

The Thorntown Plan Commission met in a special meeting on February 2, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Thorntown Town Hall.

Members in attendance were as follows:

- President Don Gray – Citizen Member
- Nancy Durkin – Citizen Member
- Erick Smith – Citizen Member
- VP Gene Doctor – Citizen Member
- Frank Clark – Town Employee (late)

Others in attendance: Marcellus Johnson, Planning Administrator. Dave Williams, Town Council President. Randy Bruder, Town Council Member. Gary Coffman, Town Council Member. Jon Rikken, Town Council Member. Jeff Wolfe, Town Consultant.

President Gray calls the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

OPENING CEREMONIES

President Gray leads the Plan Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

President Gray declares a quorum.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Motion by VP Doctor, second by Mr. Smith, to adopt the minutes from the meeting on January 12, 2026

AYES: Don Gray, Erick Smith, Nancy Durkin, Gene Doctor. NAYS: Zero. ABSTAIN: Zero. Motion carries 4, 0, 0.

AGENDA CONSIDERATIONS

There are none.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There are none.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1 Public Hearing: Thorntown Unified Development Ordinance

President Gray opens the public hearing at 6:04 PM.

Mr. Smith provides a summary of what was discussed at the January 12 Info Session, including discussion over the accessory structure height limit and the changes to the development standards for the Residential district. See [January 12 Minutes](#) for more information.

Mr. Bruder asks if the ordinance regulates companies placing yard signs on private property without permission. Mr. Johnson explains that the scope of the UDO covers the use and development of private property by the property owner (or their representatives). The problem Mr. Bruder described may be regulated by ordinance, but it is not within the scope of this UDO.

Mr. Wolfe asks if the sign ordinance includes prohibited locations for signs. Mr. Johnson says that it does. He then asks if there are standards for the pitch of roofs in the residential districts. He explains that his concern is that smaller homes will be built with roof pitches that make them look substandard compared to neighboring larger homes. He identified manufactured homes as a particular concern in this regard. Mr. Johnson points out that manufactured homes would only be allowed in the High Density Residential zone, which is proposed to exist only where manufactured homes already exist, so the lack of roof pitch standards is unlikely to create new conflicts of the kind Mr. Wolfe described. Mr. Johnson also says that this UDO contains no architectural standards. He explains that the intention was to provide a robust base set of ordinances that would allow the town to effectively manage development, and that architectural standards are in a less necessary tier of standards. He adds that the town can adopt additional standards at a later date. Finally, Mr. Wolfe makes a suggestion for a potential overlay district for the town's main thoroughfares that would impose additional standards to create attractive streets where people, especially visitors, are most likely to be driving through town. Mr. Johnson agrees that it is a good idea and confirms that it is something that the town could add at a later date after determining what streets they want to regulate in this way and what character they are trying to achieve.

Mr. Williams expresses his disapproval of the reductions in minimum dwelling area and rear yard setbacks, as well as his disapproval of the side yard setback proposed for the Residential district. Mr. Johnson points out that the side yard setback is the same as what is currently required in Thorntown. Mr. Williams believes that 900 square feet is simply too small. President Gray reiterates points made during the Info Session that these reductions are meant to make more of the existing parcels in Thorntown buildable without the need for variances. Mr. Bruder, Mr. Coffman, and Mr. Rikken say that they talked about the minimum area reduction earlier and did a quick estimate of the cost difference between a 900 square-foot and 1200 square-foot home, and found that the smaller home would save over \$76,000 in construction costs, mostly due to the cost of materials. Mr. Rikken also points out that many of the larger and older homes in Thorntown are not very energy efficient, and with energy costs expected to continue to rise, a reduction in the minimum living area could create recurring energy cost savings.

President Gray asks if there are any further questions or comments. There are none. **President Gray closes the public hearing at 6:24 PM.**

President Gray says that he would entertain a motion for a favorable recommendation.

The other commissioners are not willing to make a motion yet. VP Doctor, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Durkin see both sides of the argument, agreeing that there are significant advantages to reducing the minimum, particularly the economic argument, but also agreeing that these smaller homes may cheapen Thorntown's architectural character.

Mr. Johnson says that while he has not conducted a survey of existing properties in Thorntown, he has found that many smaller towns set standards that would prohibit the construction of many of the buildings that already exist and render many existing lots unbuildable. While it is always possible to request a variance, he explains that variances are intended to provide relief in unique situations. If requests for variances from particular standards become commonplace, that suggests that the standards are ill-designed and ill-suited to the town. President Gray says that his concern with maintaining the 20-foot rear setback is that it risks forcing all development on a property into a small buildable area, resulting in dense constructions in the middle of a parcel with huge open spaces between them. He claims that this is not a desirable pattern of development in a town.

Mr. Smith asks if the favorable recommendation can be made with conditions. Mr. Johnson is unsure as the statute does not explicitly say anything about condition, but his assumption is that no conditions can be made. President Gray reads an email from the town's attorney that explains the upcoming steps in the adoption process. Critically, he points out, Town Council has the opportunity to amend the ordinance, so it is his belief that the Plan Commission should provide the favorable recommendation and allow the Town Council to decide whether and how to amend these specific standards.

Motion by President Gray to certify a favorable recommendation to Town Council for the adoption of the Thorntown UDO and official zoning map. The motion receives no second. The motion fails.

OLD BUSINESS

There are none.

OTHER BUSINESS

There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are none.

ADJOURNMENT

As there is no other business, President Gray adjourns the meeting at 6:47 PM.

Donald Gray

President

Marcellus Johnson

Secretary