

**CITY OF COLUMBUS
JOINT CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETING FORMAT
STATUTES SECTION 13D.021
10-01-2025**

The October 1, 2025, Joint City Council & Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Wood at City Hall. Present were Planning Commission members Robin Wood, Susan Bautch, Kim Snell, Mike Ostwald, and Andy Heinen. Also present was Mayor Ron Hanegraaf and City Council Members Rob Busch, Scott Wendell, Janet Hegland, and Jennifer Lattin. Also present was Aaron Bedessem and Alex Trueman.

The meeting was held in an interactive technology meeting format.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER – Planning Commission Meeting – 6:00 p.m.**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. CONSENT AGENDA**

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Approval of September 17, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Bautch to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Snell. Roll call vote: Snell – Aye; Ostwald – Aye; Heinen – Aye; Bautch – Aye; Wood - Aye. Motion carried.

- 4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

At this time, Aaron Bedessem, representing Running Aces, addressed the Council and Commission, thanking the City and Fall Fest Committee for partnering with Running Aces. He noted that although the movie portion of the event was canceled due to weather, it has been rescheduled for the following Friday, when it will be shown on the racetrack screen.

Council Member Wendell expressed appreciation on behalf of the City and Fall Fest Committee, commending Running Aces for their hospitality and willingness to accommodate guests.

- 5. PUBLIC HEARING – VERIZON WIRELESS SMALL CELL IUP & TEXT AMENDMENT – 15201 ZURICH ST NE**

At this time, A Public Hearing was held to consider a request for an IUP and Text Amendment to allow the installation of a Verizon wireless small cell antennae at 15201 Zurich St Ne. No public comments were heard.

Applicant Alex Trueman explained that the installation is designed to relieve heavy demand on the network at Running Aces, where large gatherings frequently overwhelm existing

service capacity. He emphasized that maintaining reliable service during these events is also a safety issue, as guests and staff depend on the ability to make emergency calls. Trueman explained that the proposed antenna would be mounted on an existing light pole and designed to integrate with the site, adding that Verizon may consider a second installation in the future to provide full coverage across the entire Running Aces property.

Commissioner Bautch stated that there is no term limit for Communications Towers and Antennae IUPs in the code. Assistant Planner Hahn stated that staff recommended a ten-year term for the IUP. Hahn noted that while the code does not specify a term, a ten-year limit would be consistent with other interim approvals for built structures in the district such as billboards. Bautch also asked about periodic compliance and whether Verizon would be required to demonstrate adherence to FCC licensing standards. Hahn responded that compliance with FCC requirements is a condition of Verizon's federal license and could also be incorporated as a condition of the IUP.

Chair Wood inquired whether AT&T or other carriers would be able to co-locate equipment on the proposed pole. Assistant Planner Hahn clarified that the design allows only Verizon equipment. Hahn stated that this pole would only be able to support a single install.

Trueman stated that Verizon is a licensed FCC operator and is required to maintain compliance with anything from the FCC. He stated that they are required to report that on an annual basis. He also stated that there are plans to add a second small cell on a different light pole in order to extend coverage in the parking lot area where many of the events are held.

Council Member Busch asked whether the installation would improve coverage for the wider Columbus community, noting that residents often experience dropped calls, especially while driving by Running Aces. Trueman explained that the antenna is designed to serve Running Aces specifically, with only limited bleed-over into surrounding areas. He added that Verizon is working on broader metro-area upgrades that will eventually improve coverage throughout Columbus.

Hearing no public comments, Chair Wood closed the public hearing. The consensus of the Council and Planning Commission was that the request should remain with the Planning Commission for two weeks of review before findings and recommendations are forwarded to the City Council for consideration.

6. DISCUSSION – FARM ANIMAL ORDINANCE

At this time, Assistant Planner Hahn introduced the topic of the farm animal ordinance, stating that staff's goals for the rewrite were to clarify the code, balance animal welfare, address neighborhood impacts, and maintain rural character. She stated that there was

a presentation outlining the current ordinance at the September 3 Planning Commission meeting which explained that the current ordinance is confusing for residents and staff alike. She stated that there was a list of questions for the Planning Commission and City Council to consider in their packet.

