

**GUNNISON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 18, 2025**

The Gunnison County Planning Commission conducted a Joint Public Hearing in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room at 200 E Virginia, Gunnison, CO. and on Zoom **Present:**

Chairperson - Roland Mason Commissioner - Julie Baca Commissioner - Fred Niederer Alt Commissioner - Sean Patrick	Director of Community and Economic Development - Cathie Pagano Director of Planning - Hillary Seminick Planner II - Rachael Blondy Planner I – Caroline Danielson Planning Technician – Aidan McComas Others present as listed in text
BOCC - Jonathan Houck BOCC - Liz Smith BOCC - Laura Puckett Daniels	

Absent: Barvitski, McBreen, Phillips

Recused:

Zoom: Baca

With a quorum present Chairperson Mason opened the September 18, 2025 regular meeting of the Planning Commission at 8:45 am. Mason seated Alternate Member Patrick as a Voting Commissioner.

Neiderer provided substantial comments on the September 4, 2025 planning commission minutes. Group directed staff to revise minutes for approval at the following meeting.

Staff announcements/ miscellaneous:

Oct 16 meeting is moved to Oct 23. Next meetings are Oct 2 and Oct 23

Joint Public Hearing: SG-25-00001 | Gunnison Area Plan and Special Area Regulations

Discussed the proposed Gunnison Area Plan and Special Area Regulations with Gunnison County planning Commission and Gunnison Board of County Commissioners

Confirmation of Adequate Public Notice

Pagano confirmed adequate public notice. Houck noted ex-parte communication with Steve Westbay but explained that the potential deliberation was only to take place during the public meeting.

Applicant Presentation

Pagano introduced GAP/SAR, explaining that the plan is intended to support compact, well-planned neighborhoods, housing affordability, and the preservation of agricultural lands and open space, while directing growth into the city core to limit sprawl and reduce impacts on rural roads. She outlined the process, noting that it began in 2022 with the BOCC, City Council, and Planning Commission, continued in 2023 with community engagement, shifted in 2024 to

technical analysis, and resumed in 2025 with public sessions and work sessions with both boards.

Pagano addressed community concerns regarding traffic, density, and loss of land. She stated that traffic studies are guiding improvements to Gold Basin Road, Fairway Lane, and Highway 50, and that developers will be required to meet traffic standards. She explained that moderate density is planned for the South Urban Transition Area, served by County utilities and subject to design standards, with parks, trails, and open space required for developments of eleven or more units. She emphasized that concentrating development within defined areas will help preserve agricultural and public lands.

Pagano noted that by 2029 the Valley will need approximately 1,300 homes, primarily for local workers and families, and that moderate density will allow for a range of housing types to serve different ages and life stages. She explained that the review process will be streamlined to provide predictability while maintaining standards and thorough review of major impact projects. She also described the Wildlife Planning Tool, which identifies low-value habitat near Gunnison as appropriate for growth and rural high-value habitat as areas to preserve, and said the plan will guide regulations addressing wetlands, floodplains, wildfire, and water quality.

Pagano stated that without a plan, sprawl and higher costs will continue, but with a plan, growth will be compact, high-value lands will be preserved, design standards will improve, and impacts will be mitigated.

Mason: opened for comments from the board.

Public Comments

Monica Carter asked how much of the 1,300 housing units projected as needed by 2029 are being addressed by existing developments and asked about their status.

Landry questioned eliminating public comments from the GAP/SAR process.

Jeff Wilkinson (Fairway Ln) emphasized that new developments must match the character of adjacent neighborhoods.

Mark Kintz stressed that development should be compatible, complementary, and phased over time with local contractors; he tied the housing crisis to a job crisis and said growth is needed but should meet local demand.

Will Halligan asked about current and proposed density regulations in the South Urban Area, whether traffic and utility impact studies have been done, and if the Dunbar tract is suitable for dense development.

Steve Westbay (Fairway Ln) expressed concern for the health, safety, and welfare of Dos Rios 3, said the 120-acre Dos Rios tract cannot handle 10–20 units/acre and would be car-dependent, water-incompatible, and harmful to public process; he opposed the 3-minute speaking limit.

Perry Anderson (Fairway Ln) accepted that development is inevitable but urged that it be compatible with existing density, near city services, and not overburden local roads; he said high density should remain in the city.

John Schaefer echoed concerns about public outreach and said dense development would harm the semi-wetland Tomichi drainage area, infrastructure, and environment; he suggested lower or mixed densities.

Ken Bloomer (Fairway Ln) said high density would degrade quality of life, create urban sprawl, and should be in town; urged cohesive, sensible development.

Dave Taylor supported streamlining, stated public input must remain central and that any approval in sensitive habitats must be applied ethically to all similar cases.

Jeff Lazo (Tomichi Trl) warned of tenfold traffic increases, impacts to Hartman's access, displacement of residents, and loss of property values, said large-scale development should not be expedited and should benefit citizens, not developers.

Steve Jenkins (Tomichi Trl) opposed development on the Dunbar ranch due to environmental and safety concerns, cited inadequate outreach and violations of the master plan; he also said 3 minutes is too short to comment.

