CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a meeting of the Hastings Planning Commission was conducted at the Hastings Municipal Airport, 3300 W 12th Street, Hastings, Nebraska, Tuesday, August 18, 2026

Chair Rosenberg called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. in Regular Session. Chair Rosenberg welcomed James Carson to the Planning Commission.

The following members were present: Craig Hubbard, Chuck Rosenberg, Greg Sinner, Shannon Adler, Lou Kully, Shawn Rossi, James Carson, and Sarah Bruce. Absent: Rick Schnase and Joe Kindig. The following City Officials were present: City Attorney Jesse Oswald; Director/City Engineer, Lee Vrooman; City Mayor Jay Beckby; Director of Development Services, Kevin Kubo; City Planner, Ember Batelaan; Chief Building Inspector, Danny Graves; Fire Inspector, Travis Nolan; IT Director Erik Nielsen; and Public Information Manager Tony Herrman.

Chair Rosenberg asked everyone to observe a moment of silence for former Planning Commissioner and former Chairman, Marshall Gaines, who served for many years and passed away recently.

Chair Rosenberg led the Commission in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

Chair Rosenberg welcomed our new Commissioner, James Carson, who was at his first meeting and was also appointed to the Commission.

Chair Rosenberg called for a motion to adopt the current agenda for the August 18, 2026, meeting. Moved by Sinner, seconded by Kully, to adopt the current agenda. Ayes: Kindig, Kully, Hubbard, Adler, Sinner, Rossi, Bruce, and Rosenberg. Nays: None. Motion carried: 8-0.

Citizen Communications: None

PUBLIC NOTICE - Official Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute Section 84-1411. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statutes Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible written material, which will be discussed at today's meeting, is available for public review. Additionally, a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted and accessible to the public—Neb. Rev. Stat 84-1411 (1bn).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Meeting of June 16, 2026
Chair Rosenberg called for a motion to approve the minutes of June 16, 2026. Moved by Sinner, seconded by Hubbard: Roll Call: Ayes: Kindig, Kully, Hubbard, Adler, Sinner, Rossi, Bruce, and Rosenberg. Nays: None. Motion Carried: 8-0.

Special Order of Business

a. "Presentation of the City of Hastings One and Six-Year Street Improvement Plan"

- **Completed projects:** Lee Vrooman reviewed street projects completed during the last fiscal year, including resurfacing projects. The City also made its first payment toward its **20% share of the Hastings Southeast Project** last October.
- **One-Year Street Improvement Plan:** Projects proposed for Year One are included in the current street budget and will be presented to the City Council in September for approval. Projects in Years Two through Six remain subject to change.
- Funding**:** Upcoming asphalt resurfacing projects will be funded through the City's **half-cent sales tax**.
- **Quiet Crossings:** The Quiet Crossings projects are anticipated to be completed in **2027**.
- **Hastings Avenue/Baltimore Avenue improvements:** Two projects not completed this year remain priorities. The City plans to re-stripe and improve the roadway from Hastings Avenue to Baltimore Avenue, creating a three-lane section with dedicated turn lanes at Burlington. The City will seek state safety funding in January 2027, aiming to secure 80% of the **funding**.
- **Central Hastings Drainage Improvements:** The storm sewer design work addressing flooding was funded through a **FEMA BRIC grant**. The City has applied for construction funding through the same program. If approved, approximately **70% of construction costs** would be covered by the grant.
- **Hastings Southeast Project:** The project is anticipated to be completed in **spring 2028**. The City has made its second and final payment, with our share being **20%.**

- **Project costs:** In response to Chair Rosenberg's question about the City's actual cost for the Southeast Corridor, Vrooman said each street-related payment was approximately **$3.2 million**. The **utility portion totaled approximately $8.5 million**, of which the State will pay 80%. The **street portion is approximately $6.3 million**, all funded through the City's street fund. Chair Rosenberg asked what the city's actual cost was on the SE Corridor. Lee stated each payment is roughly 3.2 million, street portion only. The Utility payments were 8.5 million total, with the State paying 80 percent of that 8.5 million. The Street portion is roughly 6.3 million, which is all paid from the street fund.

Bruce asked about the Colorado Crossing project and whether it included completing the bike trail. Vrooman explained that bike trails across railroad crossings present significant challenges. A sidewalk will be included in the project; however, it may not be wide enough to meet the standard for a trail.

