



Planning & Zoning Board Work Session Minutes

January 27, 2026 at 12:00 PM

Chapman Room
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

David Bornstein, Jason Johnson, Bill Segal, Charles Steinberg, Michael Dick, Vashon Sarkisian

Absent

Alex Stringfellow

Staff Present

Director of Planning & Zoning Allison McGillis, Asst. Director of Planning & Zoning/Zoning Official John Harbilas, Planner II Nicholas Lewis, Planner I Corinna Lundgren, Administrative Coordinator Mary Jean, Director of Electric Utilities Jamie England, Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih, Electrical Engineer Hector Rodriguez

1. Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

2. Discussion Item (s)

- a.
 - Pad-mounted transformer locations
 - Upcoming agenda items

Concerns were raised regarding the aesthetic impact and location of pad-mounted transformers, especially following a transformer installation at a Rollins College apartment complex that did not fully comply with city codes or utility guidelines. Various issues were discussed. One issue was regarding how transformers often obstruct views, particularly when placed near windows or public areas. A second issue was in regard to placement, which prioritizes safety and technician access during maintenance or storms, which can conflict with aesthetic goals. A third issue was in regard to certain transformers being privately owned and located on private property, while others are city-owned and placed in the public right-of-way, complicating screening and landscaping efforts. Code Requirements were also discussed, noting that property owners must provide space on-site for transformers and switchgear, screening with landscaping or approved materials is required to the degree possible without obstructing utility access, and accessibility standards demand clearances of approximately eight feet around equipment to allow utility trucks and tools safe operation.

Discussion continued, and various challenges were identified, such as the difficulty of balancing aesthetics vs. safety/accessibility and that some transformers cannot be fully screened due to space limitations, right-of-way constraints, or utility needs. Also, landscaping can impede access if placed too close (e.g., hedges that must be trimmed or removed for service) and location is often influenced by underground wiring routes, easements, and physical site constraints. Certain process improvements were then discussed, such as moving forward, transformer locations being reviewed earlier during the conditional use permitting phase and collaboration between planning staff, developers, and utility engineers seeking to optimize location and screening. Also, a requirement of developers to provide landscaping plans for transformer screening as part of site permits and transformer placement possibly shifting during final construction due to circuit and site adjustments was discussed.

Discussion then ensued about the vagueness of the current city code language, prioritizing aesthetic considerations in placement first, then requiring screening, clarifying policy on the balance between public safety visibility and complete visual concealment, and enhancing internal review processes and checklists. Staff will draft clearer language emphasizing location priority before screening for future code or policy updates. Also, staff will work on enhanced internal checklists for site plan and permit reviews that will incorporate transformer placement and landscaping.

The meeting then concluded with discussion on the following upcoming agenda items:

1020 Palmer Avenue (Marywood Property):

The property is on the Florida Master Site File (statewide historic list), triggering a 90-day demolition hold by the Historic Preservation Board to allow salvage or documentation.

The applicant plans to request continuance to delay the demolition decision.

If demolished, subsequent requests for a lot split (to create two lots) may be affected; the Board emphasized no public benefit exists in approving lot splits following demolition.

The Board discussed the importance of maintaining historic structures to justify amendments to the comprehensive plan.

210 East Morse Boulevard (El Cortez Apartments):

Approval was previously granted to demolish the existing apartments and build five townhomes with a synagogue on site.

This project will have city-wide notification due to its significance.

Holler Hyundai Redevelopment:

Major redevelopment involving demolition of existing buildings and construction of a new approximately 60,000 sq. ft. building.
No change of use; project aims to update building aesthetics to current standards.

Lot Split at 210 Stirling Avenue:

Proposal to split a large lot, retaining the historic house on the front and creating a new buildable lot in the back.

The new lot has a narrow "panhandle" shape meeting setback and area requirements. Opposition exists from a neighboring property owner, but the project has neighborhood support.

It was noted that such unique splits are rare and may not be supported if the existing historic structure were not preserved.

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

/s/ Mary Jean, Recording Secretary