

Rock Island Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes

Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor

1528 3rd Avenue

April 7, 2025

5:30 PM



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

Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Whitten called the meeting to order at 5:34 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

Wright moved to approve the minutes for March 3, 2025. Creger seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0.

Public Hearings

2025-11 Public hearing: Request from Joseph Friday to consider a variance from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance for property at 1200 15th Street in an R-2(one-and-two-unit residential) district.

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

Joseph Friday, the applicant, spoke on the request. He stated the fence was put up to protect him and his family from shootings that happen in the community.

Commissioners asked if he received negative comments from neighbors. He said no. Discussion continued regarding the visibility triangle requirement. Staff clarified that the visibility issue at the corner applies whether the fence is 4 ft or 6 ft tall because it is a tight board wooden fence that obstructs visibility, unlike a chain link or picket fence.

Commissioners discussed potential compromises such as reducing the fence height at the corner or cutting it diagonally to improve visibility. Staff confirmed the required setback is 20ft from the northeast property corner, extending west and south, forming a visibility triangle. A commissioner suggested amending the motion to allow the 6 ft fence, but only if it is pushed back to align with the side of the house, near the bay window, with no privacy fence in the front yard.

A motion was made to amend the original motion by having the homeowner push back the 6 ft fence to the side of the house where the bay window is, and not have any privacy fence in the front yard, but approving the 6 ft fence from that point back to the backyard. A second was made. Vote on the amendment to the first motion did not pass. The vote was three ayes and three nays. The motion to amend did not pass as it required four votes.

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

Decision for Case 2025-11

Moline made a motion to deny the fence variance. Creger seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0 (Creger, Wright, Whitten, Sowards, Moline, and Mewes)

2025-12 Public hearing: Request from Ken Brill to consider a variance from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance for an unrelated group use for property at 3215 7th Avenue in an R-2 (one-and-two-unit residential) district.

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

Ken Brill, the applicant spoke on the request and concurred with staff's analysis. Commissioners asked about the distance to the next unrelated group use. Staff estimated it was approximately 130 feet away. Staff explained that the purpose of the ordinance requiring distance between unrelated group uses, especially student rentals, is to monitor them and ensure adequate on-site parking to avoid issues with on-street parking impacting neighbors. Staff noted that this property has ample parking.

Decision for Case 2025-12

Wright made a motion to approve the variance for the unrelated group use. Sowards seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0 (Creger, Wright, Whitten, Sowards, Moline, and Mewes).

2025-13 Public hearing: Request from Emmanuel Nwumeh to consider a Special Use Permit from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance for property at 603 39th Avenue in an I-1 (light industrial) district.

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

Emmanuel Nwumeh, the applicant, spoke on the request. He explained that mobile clinics are available and used by many providers and specialties, including dentists. He planned to use the mobile clinic because he was displaced from his previous clinic and needed a quick way to continue practicing before setting up a permanent location. He happens to own the property at 603 39th Avenue and planned to pull the mobile clinic there. He reiterated that mobile clinics are built ready to go, with exam rooms and everything needed, making it easier than retrofitting a building. He initially planned to build a storage facility and attach a clinic, retrofitting the warehouse, but the mobile clinic was a temporary solution. He stated his patients would follow him to the new location. He confirmed it will be a medical clinic run by a himself – a doctor. He stated the clinic is already registered with the State of Illinois and has a license to practice. He acknowledged he didn't realize the industrial zoning was an issue when he bought the property.

Decision for Case 2025-13

Moline made a motion to recommended denial of the Special Use Permit to the City Council. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0 (Creger, Wright, Whitten, Sowards, Moline, and Mewes)

Other Business

Recommendation on the adoption of the Rock Island Strategic Housing Plan

Staff provided an update on the Rock Island Strategic Housing Plan. This is the city's first housing plan, documenting existing conditions and setting a direction. Staff highlighted components the commission will be involved with, such as discussing priority sites mentioned in the plan and developing a clear annexation policy, which the city currently lacks. The plan calls for this document. Staff also mentioned ideas to improve the perception and marketing of the city.

Commissioners raised several concerns about the housing and development plan, including the sequencing of action timelines and the limited reliance on the Quad City Land Bank Authority, which is only briefly mentioned. They questioned the practicality of publicizing annexation targets, fearing it could drive up land prices, though staff clarified annexation strategies and identified three focus areas with incentives and feasibility considerations.

Commissioners also noted the limited capacity of Habitat for Humanity and cautioned against depending on them for significant housing outcomes. Concerns were expressed about redeveloping the 951 25th Street site for low-income housing due to potential conflicts with nearby upscale developments.

They praised the inclusion of the southwest area for upscale housing but noted challenges in attracting higher-income residents.

Wright made a motion to recommend approval of the Rock Island Strategic Housing Plan to the City Council. Mewes seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0 (Creger, Wright, Whitten, Sowards, Moline, and Mewes)

Adjournment

Vice Chair Whitten adjourned the meeting at 6:38PM.

Minutes submitted by Eunice Amissah-Mensah.