

City of Ashton Minutes Planning and Zoning Commission

**Thursday, February 19, 2026
7:00 p.m.**

In Attendance: Rosie Owens, Trena Howell, Audrey Tibbitts and Dallas Hill.

Also, in Attendance: Administrator Aaron Denney, Deputy Clerk Jan Warnke, and Sheryl Hill.

Chairman Owens opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

1. Approve Minutes of January 15, 2026: ACTION ITEM

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Commissioner Tibbitts seconded the motion. The motion passed.

2. Discussion regarding updated Area of Impact by Fremont County.

Administrator Denney told the commission that the county adopted a new area of impact boundary. They adopted a slightly larger area than the City of Ashton had proposed, and it has been added to the county website. Commissioner Hill mentioned that he has a hard time distinguishing zone transitions because some of the colors blend together.

3. Public Hearing – To Amend the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Ashton, Idaho. ACTION ITEM

Chairman Owens turned the time over to Deputy Clerk Warnke to be the hearing officer.

Deputy Clerk Warnke called the hearing to order. The purpose of the hearing is so that the Planning and Zoning Commission may receive public comments and testimony concerning adopting an amended comprehensive plan for the city of Ashton, Idaho. The public hearing was published in the Standard Journal and a copy of the proof of publication was given to each commissioner. She asked the commission if any of them had a conflict of interest. The commission answered as follows; Commissioner Hill, no. Commissioner Howell, no. Commissioner Owens, no. Commissioner Tibbitts, no. Administrator Denney presented his report on the proposed amended changes. He reminded the commission that they had received the draft for the new comprehensive plan from the consultant. The consultant had made several changes. There were changes that the commission had requested that were not included. He suggested that they discuss anything that needs to be changed or added. Then it'll be up to the commission to either recommend it for approval or denial or hold another public hearing after more changes are made.

Deputy Clerk Warnke asked the commission if they had any questions for the administrator. The commission discussed changes that they want changed in the draft. In Community/Land Use says that Hwy 47 brings 2 million visitors. It should say that Hwy 20 brings 2 million visitors instead of Hwy 47. The commission agreed with the list of changes suggested by Sara Bowersox. Deputy Clerk Warnke read the list that Ms. Bowersox sent. Page 8 – Community/Land Use and Housing/Land Use – second line says Hwy 47 brings 2 million visitors. Should that be Hwy 20?

Page 9 – Graphic on Housing Age – says build between “1969 & 1940” – shouldn't the earlier date come first?
Page 13 – Shouldn't the example references be Ashton area pictures and not unrelated?

City of Ashton Minutes Planning and Zoning Commission

Page 15 – Economic Development – says Figure 4 shows top employment in city & county. Says the largest sectors in Ashton are health services and construction. Figure 4 does **not** list health services for the city.

Page 17 – The official name of the trail is the Ashton-Tetonia Trail.

Page 23 – Environment – 2nd & 3rd lines “prime farmland soils after irrigation.” doesn’t make sense to me.

Page 23 – Natural Resources – Is it “Great Yellowstone Ecosystem” or “Greater?”

Page 29 – Public Services, etc. – has the water system not been updated since 1992 and sewer not since 1979?

Appendix A – do you really want to publish people’s names, addresses, and phone numbers in the Comp Plan?

They’ve already been published in this draft on the website for all to see.

Next, she reported another suggestion from Ashton City personnel. They commented that the draft was larger than the existing Comprehensive Plan. Because they and the P & Z Commission think that the existing Comprehensive plan is too monotonous, they suggested a solution to make the new plan smaller.

Appendix A is the Public Involvement Summary. The Comprehensive Plan Appendix A could be referenced as having a copy at the city office. If someone wanted to read what was gathered by the survey, then they would be able to do so. Appendix B is the checklist from the Office of the Attorney General. Instead of having the whole appendix, The Comprehensive Plan could reference the website of where it can be found. The commission then went to public comment.

Deputy Clerk Warnke reminded all present that the city requests that comments address the changes proposed to the city of Ashton’s comprehensive plan. Each speaker will be given three minutes to speak, and each person must state their full name and physical address.

Sheryl Hill, 308 Highland Street in Ashton, Idaho. She thought that the commission’s discussion preceding the hearing was important. There are many changes that still need to be made to the document before it’s presented to the public. The draft is on the website, but a lot of people don’t know how to navigate the site. She posted about it on her Facebook page called Ashton’s page for civic engagement, to encourage civic engagement. She also shared it with two other Facebook pages, Ashton News and True Ashton News. There was not a lot of response. This is such an important document. The process is important. This is something that happens only every so many years and so it’s important to try very hard to get the community’s involvement. If you have people reading this document, you’ll be surprised at how many errors they find and how many corrections they would like to see, simply because they have the local knowledge. She pointed out that the comp plan described the sewer plant as being in the northwest quadrant of the city. She said that is old information from when the sewage plant discharged into Baker draw, which is now a housing development. That’s the kind of knowledge that older people have. She feels that the plan needs more work before it is recommended to the city council. It is also her understanding that the city does not have a representative from the area of impact on the commission. It is in the development code that you must have a representative. She thinks that the commission cannot make any recommendations until they have fully conformed to the code. Fremont County is currently being sued for that very thing because they did not have enough commission meeting members. She hopes that’s something the commission will take into consideration.

Deputy Clerk Warnke thanked Sheryl for her comments.

She then asked Administrator Denney if he would like to give any rebuttal statements or to clarify any earlier statements. He did not have anything.

Deputy Clerk Warnke asked the commission if they had any questions.

