

Alachua County Local Planning Agency/ Planning Commission Meeting Minutes: March 19, 2025

The Alachua County Planning Commission held a public meeting on March 19, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held **in person**.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Melissa Norman, Vice-Chair
Kristen Young
Samuel Mutch
Barry Rutenberg

Raymond Walsh, absent
Sarah Rockwell absent
Jancie Vinson, absent
Gailine McCaslin absent

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Hays, Director, Growth Management
Chris Dawson, Principal Planner, Development Services, Growth Management
Courtney Wilson, Senior Assistant County Attorney, County Attorney Office
Patricia McAllister, Clerk, Development Services, Growth Management

Meeting Called to Order:

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair Norman at 6:02 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
Motion was made by *Commissioner Young* to **approve** the agenda. Motion was **seconded** by *Commissioner Rutenberg*.
Action: The **agenda** was **approved** with a vote of **4-0**.
2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 18, 2024
Motion was made by *Commissioner Young* to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2024 meeting. Motion was **seconded** by *Commissioner Mutch*.
Action: The **minutes** for the December 18, 2024 Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission meeting were **approved** with a vote of **4-0**.
3. LEGISLATIVE ITEM: Z25-000006 (Comprehensive Plan Amendment)
County Initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment to add Tree Preservation policies to the Conservation and Open Space Element

Staff Presentation:

Chris Dawson presented this county-initiated amendment to policies in the Comprehensive Plan. *Mr. Dawson* explained that the Board of County Commissioners, in a series of workshops, identified specific trees for enhanced protection and the need to provide some flexibility in open space designation criteria to retain additional canopy throughout developments. *Mr. Dawson's* presentation included current policies, proposed changes of policies and definitions for champion trees and landmark live oak trees.

Discussion: This discussion focused on expanding the landmark live oaks trees to include more species of trees and not just limiting to live oak trees. Discussion also included tree registry discussions for state tree registry and national tree registry.

First Motion was made by Commissioner Mutch to **recommend approval** to the Board of County Commissioners **with** the provision that county staff does more work regarding specificity of conditions that come about with these plan provisions and to suggest approval of a set of county champion trees for species of interest and county landmark trees and include other species of trees.

Motion failed due to lack of a second.

Second motion was **made** by Commissioner Young to **recommend approval** to the Board of County Commissioners **with** the **change** in phrase from 'champion trees and landmark live oak trees' to 'champion trees and landmark trees.

Motion was made to **second** by Commissioner Mutch for discussion.

Public Comment:

Matthew Hurst spoke regarding health issues improved by tree canopy and he also liked removing 'live oak' trees so that landmark trees include more species of trees.

Action: Vote was 2-2. Motion failed.

Discussion continued of tree registries, landmark trees and champion trees and creating a county tree registry for champion trees.

Motion was **made** by Commissioner Mutch to **table this application**. **Motion was not seconded** and **the motion** to table the application **failed**.

Discussion of the registry and types of trees and the need to have a county tree registry continued.

Motion was **made** by Commissioner Mutch again to **table this application**. **Motion was not seconded** and **the motion** to table the application **failed**.

Motion was **made** by Commissioner Rutenberg to ask staff to continue to work on this and come back to us with a proposal based on what you heard today and what you could find out.

No second. **Motion failed.**

Motion was **made** by Commissioner Mutch to **table this application**.

No second. **Motion failed.**

*Chair Norman **passed the gavel** to Commission Rutenberg so that she could make a motion.*

Motion was made by **Commissioner Norman** made to **recommend approval** to the Board of County Commissioners **with staff recommendations with consideration of expansion of the tree species and quality to be included**.

Motion was **seconded** by Commissioner Young.

Action: Z24-000006 was recommended for **approval** to the Board of County Commissions **with staff recommendations** and **with consideration of expansion of tree species and quality to be included** with a unanimous **vote of 4-0**.

*Commissioner Rutenberg **passed the gavel back** to Commissioner Norman.*

4. **INFORMATIONAL ITEM: EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL OVERVIEW PRESENTATION**

Staff Presentation:

Ben Chumley made an informational presentation with an overview of the Evaluation and Appraisal process of the Comprehensive Plan. No action is required for this presentation. *Mr. Chumley* stated there are two parts to the appraisal process with one being to determine whether any amendments are needed to reflect changes in statutory requirements and two for local issues scoping and proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

6. **ATTENDANCE REPORT:** No attendance issues.

7. **PLANNING COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:** None

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.