Chair Rosenberg asked Vrooman whether the City plans to work on Elm Street while the Southeast Project is under construction. Vrooman explained that because Elm Street is a quad-gate crossing, the work must be coordinated with the railroad and its contractor. He stated that the City hopes to have the roundabout completed within the next two months, but the timeline for the quad-gate remains dependent on the railroad.

b. **Micro-TIF Amendment to revise the required age from 69 years to 25 years to align with State Statutes 18-2155**

Batelaan presented the staff report on the Micro-TIF Amendment. Micro-TIF was approved in 2025 and is a 30-day process. Batelaan explained how to apply for the Micro-TIF. Under the previous State Statutes, Micro-TIF properties were required to be within City limits for at least 60 years. This requirement was reduced to 25 years in last year's amendment. Batelaan presented the updated amendment to the Planning Commission to inform them before it proceeds to City Council.

Bruce asked for an estimate of the additional properties that will become eligible under the amendment. Batelaan indicated that staff had identified the properties on a map, and it's posted on Engage Hastings, which will allow more properties to become eligible. Chair Rosenberg believes allowing more properties to use Micro-TIF will be beneficial.

Hubbard asked whether the Micro-TIF amendment would expand eligibility beyond owner-occupied properties. Batelaan explained that the program remains limited to single-family residential projects. The Micro-TIF program is not limited to owner-occupied properties; it's limited to single-family homes. Staff's recommendation to the City Council will be to change only the property age requirement from 60 years to 25 years.

Hubbard thought limiting the program to single-family homes was beneficial as it would also allow investors to make improvements to those properties.

Unfinished Business

a. Continued Applications – None

b. Tabled Applications- None

c. Postponed Applications – None

Chair Rosenberg opened the Public Hearing.

Chair Rosenberg read the Public Hearing Rules.

Public Hearings

a. **2026-312 Public hearing to consider the request from John Ferrone, Johnny the Knife, LLC (JtK), for a conditional use permit for convenience retail, automobile for property commonly addressed as 223 E 14th Street, City of Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska.** Batelaan pointed out that convenience retail, automobile, was the most similar use in our zoning code; thus, that is the use listed. Batelaan continued presenting the Staff Report to consider a request from John Ferrone, Johnny the Knife, LLC (JtK), for a conditional use permit for convenience retail addressed as 223 E 14th Street, City of Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska. Staff recommended that the Planning Commission recommend approval to the City Council, based on the findings provided in the staff report, with the following conditions of approval: the hours of operation shall be limited to 8 am to 1 am and the use shall be established within 180 days of approval for the property at 223 E 14th Street, City of Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska.

John Ferrone, 1126 Country Club Drive, Hastings, NE, presented information regarding the proposed **Johnny the Knife**, a speakeasy-themed Martini Social Club concept.

Mr. Ferrone thanked City staff for their hard work, understanding, and assistance throughout the application process. He explained that he is a management consultant by profession and is not attempting to open a *traditional* bar. The concept would be open to the public by reservation only, made through the establishment's website. There would be no admission charge; however, a dress code would be required, and cell phones would need to be turned off.

Mr. Ferrone clarified that the space is small. His previous reference to accommodating 30 people was intended primarily for private events. He anticipates typical attendance of approximately 15-22 people. The establishment is expected to operate on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.

Mr. Ferrone describes himself as a hobby bartender and mixologist and stated that he has been involved in the hobby for approximately ten years, including hosting parties at his home. He estimates 90 percent of the drink menu would consist of his own creations, with local craft beers and wine. Also specializing in bourbon and whiskey.

Mr. Ferrone stated that while he appreciates the 8:00 a.m. opening option, he does not anticipate using it due to his day job. He is aware of other businesses and services in the building and wants to avoid conflicts with tenants or parking needs. He requested flexibility to hold private events, such as retirement parties, between noon and 5:00 p.m., when feasible. He emphasized that he would use prudent judgment regarding days and hours of operation.

Regarding the 180-day requirement, Mr. Ferrone requested an extension to one year, citing uncertainty about the liquor license process and the anticipated time needed to complete remodeling, much of which he plans to do himself with assistance from Barney and the Crosier Professional Center team.