Rob Strickland (Tomichi Trl) supported higher density only within city limits and warned development would harm riparian wildlife.

Mark Turner (Fairway Ln) said increased density is incompatible with Gunnison's natural character, would harm wetlands and creeks, and create traffic congestion.

Tama Kinsey (Fairway Ln) raised concerns about groundwater displacement affecting existing homes.

Michelle Burns (real estate agent) warned about effects on home values and said public input is key for cohesive growth.

Mark Lukas (developer, Tomichi Creek Subdivision) stressed local compatibility, warned of traffic and property impacts, and said residents would bear the burden of increased density.

Steve Secofsky opposed eliminating public hearings, saying the public must have input in approvals.

Angelina Harvey said residents give the neighborhood its character, and development at the end of Fairway Ln would harm that character and increase traffic.

Cindy Jenkins said many residents were unaware of the meeting, hoped environmental constraints would limit development, and noted affordability challenges.

Bill Sammons said the commission is disrupting quality of life, harming property values, and must ensure transparency.

Gary Dollyard said public notice was inadequate, the wildlife corridor should not be developed, and uranium in water threatens development.

James Sanomson asked if the Dunbar parcel is being annexed and echoed concerns about traffic, water damage, and protecting wildlife corridors.

Public comment is closed at 11:06am

Staff Comments

Pagano: No development is currently proposed. This plan is intended to guide future development and respond to Dos Rios concerns. Any current projects are reviewed under the existing Land Use Resolution (LUR). Annexation only occurs at the request of a landowner.

Smith: This plan is not an approval of any specific project. Neither the County nor the City is purchasing or developing public land. Annexation and land acquisition are separate processes.

Mason: Asked Pagano to explain the administrative review process.

Pagano: Developments of three or more units must go through administrative review. The timeline depends on project scope. Public hearings are held for input, and projects meeting certain thresholds must submit permits for staff review under local and state regulations. The GAP/SAR system is used for this process.

Staff and Commission Response

Pagano emphasized the need for housing, noting Whetstone's approval. She clarified that Gunnison Rising is a private project still requiring full review, Westhorn is only a proposal, and the GAP/SAR creates a regulatory framework while market forces drive development. She said the goal is to streamline reviews without removing regulations or public input.

Houck asked about the public process; Pagano explained that minor items like replats do not require public hearings, with staff ensuring compliance. Puckett-Daniels stressed balancing transparency and timeliness, noting the process is often seen as a barrier.

Mason asked what is currently allowed under the LUR. Pagano said single-family homes and ADUs are permitted by right, parcels over 35 acres can be divided without review, and smaller divisions require county review. She added that the GAP/SAR aims to make density more predictable in response to housing shortages and high costs. Smith noted it also protects corridors, open space, and agricultural lands. Staff emphasized developers are responsible for traffic, utility, and environmental studies, and that existing stormwater, groundwater, and wildlife protections remain.

Pagano said higher density near utilities uses land efficiently, mixed-use housing is allowed, and there is no evidence density lowers property values. Subdivision signage and environmental protections remain in place.

Seminick outlined GAP/SAR revisions: clearer maps, simpler text, consolidated review sections, updated tables, stormwater and landscaping requirements, and possible graphics. Mason raised concern about densities over 20 units per acre; Seminick said such projects would require rigorous standards and deed restrictions.

Puckett-Daniels questioned triggers for administrative review. Seminick said distinctions are now clearer and prohibited uses added. Pagano noted compatibility is subjective and new projects may not resemble existing neighborhoods.

San Filippo explained this is a legislative process, so judicial due process does not apply, and time limits on public comment are permitted. Staff agreed to improve meeting structure with presentations, deliberations, and a separate comment period. Neiderer and Patrick supported allowing more time for public comment, while Mason, Houck, and Puckett-Daniels favored continuing the hearing, clarifying the agenda, and ensuring the public knows when comment is allowed.

Neiderer stated that no decision has been made on the proposal. He emphasized the importance of public comments and noted that while the County follows established rules, changes to those rules may be necessary.

Pagano clarified that the property owner has contacted staff about possible future development, but no formal application has been submitted.

Smith observed that most comments focused on a single location rather than the overall GAP/SAR plan. He acknowledged concerns about potential density but noted that it remains hypothetical. He encouraged the public to continue submitting comments to help address both potential development and existing property issues.

Puckett-Daniels stated that she has not made up her mind and thanked the public for participating. She noted that many issues still need to be addressed, that outreach is important, and that the South Urban Transition Area is only one part of the overall process. She emphasized the need to balance tradeoffs and provide housing and quality of life for the community.

Houck reminded attendees of the three-minute limit for public comment to ensure fairness. He addressed concerns about uranium remediation, water, air, and soil quality. He clarified that there is no proposal specifically for low-income housing. He also noted that compatibility in the area includes a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, all of which affect wildlife. He encouraged continued engagement as the process moves forward.

Puckett-Daniels asked Seminick for clarification on design standards.

Next Steps

Group directed staff to continue the public hearing to Oct. 23 at 9am. Group directed staff schedule a work session for GAP/SAR on Oct. 9 at 8:45am.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:51pm