

Town of Walden
Walden Planning Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting
March 26, 2026
5:30 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly meeting of the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) was called to order by Chairman Tom Bartoo at 5:30 PM. The following interested citizens were in attendance: Mary Aho, Grace Mynatt, Tony Wheeler, Margha and Joe Davis, and Jean Trohanis.

II. ROLL CALL

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott called the roll, noting the presence of Tom Bartoo, Angela Cassidy, Tim Hilvers, Joe Robbins, Jr., Werner Slabber, Bill Trohanis, and Dawson Wheeler. Town Attorney Sam Elliott was also present, and Ashley Gates, Walden's consultant from Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETD) joined the meeting at 5:37 PM.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS MOVED TO ADOPT THE AGENDA, SECONDED BY CHAIRMAN TOM BARTOO AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 26, 2026

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2026, WITH ONE AMENDMENT (AN ADDITIONAL COMMENT BY COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS ON PAGE 2), SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

V. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott gave the report, noting that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA) have agreed to begin negotiations for acquisition of the Totten Property.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

There are no communications from the Chairman or Commissioners (Comms).

VII. HEARING OF PERSONS HAVING BUSINESS WITH THE COMMISSION

There are no citizens having business with the WPC.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Zoning Ordinance Updates

Chairman Tom Bartoo invites discussion of this agenda item from the WPC. Comms Werner Slabber and Angela Cassidy both noted some typos and punctuation edits. There are questions remaining

regarding limits on livestock and fowl. The updated document is attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix A).

COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO DEFER ACTION ON THIS AGENDA ITEM UNTIL THE APRIL MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TIM HILVERS AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

b. Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

Ashley Gates summarized the updates to this draft ordinance, which is attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix B).

COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS MOVED TO DEFER ACTION ON THIS AGENDA ITEM UNTIL THE APRIL MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

a. Planning Commission Review of Totten Property Acquisition

Comm Tim Hilvers began the discussion by disclosing that his primary residence borders the Totten property.

Chairman Tom Bartoo reminded the WPC that their role is strictly to make a recommendation to the BMA based on Walden's current Land Use Plan (LUP). Town Attorney Sam Elliott also reminded the WPC that their role is strictly advisory.

SETD's Ashley Gates summarized the staff's recommendation, which is attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix C). She also noted that public development of property is always much more time-consuming than private development. Chairman Tom Bartoo invited speakers from the audience.

Ms. Grace Mynatt handed out several printed copies showing overlays of the Totten property. She suggested that additional surveys be completed prior to the purchase of the property by the town. The overlays are attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix D).

Mr. Joe Davis, Walden resident, asked if the acquisition of the property will fit the LUP. Chairman Tom Bartoo clarified that the question is whether the property itself fits the LUP. Mr. Davis stated that he does not know of a specific plan for use of the Totten property but understands that the mere acquisition of the property will not violate the LUP. Town Attorney Sam Elliott agreed with this statement.

Mr. Tony Wheeler cited a recently released geotechnical study that was introduced to the BMA at their meeting on March 10, 2026. This study could potentially be impactful for any development atop Walden's Ridge, including the Lines Orchid Property (LOP), Spangler Farm site and the Stone development. Mr. Wheeler confirmed that the LOP developers had applied for two variances, but these were denied by the WWTA on March 10th of this year.

Following comments from the citizens, Chairman Tom Bartoo again reminded the WPC that their role is strictly to make a recommendation to the BMA based on the Walden LUP. Comments from Comms and staff included the following:

- Town Attorney Sam Elliott noted that there will be a Public Hearing regarding the potential purchase of the Totten property at a Special Called Meeting of the BMA on April 14, 2026. It will begin at 6:30 PM at the Bachman Community Center.

- Comm Bill Trohanis stated that he agrees with the SETD analysis. However, based on all of the potential issues, he is not certain this is a good buy for the town.
- Comm Dawson Wheeler noted that it sounded as if the purchase is moving forward, which Attorney Elliott confirmed. Written comments submitted by Comm Wheeler are attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix E).
- Comm Tim Hilvers stated that, in terms of geography, the property does fall in line with the LUP.
- Town Attorney Sam Elliott clarified that if the property is ever to be developed, the proposal will come back before the WPC.

CHAIRMAN TOM BARTOO MOVED TO SEND THE SETD STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

X. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER TIM HILVERS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER.

Chairman Tom Bartoo adjourned the meeting at 7:52 PM.



Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart



Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator



Approved:
Tom Bartoo, Chairman