Commissioner Hill asked Sheryl Hill if she had any specific recommended changes that she would like to see incorporated into the comprehensive plan. She agrees that the maps should be easy to read and feels that all changes that they want to see must be in the document before they consider making a recommendation.

Deputy Clerk Warnke closed the public hearing and called for a discussion amongst the commission. The commission liked the feedback that they received. Commissioner Hill is not happy with the engineering firm. He thinks that they shouldn’t have already used all the budgeted amount of money. The Administrator has sent the new Area of Impact Map, but it has not been updated. The commission noticed that the table of content online document didn’t coordinate with the page numbers. Another item that needs to be corrected is the library information. The library is called North Fremont District Library. It is not operated on any city funding, only county and federal funding. They loan out books, periodicals etc. They offer education and outreach programs. The library building is also home to the Ashton Archives.

City of Ashton Minutes Planning and Zoning Commission

Commissioner Hill made a motion to wait until the requested changes have been made and the Comprehensive Plan has been gone through again. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

4. Public Hearing – To Amend Title 17 Development Code of the City of Ashton Code to allow the Buildable height in Highway Commercial Zoning District to increase from 35 feet to 50 feet. ACTION ITEM

Deputy Clerk Warnke called the hearing to order. The purpose of the hearing is so that the Planning and Zoning Commission may receive public comments and testimony concerning amending Title 17 Development Code of the City of Ashton, Idaho to allow the buildable height in Highway Commercial Zoning District to increase from 35 feet to 50 feet. The public hearing was published in the Standard Journal and a copy of the proof of publication was given to each commissioner. She asked the commission if any of them had a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Hill told the commission that he owned property in community core and asked if they thought he had a conflict of interest. They all agreed that he didn't have a conflict. There was a roll call vote and there was no conflict. Administrator Denney presented his report on the proposed amended changes.

Administrator Denney reminded the commission that they have discussed the possibility of allowing increased buildable height in the city, and after our discussion, we decided it makes most sense to allow it in the highway commercial zone. He reviewed the code. The only thing that he could find that would need to change is changing the two numbers and the table. It's a simple code change if you think that makes sense for Ashton, but it's just 15 feet increase. It could allow a developer or a community member to build a building that's maybe up to four stories. It's nothing too crazy and it's not city wide. He asked the commission if they had any questions for him. Commissioner Hill asked if there was any demand for the change. Administrator Denney has had some inquiries. Deputy Clerk Warnke informed everyone present that the city requests the public comments address the changes proposed to amend title 17 development code of the City of Ashton. Each speaker will be given three minutes to speak, and each person must state their full name and physical address.

Sheryl Hill, 308 Highland Street in Ashton, Idaho. She believes that the change from 35 feet to 50 feet, which would, as the administrator said, allow the difference between a three-story building and a four-story building to be quite significant. The city doesn't have many two-story buildings in the highway commercial district. A few years ago, there was a proposal to build a two-story hotel and restaurant, and it received an outpouring of opposition from the community, and the sentiment was that it was too big. It would have been built just adjacent to a residential neighborhood, and many people perceived it as just being overpowering. I think people would accept a one-story building, but not a two-story building. She is opposed to this change. She doesn't think it's necessary. She gets concerned when she hears that changes are proposed, because there have been inquiries. This is our city. We shouldn't necessarily make it amenable to developers who may have plans for it. It should reflect what the people of Ashton want and based on the outpouring of sentiment over the proposed hotel a few years ago, she believes that residents of Ashton would be very disturbed if someone came along and proposed a four-story hotel and then they found out that the code has been changed and that's allowed. She thinks people would be opposed to a three-story hotel or any kind of structure that tall. She recommended denying the code change.

Deputy Clerk Warnke asked the Administrator if he wished to give any rebuttal statements or to clarify any earlier statements.

Administrator Denney told the commission that it was up to them to decide what they wanted to recommend to city council. If the commission feels like there's no public support for this and it doesn't make sense for city of Ashton, so just base your decision on that. If you feel like the height needs to still be capped at 35 then you should keep it at that height.

Commissioner Tibbitts didn't live in Ashton when the proposed hotel plan was in front of the commission. She asked Ms. Hill to explain more about the hotel conflict.

City of Ashton Minutes Planning and Zoning Commission

Ms. Hill replied that the developer had received a permit for the hotel and restaurant, and then they were proposing housing units. They wanted to reconfigure the entrance and exit to that. Otherwise, she thinks that it would have been approved too. MS. Hill believed that the developers were developing it specifically for tourists from China. She thinks that the development stopped because the visas changed and it was no longer possible for Chinese citizens to get visas to travel to the United States.

Deputy Clerk Warnke asked the commission if they had any other questions. They did not so she closed the public hearing and turned the time over to the commission for discussion. Commissioner Howell was not at the hotel public hearing, but she heard that there were a lot of people that were very opposed. Commissioner Owens asked if the top floor could be used for residential. The administrator informed the commission that there is no residential allowed in highway commercial zone. The commission discussed that in prior meetings the citizens of Ashton were very vocal about not wanting taller buildings and big developments. After a brief discussion the commission all felt that they did not want to move forward with the change. They also want to keep the small town feel without high buildings.

Commissioner Hill made a motion not to send the recommendation of the height change to the council. Commissioner Owens Second the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

Administrator Deney informed the commission of the two bills that were in front of the state house and senate concerning short term rentals. The bills, if passed, will severely strict a city's ability to regulate short term rentals. Ashton may have to change the regulations that they have.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:18 pm

Next Scheduled Meeting: March 19, 2026

Minutes respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Jan Warnke