MINUTES

HARRISBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
January 7, 2026
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CITY GOVERNMENT CENTER
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Alsberry, Chair
Vern McKissick, Vice Chair
Shaun O'Toole
Jamesetta Reed
Anne Marek
DeRon Jordan

MEMBERS ABSENT: Basir Vincent

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Tyrsa Cameron, Deputy City Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER: **6:35 PM**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commissioner Reed moved, and Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion, to approve the minutes from the November 5, 2025 meeting without corrections. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Special Exception Application for 1100 North 17th Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Muwahhideen Inc., to establish a "Place of Worship" use at the subject property.**

Commissioner Alsberry noted the Applicants were not in attendance at the meeting and stated that the case would be moved to the end of the agenda and could be heard if the Applicants showed up during the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Special Exception Application for 100 North 13th Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Jarred Neal with Halden Horizons Group, LLC, to consolidate the primary parcel with vacant lots along North Linden Street and convert the property into a twelve-unit "Multifamily Dwelling" with accessory off-street parking.**

The case was represented by Phil Petrina with McNees, Wallace & Nurick, LLC (the legal counsel), 100 Pine Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101; and Jarred Neal with Halden Horizons Group, LLC (the property owner), 227 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 (aka "the Applicants").

Mr. Knight noted the project had previously been submitted and approved by the Planning Commission, specifically that the zoning relief had been approved in April 2021 and the Land

Development Plan had been approved in March 2022; he noted that the previous owner had not moved forward with the project and the properties were ultimately sold to the Applicants. He noted the current proposal included more of the lots along Linden Street which obviated a previous variance request for the density and a special exception request for relief from the off-street parking requirements. Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the conditions were that:

1. If granted approval for the requested zoning relief, the Applicant will subsequently file a Lot Consolidation & Land Development Plan and receive approval from the Planning Commission and City Council.
2. The Applicant will submit a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application and receive approval from HARB for the proposed parking area, which is located in the Summit Terrace Architectural Conservation Overlay District (ACOD).
3. The Applicant will coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Capital Region Water to confirm the appropriate size and location of refuse collection on-site, update the billing accounts to reflect the new use, and ensure that the proposed site disturbance is reviewed against requisite stormwater management regulations.
4. The Planning Bureau recommends the Applicant consider installing fencing enclosing the proposed parking area, in addition to the required vegetative screening, to provide more security and access control, to reduce the headlight spillover from cars into the units across Linden Street, and to enhance the aesthetic impact of the project. The Bureau also notes that if the required trees are not planted on-site, they can be planted in tree pits in the surrounding rights-of-way.
5. The Planning Bureau recommends that the Applicant install the requisite bike racks near the proposed entrance from Walnut Street; if possible, the Bureau would recommend that the Applicant consider a secure, indoor bike storage area near that entrance/access stairwell, since the building will not be equipped with elevators.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicants if they had conducted any outreach to neighbors in the surrounding community. They confirmed that while they had not met with all the neighbors, they had spoken with several of them including ones from directly across the street, and noted they had also spoken with residents who had approached contractors on-site regarding ongoing work on-site. Commissioner Alsberry noted there was a neighborhood group representing that community; Mr. Knight confirmed that it was the Summit Terrace Neighborhood Association. Commissioner Alsberry suggested the Applicants reach out to that organization.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether the other commissioners had questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner McKissick stated that he had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that it frustrated him when Applicants present developments to the Planning Commission only to later on not complete the process or the project, and noted that he liked the project the first time through and was happy to see it was still being pursued. Commissioner O'Toole asked Planning Bureau staff whether the previous project had provided parking on-site; Mr. Knight confirmed that a smaller, twelve-space lot only accessible from Linden Street had been part of that proposal, whereas the current project will utilize all the

vacant lots along Linden Street for a larger, fifteen-space accessory parking lot with bi-directional access from both Calamus Street and Linden Street. Commissioner O'Toole asked whether the Harrisburg Redevelopment Authority owned the vacant lots; Mr. Knight confirmed the lots were all owned by the Applicants. Commissioner O'Toole stated that he felt it was a good project and that he looked forward

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner Marek stated that she had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner Jordan inquired as to the anticipated rents for the proposed units. The Applicants stated that they had reached out to the Dauphin County Housing Authority to better understand affordability levels in the county, and confirmed that while they were not planning on submitting the project through the City's formal Affordable Housing Program, they were trying to ensure the units would be affordable to the greatest extent possible.