Council Member Hegland began by referencing research previously completed by Shelly Logren, emphasizing the importance of building on that work. She stated that certain neighborhoods, such as Thurnbeck, had covenants against large animals but no longer do. She stated that there's a variety of different types of neighborhoods, and they might need different rules. She explained that while animal welfare is critical, public health and neighborhood compatibility should also be weighted heavily, particularly given risks of disease and water contamination. Council Member Wendell agreed that public health is important, emphasizing the impact of rodents.

Assistant Planner Hahn noted that many communities do not allow farm animals in platted neighborhoods; however, she does not believe that it would be helpful in Columbus as some of the platted neighborhoods are very well suited for large animals. Council Member Hegland noted that lot layouts vary widely across the city, from long pencil lots to more compact parcels. She provided an example of lots with homes 300-400 feet back, with a huge front yard; however, our ordinances do not allow the required animal structures in the front yard. Hahn responded by stating that a provision to allow animal structures in front yards in those specific situations.

Council Member Wendell emphasized the need for simplicity in measuring animal units. He referenced Nowthen's approach of one unit per acre as a possible model, which is a much simpler table of animal units. He acknowledged that Columbus' unique landscape makes a direct transfer difficult. Council Member Hegland said the group should return to the original question of what the goals of the ordinance are before deciding how many animals per acre should be allowed. She explained that acreage can mean different things depending on whether it's meant for grazing or just space to move, since many new owners assume pasture alone will feed large animals even when the land isn't suitable. She added that animal size varies greatly, even in the same species, and the ordinance could be weight-based to account for those differences when setting limits. Hahn agreed that animal needs vary widely and said this is an important issue to consider as the City decides whether to simplify the animal unit list for clarity or make it more detailed to reflect local conditions. Council Member Wendell clarified that animal units were historically based on waste production, not nutrition, and that weight-based standards would be impractical for enforcement. Hahn elaborated, stating that the City ordinances are based more on neighborhood impacts and potential nuisance rather than the care of the animals, which is left up to the individual owner of that animal. Council Member Hegland gave an example of an equine therapy facility in Medina, where ordinances that lacked flexibility forced quite a few

unnecessary variances. She stated that if the City doesn't want a lot of variances, it would have to consider all of these nuanced situations in the language.

Commissioner Bautch spoke next, supporting the idea of simplification from an enforcement perspective. She suggested that a staff-level zoning permit process would be more appropriate for most residents than the IUP process, and that requiring a simple site plan showing fenced areas, setbacks, and shelters would provide both clarity and a record for enforcement. She stated that better defining habitable acres would be the best place to start.

Council Member Lattin shared that when she asked several longtime residents with horses how many they were allowed, each gave a different answer, showing how unclear the current rules are. She said the City needs to think about how any new ordinance will be communicated and enforced so it doesn't just become "a piece of paper," and suggested getting resident feedback before making major changes. Planner Hahn agreed, noting that many residents misunderstand the current code, and explained that a simple zoning permit process could improve clarity and enforcement. She also gave an example of a past typo in the handouts that led residents to believe they could have 1,600 chickens per habitable acre instead of the correct 16, and that most issues arise from communication gaps rather than intentional violations. Commissioner Bautch reiterated that the ordinance must be clear and easy to understand for both residents and staff, and gave support to the creation of a simple zoning permit.

Assistant Planner Hahn then asked the group to consider whether there should be a minimum lot size for keeping large animals. Council Member Wendell shared that Nowthen requires three acres for up to three animal units, while Council Member Hegland agreed that small lots would create conflicts with neighbors. Council Member Busch added that since Columbus already requires five acres to build a house, it might make sense to use the same threshold for keeping large animals. Council Member Lattin noted that lot averaging in her neighborhood creates properties as small as two and a half acres, and she could see some neighbors wanting small animals like goats, which makes setting clear limits difficult. Council Members Hegland and Wendell both pointed out that "pencil lots" vary widely—some are too narrow or wet for large animals, while others have plenty of usable pasture—making uniform rules hard to apply. Assistant City Administrator Aaron Berg suggested distinguishing between large and small animals so smaller lots might allow goats but not horses, and Lattin agreed, saying she liked that approach and thought allowing at least two small animals would make more sense than limiting residents to just one.

