stated that draft community goals were created from the results of citizen outreach and surveys and that the goals of the community were written out within the General Plan and linked to policies that will help achieve those goals. She stated that the plan includes different descriptions of "place types" to help guide what types of development fit for areas around Town. She stated that the General Plan Land Use Development followed a "scenario" planning style, with different scenarios provided in the plan.

Chair Frost noted that the General Plan lays out many goals and that those goals are meaningless unless staff are keeping up on the goals and checking for progress. He inquired if an update on the status of those goals would be provided.

Ms. Benitez stated that the General Plan calls for yearly updates and that those have not been provided, but noted that staff are reviewing the goals for the update.

Mr. Monroe requested direction on what details the Commission would like staff to focus on for their next General Plan discussion with the Commission.

Chair Frost stated that the section regarding PUDs would be beneficial to have a discussion on.

Vice-Chair DeRosa stated that she feels the General Plan is too loose and could lead to developers using it to place unwanted developments in residential areas. She inquired how to keep the General Plan broad while tightening up protections for land uses.

Mr. Monroe stated that the General Plan was a tricky item to develop due to the number of PUDs within the Town and the constraints from those PUDs, noting that this was part of the reason to have a Land Use Map as opposed to a hard-zoned map. He stated that the General Plan is then used to guide the development of the hard-zoned map. He stated that it ultimately comes down to what is allowed under the zoning regulations laid out in Chapter 150 of the Town Code.

Vice-Chair stated that she does not feel that there are enough restrictions to allow the Town to prevent development that would not be the best fit for the area.

Mr. Monroe suggested a review of the General Plan chapter on implementation as well as a focus on Chapter 150 of the Town Code.

Council Liaison Adam stated that with a strong Commission and Planning Department, this General Plan will be effective, noting that the Commission and Planning Department have recently improved and are now strong enough to utilize the General Plan properly.

Commissioner Leaman expressed his frustration that the General Plan does not have enough industrial zoning, but noted that the General Plan was built using citizen input.

Chair Frost inquired what assistance the Commission could provide to staff.

Mr. Monroe stated that the Commission has an obligation to uphold the General Plan and the Development Code, and that includes offering suggestions on potential tweaks and changes. He stated that staff need the direction of the Commission and that the Council relies on the Commission for advice.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

### **Upcoming Projects**

Mr. Monroe stated that it is likely the May 15, 2025, Commission meeting will be canceled because staff will be attending the Historic Preservation Conference at the same time. He stated that staff presented

Rail Three Ranch on Main Street with their Historic Building plaque in commemoration of Historic Preservation Month. He noted that there are 26 final plats and two preliminary plats in review by staff.

**CALL TO THE COMMISSION- CURRENT EVENTS ONLY:**

Commissioner Leaman reminded everyone to attend the in-person meetings for the proposed Loop 505 highway.

Chair Frost requested information about the Historic District and the vision for the Historic District.

Council Liaison Adam suggested holding off for a month as the Council works on strategic planning that will include the Historic District but offered to provide Chair Frost with her individual view of the Historic District.

Vice-Chair DeRosa requested an update on the potential incorporation of San Tan Valley and how that will affect the Town.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by Commissioner Proulx, seconded by Commissioner Leaman, carried by a 4-0 vote, to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 PM.



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**Lonnie Frost, Chairman**

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