Commissioner Jordan stated that he was in favor of the project as it was proposing to rehabilitate a large, long-vacant building with multi-bedroom units; he also noted pedestrian infrastructure around the site would be improved as part of the project as well.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anyone from the public for or against the project; there were no questions or comments from the public.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner Marek seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

2. **Variance for 3300 North Cameron Street, zoned Institutional (INS), filed by Michael Della Porta with HACC, to install an eight-foot-high fence to fully enclose a retention pond associated with the fire training facility on-site.**

The case was represented by Michael Della Porta and Kathy Brickner with HACC (the property owner), 1 HACC Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17110 (aka "the Applicants").

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the conditions were that:

1. The Applicant has not clarified in their submission why there is a four-foot-high portion of the fence and, given the reasonable safety and liability justifications necessitating an eight-foot-high fence, the Planning Bureau recommends that the Applicant install eight-foot-high fencing around the entire perimeter of the retention pond.

Commissioner Alsberry stated that he had no questions and noted that the request appeared to be fairly simple and straightforward.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether the other commissioners had questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner McKissick inquired as to why the project was being proposed now, given that the facilities and retention pond had existed on-site for a while. The Applicants stated that HACC was beginning a project to better secure the Fire Academy Training Facility overall and that this project was a small component of that. Commissioner McKissick noted that he hadn't seen any new construction on-site and thus wasn't sure if the facility was moving or expanding.

Commissioner O'Toole stated that he felt the proposal was a commonsense one that justified the requested relief from the Zoning Code.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner Marek concurred with Commissioner O'Toole, and stated that she was somewhat surprised it hadn't been fully enclosed. She noted the pond was fairly large and inquired as to its depth; the Applicants stated that it was approximately twelve feet deep. Commissioner Marek concurred that it was a significant safety concern.

Commissioner Jordan asked the Applicants to address why a portion of the fence was only four feet high. They stated the manager of the fire training academy had requested a lower fence height at that location so that multiple teams would be able to "drain down" their hoses after training exercises.

Commissioner Alsberry asked Planning Bureau staff whether that response addressed the condition in the case report; Mr. Knight stated that any deviation from the eight-foot height might allow unauthorized access, and speculated that there may be other solutions than a lowered fence height, but stated that if the fire training academy specifically requested a lower fence, he wasn't knowledgeable enough about firefighting protocols to second-guess that aspect.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anyone from the public for or against the project; there were no questions or comments from the public.

Commissioner Marek moved to approve the request; Commissioner McKissick asked whether she wanted to include the condition that all of the fence be eight feet in height. Mr. Knight noted that he considered it a "recommendation" that the commissioners could choose to adopt or not. Commissioner O'Toole asked if her motion was with the condition or without, and Commissioner Marek confirmed that she was recommending approval as presented by the Planning Bureau. Mr. Knight reiterated that the condition was added for conformity of the fence height to ensure it addressed the safety and liability concerns, but that if there were operational considerations that superseded those issues, he was willing to defer to the Applicant's judgment.

Commissioner Marek moved, and Commissioner O'Toole seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

3. **Variance & Special Exception Application for 1512 State Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Jarred Neal with Halden Horizons Group, LLC, to convert the existing single-family dwelling into a three-unit "Multifamily Dwelling."**

The case was represented by Phil Petrina with McNees, Wallace & Nurick, LLC (the legal counsel), 100 Pine Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101; and Jarred Neal with Halden Horizons Group, LLC (the property owner), 227 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 (aka "the Applicants").

