

CIVIC NOTES

Civic West, West Fargo, ND

1. **Name of West Fargo meeting**

Planning and Zoning Commission

2. **Location of meeting**

City Commission Chambers, 800 4th Ave E

3. **Date of meeting** **Start time** **End Time**

1/14/2025	5:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.
-----------	-----------	-----------

4. **Quorum? Yes** **Quorum? No**

Yes		
-----	--	--

5. **Est. # of public members in attendance (excluding staff and officials)**

10

6. **Could the public speak? Yes, explain** **Could the public speak? No, explain**

Yes, on a Public Hearing	
--------------------------	--

7. **Explain any issues with how the meeting was conducted or proceeded**

Professional, substantive questions and comments by commissioners and staff.

8. **Provide a brief summary of the meeting**

- The commission approved minutes from Dec. 10, 2024 meeting.
- Joe Kolb agreed to continue as commission chairman until his term expires in late April; Eric Dodds is vice chairman. A commission vote for a new chairman could be held in May.
- A request was approved at a public hearing to reduce the required minimum control line in the Sheyenne River Corridor Overlay District near the riverbank in Shadow Creek 4th Addition. Chad and Paula Ohnstad proposed to construct a home on a peninsula lot, which would result in a portion of the footing and backfill encroaching within 80 feet of the riverbank, closer than the existing 100-foot control line. The request was approved with conditions that the owner waive any city liability for erosion, etc. The city engineer has approved a soil analysis by the owner that indicates the area soil is stable. Neighbor David Boehm told commissioners he was concerned about possible erosion and removal of trees.
- A request was approved at a public hearing to recommend that the city commission hire HKGi of Minneapolis, MN, as contractor for the city's Growth Area Master Plan project. The project is intended as an addition to the broader City Comprehensive plan. If approved by the council, work on the plan, budgeted at \$330,000 would begin in February. HKGi was chosen from among five applicants by a consultant selection committee.
- The commission approved, at a public hearing, monthly meeting dates through January, 2026.
- The commission discussed a proposed update to its bylaws, including a reduction in the required quorum needed when there are vacant seats.
- Commissioners discussed and commented at length on a draft of a proposed ordinance to establish regulations for short-term rental properties in the city, including B&Bs. (See following item).

9. Explain any agenda items of particular significance

Commissioners asked several questions and offered preliminary opinions and even political philosophies on a proposal by the city commission to direct Planning and Zoning staff to draft a short-term rental ordinance and licensing framework. Staff will incorporate feedback to write a final draft that will need approval by Planning and Zoning and the city commission

Planning Director Aaron Nelson acknowledged after the meeting that at least one city commissioner, Any Zundel, had received concerns from some residents about B&Bs in their neighborhoods.

Nelson acknowledged to Chairman Joe Kolb that the push for regulations was basically about neighborhood B&B concerns, particularly parties and noise. But Kolb said he was concerned about establishing regulations on private homeowners that might not be needed or desired. Kolb questioned why city police couldn't enforce existing noise regulations.

"Are we talking to limit the number of houses on a block that have been used for short-term residences?" Commissioner Matt Kopp posed.

Commissioner Dave Gust said the idea of regulations had merit.

"Basically, you are moving a hotel into a neighborhood . . . for things like Bison games and concerts . . ."Gust said of the potential influx of B&Bs. "I think it is a good idea to start the discussion."

"We should be hesitant to add regulation without a clearly defined reason," Kolb offered.

"That's what zoning is all about," Gust answered.

Kolb retorted: "Yeah, but it needs to be restrained for personal property owners."

Commissioner Mike Thorstad said the number of occupants regulated would be important, and any proposal would need to have a clear intent.

Several commissioners noted that current short-term renters should already be "self-reporting" and paying appropriate lodging taxes.

10. Other comments or observations

--

11. Name of observer

Date submitted

Matt Gerszewski	1/15/2025
-----------------	-----------