Mr. Ferrone stated that the establishment would offer live entertainment and provide a unique gathering experience distinct from other area venues.

Bradley Starling, 1135 N Lincoln Ave, representing **Wabi Sabi Behavioral Health Center**, **LLC**, one of the larger tenants at 223E 14th Street, addressed the Commission regarding Mr. Ferrone's Conditional Use Permit application.

Mr. Starling stated that Wabi Sabi believes Mr. Ferrone has diligently developed his application and proposed a low-impact business. Their primary concern is ensuring the Conditional Use Permit includes conditions that maintain low-impact operations and prevent adverse effects on Wabi Sabi.

Mr. Starling stated that Wabi Sabi believes Mr. Ferrone has made a diligent effort in developing his application and has proposed a business intended to have a low impact on Wabi Sabi operations. The primary concern is the conditions that would be included in the Conditional Use Permit if it is approved. They want to ensure that the operations remain low-impact and are not adversely affected by the proposed business.

Mr. Starling noted that the application includes conditions regarding hours of operation and establishment within 180 days. Wabi Sabi requested additional conditions to ensure the business remains small and has a low impact.

Mr. Starling recommended that additional conditions be included in the Conditional Use Permit to ensure the proposed use remains small and low impact. His recommendations included:

1. **Major Changes or Increased Intensity:** Any major changes to the business or an increase in the intensity of the use should require additional review by the City.
2. **Change in Ownership or Operator:** The Conditional Use Permit should address what would occur if the property changes ownership or if the business operator changes.
3. **Regular Review of the Conditional Use Permit:** Mr. Starling recommended that the permit be subject to regular review. He noted that the current code allows for a Conditional Use Permit to be reviewed.
4. **Permit Approved:** Mr. Starling requested that it reflects the use as presented in the current application, preserves the features that keep the business low impact, and provides a mechanism for reviewing the permit over time.

Hubbard asked Mr. Starling about Wabi Sabi operations at the Crosier Monastery, inquiring if they also had operations upstairs.

Mr. Starling explained that Wabi Sabi has space on the west end of the ground floor and space on the second floor.

Hubbard inquired whether Wabi Sabi operates as a school. Mr. Starling clarified that Wabi Sabi is not a licensed school but is an approved contractor through the Nebraska Department of Education providing services to the school districts.

Hubbard asked whether the services included learning services. Mr. Starling confirmed that they do and noted that students are present at the facility.

Sinner asked how the 30-person figure was determined. Mr. Starling clarified that he did not originally cite 30 people and that his comments referred only to Fire Code occupancy.

Bernard Goff, 15130 W 70th St, Kenesaw, NE, the Vice President of Operations for **Talon Properties**, which owns and manages the property, addressed the Commission in support of the Conditional Use Permit.

Mr. Goff stated that Talon Properties provides limited assistance with improvements and has discussed the proposed use extensively with Mr. Ferrone. Based on those discussions, Talon Properties does not believe the business would negatively impact on other tenants.

Mr. Goff mentioned that Talon Properties has discussed the proposal with Mr. Starling and carefully considers the building's tenant mix. He noted that, while the property is primarily medical, it also includes social businesses.

Mr. Goff offered that he has attended social events at Mr. Ferrone's home and described them as enjoyable, quiet, and respectful. Based on his experience with Mr. Ferrone, he could envision the proposed **Johnny the Knife** establishment providing a quiet and respectful atmosphere for people to gather.

Mr. Goff stated that he has attended social events at Mr. Ferrone's home and described them as enjoyable gatherings that were not loud or disruptive. Based on his experience, he believes the proposed **Johnny the Knife** establishment would provide a quiet and respectful atmosphere for patrons.

Sinner asked whether Mr. Goff had personally spoken with each tenant who could potentially be affected by the proposed use.

Mr. Goff had not spoken with every tenant but had discussed the proposal with several tenants, including those who had approached him

Sinner asked whether the tenants were aware that this proposal was currently before the City. Mr. Goff was aware that Mr. Ferrone had invited everyone in the building, as well as members of the surrounding community, to learn about the proposed establishment.

Chair Rosenberg asked about the number of windows in the proposed space. Mr. Goff stated that there were a couple of windows.