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Approval with Conditions; the conditions were that:

1. If granted zoning approval to move forward with the project as proposed, the Applicant shall allow the Codes Bureau to perform a comprehensive inspection to identify any outstanding code violations, and will receive approval for all necessary City permits prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy.
2. The Applicant must provide a detailed site plan, developed by a professional, demonstrating how the rear yard will be developed as off-street parking and whether any such development is in conformance with the applicable zoning regulations.
3. The Planning Bureau recommends the Applicant recreate historic and architectural features of the property such as the oriel windows and wooden front porch elements, to ensure the property retains and enhances its contribution to the aesthetics of the block.

Commissioner Alsberry stated that he had no questions or comments, and asked whether any of the other commissioners had questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner McKissick inquired as to how the required off-street parking would be addressed; the Applicants noted their proposal required relief from two off-street parking spaces, and that they concurred with the analysis in the Planning Bureau's case report. They stated there were two existing parking spaces in the rear of the property, and that there was sufficient street parking on the surrounding blocks. The Applicants stated they felt they met the criteria for relief from two off-street parking spaces, given the conditions of the property and surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner O'Toole referenced the existing conditions photos submitted with the application and stated that he felt whatever was necessary to rehabilitate the structure was warranted; he stated that he did not feel three units was too dense.

Commissioner Reed stated that she had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner Marek concurred with Commissioner O'Toole's statements and noted that the cost to rehabilitate the structure as a single-family residence was likely similar to the cost for the proposed conversion to multiple units. She asked whether there was any indication in the configuration of the building or past property records that it was designed for or operating as multiple units. The Applicants noted that when they toured the building, it appeared as though it had been converted or was in the process of being converted to multiple units, although it was difficult to tell based on the condition of the building. Commissioner Marek concurred that the requested relief was justified.

Commissioner Jordan asked the Applicants to discuss the structural conditions in the photos they provided and if they knew how the building had fallen into such disrepair. The Applicants noted they purchased the property in its current condition and felt it was a candidate as a viable

reconstruction project, and stated they had completed rehabilitation projects on similar properties over the years. They speculated that the issues resulting in the partial collapse of the side elevation had started with the roof and gradually expanded until a portion of the side wall and window section caved in.

Commissioner Jordan asked the Applicants to discuss the proposed floor layouts and how the three units would be accessed. They confirmed that the first-floor unit would utilize existing access points on the front and rear elevations, and that they intended on constructing a fire escape on the rear elevation to allow access to the second and third floors [note: presumably primary access would occur through the front entrance and stairway].

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anyone from the public for or against the project; there were no questions or comments from the public.

Commissioner O'Toole moved, and Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion, to Approve the request with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

4. Variance & Special Exception Application for 2140 North 2nd Street, zoned Residential Medium-Density (RM), filed by Steven Toole, to convert the existing single-family dwelling into a three-unit "Multifamily Dwelling."

The case was represented by Steven Toole (the property owner), 5005 Pellingham Circle, Enola, PA 17025 (aka "the Applicant").

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the report, recommending Denial.

Commissioner Alsberry asked the Applicant whether they wanted to address the Planning Bureau's recommendation. He stated that his family had been involved in this neighborhood since the 1980s. He noted he had presented to the Planning Commission in 2021 regarding the conversion of 2134 North 2nd Street from a commercial property to a four-unit apartment building; he stated that at that time, he had also purchased the property at 2138 North 2nd Street, which was configured as a three-unit apartment building. The Applicant stated that conversion would allow for affordable housing, stating that the third-floor unit of 2138 North 2nd Street was a one-bedroom unit listed for rent at $1,175/month and the second-floor unit was a two-bedroom unit listed for rent at $1,650/month.

The Applicant claimed that every other property on the block was a "multifamily property." He noted the property bordered a commercial property (Governor's Plaza) to the west, and the manager of that property provided a letter of support based on his work at 2134 North 2nd Street. The Applicant stated that the changes he made to these properties significantly increased the value of the surrounding properties over the past three or four years. He stated there was sufficient parking in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Applicant stated the building was 2,915 square feet [note: the County's records indicate the building is 2,532 square feet], and asked whether the best use was as a single-family dwelling, confirming that the property had been operating as a single-family residence since 2018. He

noted that as an older building, it needed constant investment to maintain its condition, and stated that the property needed to have a "profit motive." The Applicant stated that the multifamily configurations of the adjacent properties he owned (2134 & 2138 North 2nd Street) was necessary to generate the money necessary to keep the properties as "Class A." He noted that an adjacent neighbor was in attendance and that he was interested in hearing her thoughts.

