



# Planning & Zoning Board Work Session Minutes

**May 26, 2026 at 12:00 PM**

Chapman Room  
401 S. Park Avenue

## **Present**

Alex Stringfellow, Jason Johnson, Bill Segal, Charles Steinberg, Michael Dick, Vashon Sarkisian

## **Absent**

David Bornstein

## **Staff Present**

Director of Planning & Zoning Allison McGillis, Asst. Director of Planning & Zoning John Harbilas, Planner II Nicholas Lewis, Planner I Corinna Lundgren, Administrative Coordinator Mary Jean

### **1. Meeting Called to Order**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

### **2. Discussion Item (s)**

#### **a. Discuss upcoming agenda items**

- 1020 Palmer Ave lot split/Comprehensive Plan Amendment
- Conditional Use for restaurant at 1560 Orange Ave
- Conditional Use for townhomes/synagogue at 210 E Morse Blvd

Mrs. McGillis began discussion on the proposed lot split and Comprehensive Plan amendment for 1020 Palmer Avenue. Discussion with the Board covered the applicant's proposed policy changes, lot size and frontage requirements, building limitations, setbacks, and how the proposal compares with existing zoning and surrounding properties. The future of the historic James Gamble Rogers home known as Merrywood that currently exists on the property was discussed, including its condition, demolition status, preservation potential, and whether the policy should be structured to encourage saving the house. Mrs. McGillis presented staff's alternative policy intended to preserve the home while allowing a lot split, prompting discussion about precedent, consistency with the city's policy on preserving large lakefront estate lots, potential legal implications, and anticipated public input. Further discussion included considerations for reviewing additional setback information, refining conceptual plans, evaluating staff's alternative policy, clarifying that historic designation would be

required to preserve the house, confirming the applicant's position on the staff proposal, and considering public feedback before making a final recommendation.

Mrs. McGillis then began discussion on the proposed redevelopment of 210 East Morse Boulevard, including demolition of the existing El Cortez apartments and construction of five townhomes fronting Morse Boulevard with a synagogue and preschool behind them on Knowles Avenue. Discussion covered the site layout, parking, underground garage, rooftop deck, conditional use request for three-story buildings, setback and impervious coverage variances, stormwater retention, and how the project fits the surrounding streetscape. Further discussion centered on the synagogue's architecture. Board members reviewed several design iterations, debated the building's scale, massing, materials, glazing, columns, domes, and overall compatibility with the surrounding area, with concern expressed that the design appeared overly ornate or lacked a clear architectural identity. The discussion included considerations for asking the applicant to explain the architectural inspiration for the synagogue, considering additional design refinements before the public hearing, sharing the Board's architectural feedback with the applicant, and revisiting any revised plans at the next work session before final consideration.

Mrs. McGillis concluded the meeting with discussion on the conditional use request for a restaurant and café at the Hub building at 1560 Orange Avenue. Discussion covered the proposed restaurant operations, seating capacity, hours of operation, outdoor improvements, building entrance redesign, and the site's eligibility for a restaurant under office zoning because it exceeds current parking requirements. Board members reviewed the proposed landscaping and buffering improvements for both the main site and the parking lot across the street, including restoration of the adjacent city park and replacement of gateway signs. They also discussed the shared parking analysis, how the revised proposal differs from a larger proposal considered several years earlier, and compatibility with nearby residential properties. Further discussion included considerations for improving landscaping and buffering to reduce impacts on neighboring homes, limiting the parking lot across the street to office users rather than restaurant patrons or valet operations, relying on valet parking within the main site if needed during peak restaurant hours, and continuing to monitor parking and traffic impacts. A potential conflict of interest that will require one Board member to recuse himself from the public hearing was also briefly discussed.

### **3. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

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/s/ Mary Jean, Board Recording Secretary