Council Member Wendell asked which agency defines animal units, and Hahn clarified that they originated with the Pollution Control Agency and were originally intended for feedlots. Council Member Hegland noted that while the terminology is common, its purpose differs

from what Columbus is trying to achieve. Hahn stated that the City can retain the “animal unit” label but redefine the values to fit local needs. Council Member Wendell agreed, saying the City could adjust how much each species counts toward an animal unit. Hahn added that she would prefer to categorize animals as “large” or “small” rather than “hooved” or “non-hooved,” since current definitions allow unrealistic numbers of certain species, like emus. Mayor Hanegraaf asked how miniature horses would be classified, prompting discussion about whether size or weight should be used to distinguish animals. Lattin suggested that a weight-based system could make sense, but Council Member Wendell and Hahn cautioned that it would be difficult and time-consuming to enforce.

Council Member Hegland then asked if bees would be included in the ordinance. The group agreed that beekeeping should be handled separately, as it raises different issues and has not generated complaints in Columbus. The discussion concluded with Hahn summarizing that the group’s key points included clarifying the definition of habitable acres, reexamining animal unit calculations, setting possible minimum acreage for large animals, and moving forward with a simple zoning permit process.

Council Member Wendell raised the topic of chickens, asking about the current limits. Planner Hahn explained that under the existing code, chickens, turkeys, and rabbits fall under “non-hooved animals,” with a maximum of sixteen animals per fenced acre of habitable land, and that roosters are only allowed on properties of five acres or more. Council Member Hegland and Chair Wood both shared concerns about noise impacts from roosters on nearby neighbors, while Council Member Busch described complaints stemming from free-ranging chickens damaging neighboring properties. Hahn clarified that chickens must be kept within fenced areas and that free-ranging is not permitted, though it remains a common violation due to misunderstanding of the rules.

Council Member Hegland raised concerns about manure runoff into stormwater ponds and the need for setbacks to protect water quality. Hahn responded that the forthcoming definition of “habitable acres” would exclude wetlands and stormwater ponds and could include specific setback requirements. Assistant City Administrator Aaron Berg noted that other cities, such as Cambridge, group all fowl—ducks, geese, and turkeys—into a single category for simplicity and suggested allowing exceptions for front-yard structures on deep lots. Council Members Busch and Wendell discussed reviewing other cities’ ordinances, with Wendell mentioning that the Department of Agriculture provides an interactive map of local regulations and Busch asking what Cambridge’s ordinance is. Assistant City Administrator Berg explained that Cambridge’s ordinance was intentionally restrictive and not a model he would recommend adopting.

Council Member Busch observed that Columbus doesn’t have many small residential lots and that most areas follow five-acre minimums, making large-scale animal issues relatively

rare outside senior communities. Mayor Hanegraaf noted that the five-acre rule was adopted in 1979, though some older neighborhoods still have sub-acre lots. Assistant City Administrator Aaron Berg cautioned that any ordinance change will raise questions about which properties are “grandfathered in,” complicating enforcement. Mayor Hanegraaf cited a past example involving escaped pigs, and Assistant City Administrator Berg added that many future issues could be handled more effectively through the City’s nuisance ordinance—by regulating smell, noise, and sanitation—rather than solely through animal rules. Council Member Hegland agreed, noting that most complaints stem from odor and flies. Hahn confirmed the City already has limited nuisance provisions and said they could be expanded to include animal-related issues. Council Member Wendell asked how smell enforcement would work, and City Administrator Davis explained that odor meters, or “olfactometers,” are available for livestock use and could be referenced in the ordinance to establish measurable limits, similar to how sound levels are regulated.

Council Member Hegland suggested that properties with large animals or several small animals—especially near wetlands—might need a basic manure management plan to prevent runoff and protect water quality. She explained that in other cities, owners must show how waste will be contained or composted, such as in designated bunkers. Council Member Wendell noted that animal unit standards were originally meant to address manure impacts, but Council Member Hegland said results still depend on local conditions like soil and drainage. She gave an example of manure washing through culverts into her yard after heavy rain, stressing the need for clear runoff and setback rules.

Council Member Lattin emphasized that while updates to the ordinance are needed, residents move to Columbus for space and rural freedoms, so the City should approach changes carefully. She asked how often animal-related complaints occur, and Planner Hahn replied that few have been reported recently and that staff want to maintain residents’ ability to keep animals safely and responsibly. Lattin agreed with the goal of simplifying the ordinance so residents can easily understand it—particularly by clarifying that limits are based on fenced, habitable acreage rather than total lot size—and warned that overly complex or poorly communicated rules could frustrate both staff and residents.