The Applicant stated that his proposal was a valuable addition to the city. He acknowledged that the building was not abandoned and that a prospective buyer could use it as a single-family residence. He claimed the proposed development would be affordable housing.

Commissioner Alsberry asked Planning Bureau staff whether they wanted to response to the Applicant's testimony. Mr. Knight noted that as outlined in the case report and discussed in the review of the previous application at the meeting, there needed to be a justification for why the property could not be used in conformance with the Zoning Code. He noted that in the case of the previous property, it was severely deteriorated and might collapse or require demolition, and thus not granting approval might result in the loss of housing. Mr. Knight also noted the Applicant stated there needed to be profit motive to ensure the viability of the building, but noted that as a homeowner himself, the primary concern was securing the necessity of shelter and whether a profit would be made at sale was not a concern. Mr. Knight noted that because the property had been serving as a permitted use [a single-family dwelling], the pertinent question was why it could not continue operating as such.

Mr. Knight noted that another aspect of the property which differentiated it from other properties for which similar zoning relief requests had been filed was that there was no direct access to the rear yard and thus nowhere to provide parking on-site. He noted that the provision of off-street parking was a stated concern of the Planning Commission, the Zoning Hearing Board, and the general public.

Mr. Knight stated that the primary consideration was not whether the Applicant would do a good job in converting the building to multiple units, but whether the property itself exhibited the conditions that justified the requested zoning relief.

Commissioner Alsberry asked whether any of the other commissioners had questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner McKissick noted that he could appreciate the subject property was the other half of a duplex owned by the Applicant, but expressed his concern about the lack of parking on-site which necessitated full relief from the off-street parking requirements; he noted this was a common concern of the public for such projects. Commissioner McKissick asked the Applicant whether they were able to secure a lease for parking spaces in the accessory lot of the adjacent commercial property to the west. The Applicant noted that the parking lot was currently being utilized as parking for contractors working on the Governor's Mansion, and thus could not provide spaces until that project was complete, but that the lot otherwise exhibited limited occupancy prior to that time. He also stated there was sufficient on-street parking in the block to the south that was available for tenant parking. The Applicant noted that he owned other properties along 2nd Street further south in Midtown, and that on-street parking was more

available at the subject property than those properties. He speculated that other surface parking lots in the surrounding neighborhood were underutilized and thus he anticipated that he would be able to secure parking leases.

Commissioner McKissick stated that if the Applicant had specific information on the number of spaces that were available and utilized in the surrounding lots, his concerns about parking might be addressed. The Applicant stated that he would review footage from security cameras that faced the rear yard and adjacent lot to quantify how many spaces were being used. Commissioner McKissick noted that he would feel better about the proposal if the Applicant was able to secure a lease for off-street parking spaces at some point in the future.

Commissioner O'Toole asked the Applicant to confirm they had previously received approval to convert the single-family dwelling at 2134 North 2nd Street into a four-unit "Multifamily Dwelling;" the Applicant confirmed that was the case. Commissioner McKissick noted that the Applicant had previously stated the property was operating as a commercial use; the Applicant confirmed the property was a commercial use that had higher parking requirements then a four-unit "Multifamily Dwelling."

Commissioner O'Toole asked the Applicant whether they had conducted any outreach to residents of the surrounding community; the Applicant stated that he had mailed out the required notification letters, had gotten an email of support, and that one neighbor was in attendance at the meeting. Commissioner O'Toole stated that he concurred with Commissioner McKissick that a signed lease for parking in a nearby lot would help the Applicant's case. He stated he concurred with the Planning Bureau's recommendation that the property did not meet the legal standard for approval of the Variance request.

Commissioner Reed asked Planning Bureau staff whether the Variance was necessary as the building square footage was sufficient to allow by-right conversion. Mr. Knight confirmed the building was in conformance with the Specific Criteria, but that the proposal required relief from the density regulations in the Development Standards given the size of the lot.

