MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION OF 25 JUNE 2025

25PC-13 – CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Monahan called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Chambers at 101 Green Street on 23 June 2025.

25PC-14 – ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following members were present: Blaum, Einsweiler, Heim, Monahan

Absent: Holland

25PC-15 – ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Acting Chair Monahan announced a quorum of board members present to conduct city business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

25PC-16 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNNG COMMISSION MEETING OF FEBRUARY 24, 2025 AND THE JOINT MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION, HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF APRIL 23, 2025

Motion: Heim moved, seconded by Einsweiler to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of February 24, 2025 and the minutes of the joint meeting of the Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals of April 23, 2025.

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Blaum, Einsweiler, Heim, Monahan
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

25PC-17 – PRESENTATION BY HOUSEAL LAVIGNE CONSULTING TEAM OF THE RELATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO ILLINOIS STATUTES, A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT, AND A HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WITH NEXT STEPS

Kari Papelbon with Houseal Lavigne presented the final draft of the City of Galena's Comprehensive Plan, developed with community input over the past year. She noted that the plan is an advisory document intended to guide future land use, development, and public investment decisions. It is not regulatory in nature but supports alignment with zoning ordinances and strategic planning. Papelbon highlighted the following:

Planning Process Overview:

- **Kickoff (Oct.)**: Fact-finding and baseline assessment
- **Community Engagement**: Surveys, focus groups, public workshops, map-based input
- **Draft Review**: Multiple rounds with Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and City staff

- **Final Draft**: Reflects feedback and refinements

Public Engagement Highlights:

- 300+ engagement points, including:
  - 51 focus group participants
  - 122 online survey responses
  - 40+ open house attendees
  - map.social pins and stakeholder interviews

Plan Structure:
The plan includes the following chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Vision & Goals
3. Land Use & Development
4. Economic Development
5. Housing & Neighborhoods
6. Transportation & Mobility
7. Community Facilities & Infrastructure
8. Implementation

Key Recommendations by Section:

- **Land Use & Development**:
  - Future Land Use Map updated with community input
  - Definition of “Transitional Residential” clarified as higher-density areas near downtown
  - Downtown Framework developed for strategic improvements
- **Economic Development**:
  - Support for light industrial/business park expansion
  - Focus on diversifying the local economy and reducing tourism reliance
  - Workforce development partnerships and business attraction programs recommended
- **Housing & Neighborhoods**:
  - Promote housing diversity and mixed-use development
  - Simplify accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations
  - Conduct a city-specific housing needs assessment
  - Support for context-sensitive infill and historic preservation
- **Transportation & Mobility**:
  - Call for a parking study and exploration of residential permits and shared parking
  - Recommendations for complete streets policies and multimodal improvements
  - Consideration of micro-mobility and transit feasibility
  - Enhance bike/pedestrian infrastructure and ADA access
- **Community Facilities & Infrastructure**:
  - Evaluate the feasibility of transitioning to a paid fire department
  - Identify funding for childcare, medical access, and event space
  - Expand access to riverfront recreation and connectivity to parks and neighborhoods
  - Incorporate infrastructure upgrades into long-range capital improvement plans
- **Historic Preservation**:
  - Respect for historic character emphasized throughout
  - Suggest review of design guidelines and clearer ADA compliance strategies
  - Recommendation for a regulatory audit to resolve code conflicts
- **Implementation**:

  - Plan includes guidance for review, updates, and zoning alignment
  - Features an Action Matrix outlining:
    - Priority levels
    - Timelines (short, medium, long-term)
    - Triggers (e.g., capital project, development)
    - Responsible partners
- **Next Steps:**
  - Final revisions to be made based on Planning Commission input
  - Plan will proceed to City Council for final consideration and adoption

PUBLIC HEARING

Motion: Blaum moved, seconded by Einsweiler to open the public hearing on the 2025 City of Galena Comprehensive Plan.

The motion carried by voice vote.

25PC-18 – PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2025 CITY OF GALENA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City Attorney Nack swore in those wishing to testify.

Testimony: **Kari Papelbon, Houseal Lavigene** – Papelbon stated her previous presentation would serve as her testimony for the evening and she would be happy to answer any questions.

Adam Johnson, 211 Fourth Street – Johnson supported the Comprehensive Plan but shared concerns. He praised the City for addressing it and backed west side development. He favored efforts to grow the economic base through non-tourism industries and supported expanding housing, particularly large-scale projects, urging City support for initiatives that meet community needs.

Christine Baxter, 215 S. Prospect Street - Baxter expressed overall support for the Comprehensive Plan. She raised concerns about the definition and implications of the term “transitional residential”, noting she resides within that designated area. Her main concern was that the term “transitional” implies a shift in land use but does not clearly state to what it is transitioning. Baxter urged if it has not already ben corrected, the language regarding infill should specify “context-sensitive residential projects”, rather than allowing for ambiguity that could permit additional non-residential uses. Baxter cited the existing saturation of vacation rentals, inns and B&Bs in her residential neighborhood, and the risk of contiguous commercial development. She advocated for clearer guidance in the comprehensive plan to help protect neighborhoods and support families and long-term residents.