Planner Hahn noted that adding a permit process could create new enforcement challenges but said it may be necessary if the ordinance becomes more detailed. Commissioner Bautch agreed, adding that nuisances like odor and noise are subjective and should be defined as public nuisances—requiring multiple complaints rather than isolated neighbor disputes. She also suggested that setbacks from neighboring homes could help reduce conflicts on small or irregular lots without overly restricting animal ownership.

Hahn agreed, clarifying that current code includes setbacks for animal structures but not for fenced pastures, which can create problems when animals are kept too close to property

lines. Council Member Wendell questioned whether such setbacks were primarily for odor control, and Hahn confirmed they help prevent nuisance issues before complaints arise. Assistant City Administrator Aaron Berg added that fencing setbacks also protect neighboring properties from damage caused by animals reaching over fences.

Council Member Hegland then raised an example where a resident's fence had been built within the road right-of-way. Hahn explained that fences are not permitted in rights-of-way and that residents should obtain surveys before construction. Assistant City Administrator Berg noted that a permit process with site plan review would help prevent such issues by allowing staff to identify and correct placement errors before fences or structures are built.

Council Member Wendell raised a question about whether utility easements should count toward the total acreage for animal use. Planner Hahn explained that fences and structures could exist under power lines or over pipelines, but any restrictions would be determined by the easement holder, such as a utility or pipeline company, not the City. The conversation then shifted when Council Member Hegland recalled a resident wanting to keep bulls, noting safety concerns with larger or more aggressive livestock. She added that while steers and heifers might be acceptable, bulls and other large or exotic animals like bison could pose issues. Lattin shared that her former neighbors once had buffalo on their property, emphasizing how private and wooded many properties are in Columbus, which makes enforcement difficult.

Assistant City Administrator Aaron Berg suggested that the ordinance could define "hoofed animals" to include or exclude certain species—such as omitting bison or buffalo from the definition to prevent their keeping. He added that exotic animals could be addressed through interim use permits (IUPs), allowing case-by-case review, and stated that the City could be as "black and white or creative" as it wished in writing the code.

Council Member Hegland agreed with Lattin that many residents already keep animals responsibly and without issue, cautioning that discussions about changing the ordinance may alarm them. Council Member Busch suggested making a stronger effort to notify and involve residents, such as using the City billboard, social media, or mailed notices. Hahn agreed, noting that while the legal requirement is to publish a notice online and in the paper, additional outreach could help gather feedback. She and Assistant City Administrator Berg discussed using a community survey—similar to one used for the tennis courts project—to gauge public opinion, while Council Member Wendell and Bautch suggested including questions to confirm respondents are Columbus residents.

The group generally agreed that broad public input is needed before making major changes. Hahn concluded by summarizing that staff would begin drafting clearer definitions, including habitable acreage standards, while emphasizing that any rewrite should remain

fair, simple, and enforceable. Chair Wood confirmed consensus to end the discussion, and the meeting proceeded to the next agenda item.

7. PLANNING COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Nothing at this time.

8. CITY COUNCIL'S REPORT

Council Member Lattin reported on the recent Potomac Street neighborhood meeting with Anoka County Highway Department, which she and Mayor Hanegraaf attended. She explained that while the discussion began with residents' petition to address road conditions and related concerns, it quickly expanded into broader issues such as weight restrictions and truck traffic. This caused confusion and growing frustration among attendees, as opinions diverged between those who wanted improvements and those who preferred the road remain unchanged to discourage through traffic.

Mayor Hanegraaf agreed that tensions were high, noting that several residents voiced strong opposition to the project. Lattin added that due to legal concerns raised by the county attorney, the County is now considering abandoning the full reconstruction in favor of a simple mill-and-overlay approach. She noted that County Engineer Jerry will present an update at the upcoming City Council workshop, which residents also plan to attend.

9. ASSISTANT PLANNER'S REPORT

Assistant Planner Hahn reported that the Hidden Park Comprehensive Plan Amendment was recently approved by the Metropolitan Council and will be on the next City Council agenda for final adoption and publication of the associated zoning change.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Snell to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Bautch. Roll call vote: Snell – Aye; Bautch – Aye; Ostwald – Aye; Heinen – Aye; Wood – Aye. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Eleanor Hahn

Recording Secretary Eleanor Hahn

