

Rock Island Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes

Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor

1528 3rd Avenue

January 6, 2025

5:30 PM



Voting Members Present	Maureen Riggs Mike Creger Bill Sowards Sarah Wright Tanja Whitten Don Mewes Norm Moline
Voting Members Absent	Reshanda Johnson Samuel Odeyemi
Staff Present	Eunice Amissah-Mensah, Urban Planner

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Riggs called the meeting to order at 5:39 PM and read the roll call.

Public Comment

No members of the public wished to comment so the meeting continued.

Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

Creger moved to approve the minutes for December 2, 2024. Sowards seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7 to 0.

Public Hearings

2025-01 Public hearing: Request from Barry Reuther to consider a variance from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in an R-2 (one-and-two unit residential) district for properties at 2933, 2939, 2951 and 2963 9th Street.

Amisshah-Mensah read the staff report with the recommendation for approval of the request.

Barry Reuther, the applicant, spoke on the request. He explained that he had received a Special Use Permit from the Planning Commission and the City Council to sell produce from the garage at the property. He added that he intends to continuously clean up and improve the property and beautify the neighborhood. He added that his neighbors appreciate the work being done and he is willing to comply with the City to keep the work going.

Commissioners asked about the work being done on the garage. Mr. Reuther confirmed his plans to sell produce. Commissioners discussed the location of the fence and concurred that the fence will need to be cut back on the corner for better sight lines. Commissioners also asked about the historical designation process of the house. Mr. Reuther noted that the home was previously deemed one of Rock Island's top 100 unprotected historic homes.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2025-01

Moline made a motion to approve the variance with the stipulation that the fence be moved from the right-of-way and the corner connection be corrected. Mewes seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0 (Riggs, Mewes, Sowards, Wright, Whitten, Moline, and Creger)

2025-02 Public hearing: Request from Mike Shorter of Amerco Real Estate Company to consider a special exception from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in a B-4 (highway business) district for property 3840 46th Avenue.

Amissah-Mensah read the staff report with the recommendation for denial of the request.

Mike Shorter, Marketing Company President for U-haul of Eastern Iowa, spoke on the request. He stated that U-Haul wants to expand services to better serve the community. He added that they provide various services, including storage and truck sharing and have partnered with Augustana College to provide storage for students. He further stated that based on the demand he believes the community wants more of their storage product and in expanding the business to meet this demand, they would be able to create more job opportunities.

General Manager Emily Owens spoke on current community affairs and the local businesses and nonprofits that use their services. She stated that U-Haul is at max capacity and the outdoor units would help businesses with easier access. She added that they will ensure that the construction is up to the city's code requirements for snow loads and footing.

Commissioners asked how many storage units will be constructed. The applicant clarified that five structures with a total of 73 units will be constructed. Commissioners discussed the visibility of the proposed storage units. The applicant responded that the proposed structures would not be highly visible from Blackhawk Road and landscaping would be provided to mask the mini-storage structures.

Some Commissioners also expressed concern that the original retail development goal of the city will be stifled with this addition and added that the city needs more retail businesses.

Recommendation for Case 2025-02

Mewes made a motion to recommend approval of the request to the City Council. Riggs seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 4 to 3 (Ayes - Whitten, Mewes, Wright and Riggs, Nays - Sowards, Moline and Creger)

Other Business

Code Interpretation of front yard fence height regulation

The commission reviewed a case involving a fence installed by Wayne Schadt. The fence, built at a height of 6 feet, exceeded the allowable height limit in a front yard under the current City fence regulation. It was installed in response to issues with the neighbor's dogs. At the time of installation, staff interpreted the fence as compliant with the code where staff allow houses that are setback farther from the street to extend a 6-foot fence in their front yard so long as it is along the side of their property and does not extend past the point where their neighbor could place a 6-foot fence. The neighbor with the dogs requested a hearing on the matter but failed to attend. Staff presented photographs of the fence and cited another instance of administrative approval for a similar fence.

Commissioners suggested that have staff look into amending the code to explicitly allow for houses with unique setback situations to install 6-foot fences in their front yard so long as it does not extend past the point where their neighbor could place a 6-foot tall fence.

Mewes made a motion to affirm that staff may continue to administratively approve fence height on a house to house basis or as and when unique situations are presented. Whitten seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0. (Riggs, Mewes, Moline, Sowards, Wright, Whitten, and Creger)

Adjournment

Chair Riggs adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Minutes submitted by Eunice Amissah-Mensah.