Papelbon clarified that transitional residential areas are defined as the higher-density residential neighborhoods that include small-scale single-family, two-family, and multi-family housing, reflecting the architectural heritage and walkability of Galena’s historic core. These areas are located near downtown Galena and along the Galena River, serving as a bridge between historic neighborhoods and the broader community.

Ben Petitgout, Galena Area EMS, 217 Summit Street – Petitgout shared EMS data showing Galena accounted for over half of EMS calls despite being only 2.68% of the service area, with a 13% increase in calls year-over-year. He expressed concern that EMS is not listed as an essential service in the draft Comprehensive Plan. While briefly mentioned under fire services, the language inaccurately implies EMS is part of the fire department. Petitgout emphasized that EMS is a separate, volunteer-run organization and should be clearly recognized and supported as an essential service, especially given the city's aging population and rising demand.

Bill Grosshans, 418 Harrison Street - Grosshans commented on the "Limited Short-Term Rentals" section (p. 44), offering three key recommendations based on his zoning and council experience:

1. Remove "downtown" from the first bullet on p. 44 to avoid ambiguity and ensure the STR policy applies citywide, not just to the downtown area.
2. Strike "downtown" from page 96, item 6.25 in the implementation matrix for consistency.
3. Add a sentence to page 44 about existing STR density limits, suggesting: *"Further, in order to limit congestion or saturation of STRs in residential areas, the city only permits five STRs within a 25.83-acre circular area."*

He emphasized that clear, accurate language is vital for guiding zoning and council decisions.

Brad Petersburg, 5060 S. Blanding Road - Petersburg supported the Comprehensive Plan and highlighted his work on the Blackjack Watershed Plan, which includes potential Blackjack Road realignment, workforce housing, remote parking and shuttle service, a childcare facility, and a trail system linking Horseshoe Mound and Galena.

He requested an amendment to page 50 (Traffic and Parking – Congestion) to include the Blackjack Road Realignment Project alongside other major infrastructure projects. He noted recent unanimous support from both the Jo Daviess County Board and Galena City Council through an MOU and emphasized that including the project in the plan would strengthen grant applications. He also recommended adding it as an action item on page 97 in the Implementation Matrix.

Pat Smith, 712 Park Avenue - Smith supported the Comprehensive Plan but raised concerns about implementation. She questioned the feasibility of expanding the industrial park, noting surrounding land is mainly farmland and may be hard to acquire or annex.

On housing, she asked what types are proposed (e.g., cottages, townhomes) and whether they would be uniform in appearance. She expressed skepticism about workforce availability, citing current staffing struggles downtown, and said the housing descriptions sounded like "army barracks," urging clearer visuals or descriptions.

Smith also raised concerns about the cost of expanded services—like snow removal, road maintenance, and infrastructure—and questioned whether the city or county would bear responsibility, particularly if annexation occurs.

Paul Sipiera, 10 Winterwood Lane - Sipiera, while not opposed to the Comprehensive Plan, expressed concern about long-term natural resource management, especially water. He stressed the need to assess future water demand in light of population growth, climate change, and increased groundwater use.

He criticized the plan for lacking a clear 20–30-year strategy for securing and managing resources and questioned how developments like the Parker project will impact water supply and infrastructure. Sipiena urged the city to proactively plan for sustainable resource use to support future growth.

Jeannie Coates, 510 Gear Street - Coates, a longtime resident recently returned from Montana, expressed concern over the lack of land protection around Galena. She warned that projects like the Parker development could threaten the area's natural landscape, wildlife, and community identity.

She questioned whether new housing developments—especially those tied to the proposed Blackjack Road–Highway 20 connection—are the right solution, fearing they could lead to

overdevelopment. Coates also pointed to the abundance of Airbnbs downtown and noted that the plan seems to favor tourism, overlooking residents like herself.

She called for stronger conservation efforts and urged the city to balance growth with preservation of the environment, wildlife, and local heritage.

Jolene Houy, 2170 N. Blackjack Road & 1346 S. Blackjack Road - Houy stated she supports development to attract families but raised concerns about Highway 20 traffic, particularly the hazardous Fourth Street intersection. She warned that adding access points could worsen congestion, citing past issues near the hospital.

From a tourism standpoint, Houy believes Galena is oversaturated with vacation rentals, noting guest complaints about long walks for elderly visitors and limited restaurant seating.

She questioned the inclusion of the Marine Hospital and Parker projects in the long-term plan, suggesting it may have been done to ease approval.

Houy also raised concerns about slow emergency response times and said large developments like Parker should have dedicated fire and EMS services, similar to Galena Territory. While supportive of city growth, she emphasized the need to cap tourism to prevent overdevelopment.

