
MEETING MINUTES
Benton County Planning Commission
May 5, 2026 Work Session
6:00-8:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER | ROLL CALL

Benton County Planning Commission Vice Chair Hamann called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. The meeting was open to the public virtually via a published Zoom link. Chair Hamann confirmed a quorum of the Commission.

Benton County Planning Commissioners

Nick Fowler, Chair (Virtual)
Greg Hamann, Vice Chair
Catherine Biscoe
Ed Fulford
Evelyn Lee
Andrew Struthers

Benton County Staff

Bob Richardson, Community Development Director
James Wright, Associate Planner
Gordon Kurtz, Public Works
Meg Reehoorn, Recorder

Absent

Sara Cash
John Wilson

II. APPROVE MINUTES FROM January 20, 2026

Commissioners reviewed the draft minutes from the March 17, 2026 meeting.

MOTION: Motion made and seconded to approve March 17, 2026 minutes as presented.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

ACTION: Minutes approved without amendment

III. LU-25-066 & LU-25-067-Conditional Use Permit and Variance: Northside Christian Church

PLANNING COMMISSIONER DELIBERATIONS

Benton County will make reasonable accommodations for all alterable participants. Please give notification 72 hours before the meeting. All Planning Commission meetings are recorded and retained as required by ORS 166-200-0235.

Chair Hamann opened the deliberation for LU-25-066 & LU-25-067 RELATED TO A Conditional Use Permit request for Northside Christian Church at 4500 Powers Avenue NW, Albany, Oregon. Staff noted that the public comment period had previously closed, and no additional public testimony would be accepted.

Staff reviewed the quasi-judicial hearing procedures and summarized the prior public hearing process, including:

- Initial public hearing held March 17, 2026
- Completion of the Oregon “7-7-7” record process
- Closure of all rebuttal and written argument periods by April 7, 2026

Staff further clarified that:

- The applicant withdrew the parking variance request during the record process
- The revised proposal focused only on the Phase 1 church development
- The revised application reduced the scope from the originally proposed larger church project approximately 54,000 square feet in size

Vice Chairman Hamann requested declaration regarding ex parte contact, conflicts of interest, or bias. No declarations or challenges were made.

COMMISSIONER DELIBERATIONS

Commissioners discussed the revised application, applicable Benton County Code criteria, infrastructure impacts, compatibility with surrounding rural residential uses, and conditions of approval proposed by staff.

KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS INCLUDED:

- Compatibility with rural residential character
- Road and transportation infrastructure limitations
- Emergency vehicle access concerns
- Potential impacts to wetlands, drainage, and groundwater systems
- Septic system capacity and long-term operational concerns
- Adequacy of proposed conditions of approval
- Interpretation of “church” as an allowable conditional use in the Rural Residential Zone
- Public Works improvement requirements
- Adjacent property impacts under Benton County Code 53.215

Several commissioners expressed concern that the proposal represented an urban-scale use within a rural setting and questioned whether the application sufficiently mitigated impacts to neighboring properties and infrastructure.

Other commissioners stated that:

- Churches are specifically contemplated within the conditional use framework
- The revised Phase 1 proposal significantly reduced impacts compared to the original submittal

- Staff-imposed conditions of approval addressed transportation, fire protection, parking, and utility concerns
- Approval conditions would need to be satisfied before development could proceed

MOTION

Motion to Deny

A motion was made to deny LU-25-66 & 67 based on:

- Evidence contained within the record
- Staff report findings
- Public testimony received during the hearing process
- Concerns regarding compatibility with the character of the area
- Potential interference with adjacent property uses
- Potential undue burden on public improvements and infrastructure under Benton County Code 53.215

The motion received a second.

VOTE

The Planning Commission conducted a call vote on the motion to deny the applications. Commissioners voting in support of denial cited:

- The infrastructure constraints
- Road safety concerns
- Wetland and drainage impacts
- Rural compatibility concerns
- Unresolved public improvement issues

The motion to deny passed.

IV. PLANNING COMMISSIONER | STAFF UPDATES

No substantial commissioner or staff updates were discussed following deliberations

V. ADJOURN

Chair Fowler adjourned the meeting at 7:21PM.