Chair Rosenberg inquired about the insulation and construction of space. Mr. Goff noted that the building's substantial stone construction, including walls approximately two feet thick, generally keeps the space quiet.

Gloriann Peddicord, 112 E 14th St, lives cattycorner from Crosier Park and would be directly affected. Ms. Peddicord addressed the Commission in support of Mr. Ferron's application. Ms. Peddicord spoke highly of Mr. Ferrone and his family, citing their integrity and professionalism. She expressed confidence that he would operate the establishment responsibly and maintain a non-disruptive environment, noting the intentional business model and reservation system.

She encouraged approval of the application, stating that diverse experiences and support for local entrepreneurs contribute to Hastings' growth and vitality.

Chair Rosenberg invited Mr. Ferrone to provide rebuttal.

Mr. Ferrone thanked Gloriann for her comments and expressed appreciation for the support received.

Mr. Ferrone provided clarification regarding two items: First, that the 30-person figure was based on his proposed seating layout, and second, while he did not invite every tenant, he posted a flyer inviting the surrounding area to discuss the proposed business; no one attended.

In response to Mr. Starling's comments, Mr. Ferrone stated that he would like flexibility to host groups for closed sessions and private events between 5:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. He thanked Mr. Starling for his comments and feedback.

Kully asked Mr. Ferrone to clarify the proposed hours of operation. Mr. Ferrone stated that he would not be open to the public until 5:00 p.m. Kully asked whether Mr. Ferrone had interest in utilizing the 8:00 a.m. opening time. Mr. Ferrone stated that he had no interest in opening at 8:00 a.m.

Mr. Ferrone clarified that the establishment would be open to the public beginning at 5:00 p.m.; however, private groups could hold events earlier in the afternoon, even non-alcoholic parties. Kully noted the morning hours could be used to clean the space.

Kully stated that Mr. Ferrone should be allowed to operate his business at whatever times are appropriate for the proposed use. Mr. Kully stated that the primary concern in Mr. Starling's letter was use of the common areas. He disagreed with restricting his guests from the hallways, stating that such a restriction would be discriminatory. Kully spoke about the annual review mentioned in the letter, stating that, with no complaints, the review would be a waste of City time and money. Kully asked what Mr. Ferrone's thoughts were and if he had read the letter. Mr. Ferrone had read it, and knowing how he operates, there would be no need for a review, so it didn't bother him. Mr. Ferrone agreed that loitering should not be permitted but stated that guests should be allowed to wait in common areas shortly before events, particularly during inclement weather.

Kully requested Oswald's legal opinion, and Oswald stated he would investigate further.

Mr. Ferrone noted that the building previously housed a daycare and a church, which are no longer there. He also researched the definition of a school and feels strongly that it shouldn't hinder his application.

Hubbard asked if Mr. Ferrone had reached out to the Liquor Commission about this location. Mr. Ferrone had not.

Hubbard inquired if Mr. Ferrone had reached out to the Fire Department for occupancy. Mr. Ferrone submitted a packet with a floor plan provided.

Hubbard questioned the fit and the zoning for the proposed Conditional Use Permit. The business itself is a great idea; he just questions the location.

Hubbard spoke on Wabi Sabi Behavioral Health Center services for vulnerable youth working with school districts and has concerns about liquor within that area. City Attorney Oswald interrupted, saying those are great points; however, with the new Commissioners, he wanted to point out that we haven't had a Conditional Use Permit before, and to outline in the City Code what you are approving today, as outlined by Batelaan. These points for consideration by the Commission during this process are as follows:

1. **Pedestrian and Vehicular Traffic Circulation and Safety.**
2. **Reasonable and Economic Extension of Public Utilities and Facilities**
3. **Will there be additional noise, fumes, dust, or other environmental pollution**
4. **The Maintenance of Logical and Efficient Development Patterns and Land Use Mixtures**
5. **The Maintenance of Property Values in Accordance with Established and Permitted Land Uses**

Oswald reminded the Commission to stay focused on these items as they continued their discussion.

Batelaan added that the 150 feet is not currently in the City Code, but in the Liquor Commission's. The Liquor Commission will determine if the liquor license would be approved for that location. All we are looking at is Conditional Use at this point. Once he has the Conditional Use permit, then he will move forward with the other processes for Fire Codes and Liquor License. If revisions are necessary, they will be made at that time.