Commissioner Marek concurred with the other commissioners' statements that the property did not meet all of the criteria necessary to be granted approval for relief from the density regulations. She noted the other conversions referenced by the Applicant were different scenarios from the current proposal, as they repurposed underutilized commercial of office space into housing units, or were necessary for the reconstruction of significantly deteriorated structures. Commissioner Marek noted that up until December 2025, the property was functioning as a single-family, owner-occupied dwelling, and thus could be used in conformance with the Zoning Code.

The Applicant stated that he felt the construction of the adjacent commercial buildings along Front Street decades prior [note: these were constructed in 1960] justified the current proposal to convert a single-family dwelling into three units. He stated that converting the property to multiple units would be in the best interest of the community because it would increase the "valuation of the neighborhood." The Applicant acknowledged that the property could be used as a single-family residence, but stated that he didn't think someone would be willing to purchase

the property for their residence because there were other apartments on the block. The Applicant stated that his proposal would match the other multifamily buildings on the block. He stated that he didn't think someone would purchase the property as their residence because it was adjacent to a parking lot.

Commissioner Jordan stated that he had no questions or comments about the project.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anyone from the public for or against the project. Ms. Annette McCraw (2144 North 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA) noted that she lived two homes down and owned the adjacent property at 2142 North 2nd Street. She expressed her concern about a tree in the public right-of-way in front of the subject property and noted that she was often cleaning up after fallen leaves and branches, and that she was constantly replacing the concrete sidewalk due to the uplift and heave from the tree roots. Ms. McCraw expressed concern about on-street parking, and stated that she had presumed the property had parking in the accessory lot of the commercial property to the west. She noted that the aforementioned issues had been occurring for approximately thirty years.

Commissioner Alsberry asked if there was anyone else from the public for or against the project; there were no other questions or comments from the public.

Commissioner Alsberry noted that he was always concerned about the provision of parking with respect to residential conversions, and recommended the Applicant consider securing parking in a nearby lot.

Commissioner McKissick moved, and Commissioner O'Toole seconded the motion, to Deny the request. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).

Commissioner Alsberry recommended the Applicant continue engagement with the Planning Bureau if there were substantive changes in their application, such as securing long-term off-street parking. The Applicant noted that there seemed to be some disagreement among the commissioners on whether the provision of off-street parking would impact the viability of the zoning relief request.

Ms. Cameron stated that approval or denial was not predicated upon whether parking was provided, but whether they property could meet all of the criteria necessary for approval of a Variance; she noted that parking may be a consideration regardless. The Applicant stated that he understood the distinction, but asked whether it was worth his time to continue through the process. Commissioner Alsberry noted the commissioners had voted on the case. Mr. Knight recommended the Applicant attend the Zoning Hearing Board meeting to better understand their perspectives on the proposal.

Commissioner O'Toole noted the Applicant had undermined their argument by affirming the property could be used as a single-family residence.

Commissioner McKissick further noted the property had increased significantly in value over the recent transactions which indicated that there was a market for use of the property as a single-

family residence. He stated that the conversion of 2nd Street to a two-way configuration had calmed traffic and made properties along the corridor more attractive as single-family use. The Applicant noted that he owned eleven properties along North 2nd Street and was appreciative for the conversion to two-way traffic.

OTHER BUSINESS:
Commissioner Alsberry asked Planning Bureau staff whether there were any other items for discussion. Mr. Knight confirmed that he was still working on developing an Annual Report for 2025 which had been discussed at previous meetings. He stated that the document would include an analysis of the cases heard during 2025, as well as quantitative statistics about the Planning Bureau's general work including the number of permits reviewed and actions taken on them.

Mr. Knight noted the Planning Bureau had also updated various applications and revised application review processes in coordination with other departments to improve information provided to the general public. He also noted that the Bureau was working on updates to its webpages.

Commissioner McKissick stated that an annual report would be helpful to the commissioners, the public, and City Council, noting that councilmembers had inquired about the reports during a meeting held at the end of 2025.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:45 PM
Commissioner Marek moved, and Commissioner McKissick seconded the motion, to adjourn. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (6-0).