Janna Frolich, 401 Boggess Street – Frollich voiced concern about the growing divide between the “haves and have-nots” in Galena. She highlighted low wages and lack of affordable access to downtown as key issues, criticizing the term “workforce housing” for implying unattractive, low-income developments.

She urged city leaders to focus on attracting better-paying industries to retain local youth and support a sustainable, balanced community. Without addressing wages and housing, she warned Galena risks becoming unaffordable for working-class and younger residents.

Adam Johnson, 211 Fourth Street – Johnson raised concerns about east side development due to insufficient infrastructure, especially limited water capacity at Horseshoe Mound reservoir. He questioned whether resources can support planned growth, particularly with uncertainty around the Parker project’s water use.

He criticized locating worker housing and remote parking on the east side, citing a lack of schools, stores, and emergency services, and argued that development should focus on the west side where infrastructure exists.

Johnson called for removing east side development from the plan until infrastructure is in place and requested two future land use maps—one including the Parker project and one without—to reflect pending litigation.

Kari Papelbon, Houseal Lavigne - Papelbon clarified that “workforce housing” in the plan means “missing middle housing”—diverse housing types for various incomes and life stages. It doesn’t target specific workers or income brackets but aims to provide attainable options for a broad population, from young professionals to retirees.

She added that if “workforce housing” causes confusion, the plan can emphasize terms like “missing middle,” “attainable housing,” and “affordability” instead.

Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Blaum to close the public hearing on the 2025 City of Galena Comprehensive Plan.

The motion carried by voice vote.

25PC-19 – DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON A RECOMMENDATION TO THE GALENA CITY COUNCIL REGARDING ADOPTION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Blaum to approve the plan as presented.

Planning Commission members expressed appreciation for the public input—both in support and opposition. They acknowledge that while the plan cannot address every issue in detail, it provides a solid framework to guide future development and policy discussions.

Key areas of discussion were as follows:

1. Workforce Housing Terminology:

- **Concern:** The term "workforce housing" carries unintended negative connotations.
- **Recommendation:** Replace with alternative terms like "missing middle housing," "attainable housing," or "affordable housing" to better reflect the intent and avoid confusion.

2. Emergency Services (EMS) on the East Side:

- **Concern:** East Galena lacks sufficient emergency service coverage.
- **Recommendation:** Add a new recommendation under *Community Facilities and Public Infrastructure* to conduct a feasibility study for enhanced EMS services on the east side**.**

3. Infrastructure and Water Resource Planning:

- Members were in general agreement that additional study is needed regarding infrastructure (especially water) to support future growth.
- The comprehensive plan includes references to the need for future infrastructure assessments but acknowledges that more detailed plans will follow.

4. Secondary Access to Highway 20:

- **Recommendation:** Add a new recommendation to study potential secondary access from Blackjack Road to Highway 20, based on prior committee discussions and growing congestion concerns.

5. Map Corrections and Land Use Designation Adjustments:

- Correct map color coding:
  - Change certain parcels back to green (open space)**.**
  - Change parcel at Health Department site to blue (public/institutional)**.**
  - Change adjacent parcel from orange to yellow to reflect appropriate land use.
  - Maintain Merkel Engineering site as red (commercial/industrial)**.**

6. Acknowledgment of Overlap with Current Hot Topics:

- The board noted that the plan is not intended to dictate outcomes for specific projects (e.g., Parker), but provides a general planning context.

- A suggestion to maintain neutrality and not preempt ongoing or unresolved land use decisions.

Amended
Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Blaum, to amend the motion to include a recommendation to conduct a feasibility study for enhanced EMS services on the east side**.**

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Blaum, Einsweiler, Heim, Monahan
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

Amended
Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Heim, to amend the motion to change "workforce housing" to "additional housing"**.**

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Blaum, Einsweiler, Heim, Monahan
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

Amended
Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Heim, to amend the motion to add EMS services on page 60 in the emergency services section at the top and remove specifics about EMS under the Fire Department.

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Heim, Monahan, Blaum, Einsweiler
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

Amended
Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Blaum, to amend the motion to make the following changes to the map:

- Change certain parcels back to green (open space)**.**
- Change parcel at Health Department site to blue (public/institutional)**.**
- Change adjacent parcel from orange to yellow to reflect appropriate land use.
- Maintain Merkel Engineering site as red (commercial/industrial)**.**

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Monahan, Einsweiler, Heim
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: Blaum
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

Amended
Motion: Einsweiler moved, seconded by Blaum, to amend the motion to include the addition of a second access off Blackjack Road to Highway 20.

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: AYES: Heim, Monahan, Blaum, Einsweiler
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

Main Motion
Roll Call: AYES: Einsweiler, Heim, Monahan, Blaum
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Holland

The motion carried.

25PC-20 – ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Blaum moved, seconded by Einsweiler, to adjourn.

The motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Beth Hyde
City Clerk