Chair Rosenberg asked Mr. Ferrone how guests who wish to smoke would be accommodated. Mr. Ferrone stated that he would abide by the building's smoking requirements.

Mr. Goff explained the building's smoking requirements to the Commission, including the expectations for guests who smoke.

Chair Rosenberg asked if Mr. Ferrone would agree to the conditions being asked of him, and he had mentioned extending the 180 days to a year. Mr. Ferrone then asked what was expected in those 180 days.

Batelaan clarified that the 180-day requirement is intended to show progress toward opening. Mr. Ferrone agreed to the 180-day timeframe. Batelaan noted the language could be clarified, and Chair Rosenberg stated the timeframe was reasonable. Mr. Ferrone asked about contacting the Liquor Commission, but Batelaan stated it was not required prior to Conditional Use approval.

Mayor Beckby questioned whether the location was appropriate and why the use was classified as Convenience Retail, automobile, rather than a bar. Batelaan explained that the City's current zoning code does not define bars or alcohol-related uses, making Convenience Retail the closest applicable classification. Mr. Ferrone stated that he chose the location because of its smaller size, lower investment, and support from the property owner, and envisioned a reservation-based, private, low-profile venue. Batelaan noted the City is revising its zoning code and that the proposed 150-foot buffer did not apply because the property is not near a school, church, or other protected use; the nearest residence is more than 150 feet away.

Mr. Goff addressed Mayor Beckby's 150-foot question regarding Wabi Sabi Behavioral Health Center. Mr. Goff stated that the distance from Mr. Ferrone's door to Wabi Sabi's door could be 155 feet, or 135 feet; they are on opposite sides of the building.

Carson clarified that just because you serve a school does not define you as a school.

Sinner stated that ultimately, the State will have final authority.

Chair Rosenberg asked Mr. Starling if he wanted to address the school comment, and Mr. Starling declined.

Shawn Rossi left the meeting at 5:23 p.m.

Chair Rosenberg closed the Public Hearing.

Chair Rosenberg, Sinner, and Hubbard discussed the two uses or adding more before voting.

Hubbard stated he would abstain from the vote. Batelaan suggested adding a condition that the business operate as presented as a Micro-Social Club, limited to 30 registered members. Chair Rosenberg recommended adding the condition before the City Council hearing. Oswald advised the Commission to vote separately on the amendment.

Hubbard asked for a motion to add the condition that the business operate as presented, as a Micro-Social Club, with registration and membership limited to 30 people. Moved by Sinner, seconded by Kully. Ayes: Kully, Hubbard, Adler, Sinner, Carson, Bruce, and Rosenberg. Nays: None. Motion carried: 7-0.

Chair Rosenberg asked for a motion to approve the request from John Ferrone, Johnny the Knife, LLC (JtK), for a conditional use permit for convenience retail, automobile for property commonly addressed as 223 E 14th Street, City of Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska, with the conditions of being limited to 8 am to 1 am hours of operation, and the use shall be established within 180 days of approval. Moved by Kully, seconded by Sinner. Ayes: Carson, Kully, Adler, Sinner, Bruce, and Rosenberg. Nays: None. Abstain: Hubbard. Motion carried: 6-0-1.

Subdivisions: None

Reports

a. **Committee Reports:** None.

b. **Chairman Comments:** Chairman Rosenberg hopes to be in City Hall next month.

c. **Staff Reports:**

   i. Work session-Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Update. Batelaan gave a PowerPoint presentation on updating the Comprehensive Plan and the three reasons why.

   ii. Update demographic data in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan.
   iii. Update housing data, including new construction.
   iv. Update future land use maps to better reflect the community's needs for the future.

Kubo explained the details of the Future Land Use Map, showing examples of areas being updated and explaining the reasons behind those decisions by the Planning and Zoning department as well as citizens' suggestions.

Chair Rosenberg stated he liked the change by the feedlot.

Adjourn

Chair Rosenberg called for a motion to adjourn at 5:42 p.m. Motioned by Sinner, seconded by Hubbard. Roll Call: Ayes: Carson, Kully, Hubbard, Rosenberg, Sinner, Bruce, and Adler. Nays: None. Motion carried: 7-0.

Chair Chuck Rosenberg