



Indian River County, Florida

Indian River County
Administration Complex
1801 27th Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960
indianriver.gov

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Board of County Commissioners

Joseph Flescher, District 2, Chairman

Deryl Loar, District 4, Vice Chairman

Susan Adams, District 1

Joseph H. Earman, District 3

Laura Moss, District 5

John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator

Jennifer W. Shuler, County Attorney

Ryan L. Butler, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

Thursday, October 23, 2025

6:00 PM

Commission Chambers

Joint BCC & PZC PD Workshop

PZC MEMBERS: John Campbell - Dist 1

Robert Votaw - Dist 2

Calvin D. Reams - Dist 3

Jonathan F. Day-Dist 4, Chairman

Mark Mucher - Dist 5

Jordan Stewart - Member at Large

Thomas S. Lowther - Member at Large, Vice-Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Present: 4 - Chairman Joseph Flescher
Commissioner Susan Adams
Commissioner Joe Earman
Commissioner Laura Moss

Absent: 1 - Vice Chairman Deryl Loar

2. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

A. Planning and Development Services

- 2.A.1.** [25-1024](#) Joint Public Workshop Between the Board of County Commissioners and the Planning and Zoning Commission to Discuss the Planned Development (PD) Review and Approval Process

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners and the Planning and Zoning Commission discuss the planned development (PD) review and approval process, take input from the public, and provide guidance to staff on any recommended policy changes and/or formal LDR amendments for the PD review and approval process.

Attachments: [Chpt 915 - PD Process and Standards for Development](#)
[Nearby Jurisdictions PD Project Size Requirements](#)

Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chairman Joseph Flescher opened the Joint Workshop informing attendees that the meeting was informational and would start with staff's presentation followed by discussion and public input; there would not be any voting. After introductions from the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) and the BCC, acting Planning and Services Director Ryan Sweeney used a PowerPoint presentation to provide information on the Planned Development (PD) Review and Approval Process, followed by a list of topics for further discussion.

Mr. Sweeney's presentation defined a PD as a negotiated, alternative approval process allowing waivers from conventional zoning requirements in favor of creative design; discussion was limited to the residential planning process. Details were provided on the PD approval process, and purpose and intent of the planned developments. Mr. Sweeney referenced staff's memo dated October 10, 2025, for details on the six topics staff identified for further discussion: 1) define and identify public benefits; 2) define waivers (deviations) from current zoning requirements; 3) encourage the inclusion of affordable/workforce housing; 4) minimum project size; 5) compatibility with neighboring properties and uses; 6) other procedural items. Mr. Sweeney briefly reviewed the topics, noting that each would be revisited for in-depth discussion following the slide presentation. Staff provided their recommendations on each item and sought input from the two boards and the public.

County Administrator John Titkanich added that it was envisioned this would be an initial meeting, followed by another with various stakeholders to discuss and narrow down issues, and a third follow-up meeting to provide final directions for staff on necessary amendments.

The first topic for discussion was the concept of public benefits. The two recommendations from staff were to amend the County's Land Development Regulations (LDRs) with a written definition of "public benefit", and to provide policy direction specifying what types of public benefits were acceptable or preferred. Mr. Sweeney discussed the difficulty in creating a definition that balanced the need for flexibility inherent in PDs and requested feedback on the lists of commonly accepted and rejected public benefits.

Commissioner Moss and Mr. Sweeney opened with a discussion of the definition of "public". Mr. Sweeney agreed it was not clear if the term meant the public or

people who were geographically close, adding that it depended on the enhancement being proposed. He emphasized public benefits were above what was required by County regulations and were sometimes difficult to monetize. Commissioner Moss also questioned how waiving impact fees was related to public benefit. Deputy County Attorney Susan Prado described the process as a negotiated exchange, and road work done above requirements statutorily required a dollar-for-dollar impact fee credit.

Lengthy discussion ensued between the Commissioners and PZC members. Commissioner Earman recalled a development which offered additional sidewalk construction as a desirable public benefit. Mr. Stewart received confirmation that the Planning Department specified in their report which items exceeded requirements. Mr. Lowther noted many developers requested a density bonus and suggested this benefit should be reserved only for affordable housing projects. Mr. Campbell questioned if timing was a factor and discussed roadway improvements such as the widening of 43rd Avenue. Mr. Sweeney noted the benefits were site dependent.

Mr. Lowther recalled that many of the approved public benefits were born out of the Growth Awareness Committee of the early 2000s, which saw a surge in development. He referred to a recent development where the PZC denied a rezoning request which was almost reversed on appeal to the BCC. Mr. Reams acknowledged this workshop emanated from that appealed development. He stated PDs should help the County-wide population as well as the developers and requested more specificity from the Board to the PZC regarding desired public benefits.

Commissioner Adams referred to the list of approved benefits, stating that right-of-way dedications and road improvements were desirable public benefits because infrastructure was the County's biggest cost and would save the taxpayers money. She suggested there may need to be a timeframe for improvements that would have a far-future impact. Attorney Prado added that PDs were accompanied by a Developer's Agreement which had a seven-year time limit and were subject to yearly reviews. Commissioner Adams disagreed with categorizing "provision of public access to project improvements on a limited basis" as an acceptable benefit. She suggested benefits may need to be considered in tiers where more valuable improvements would lead to better benefits for the developer. The Commissioner stated the definition of "public"

would depend on the proposed benefit.

Mr. Lowther referred to the appealed PD and requested that developers provide the same in-depth presentation for the PZC that they provided to the BCC. Commissioner Adams agreed, noting that the PZC was statutorily the County's planning agency and held a great amount of weight. There was expressed support for the creativity and benefits PDs offered, especially when they saved the taxpayers money.

Commissioner Moss recalled community outreach showed citizens were overwhelmingly concerned with the impact of development on the natural environment, and unique lifestyle. She identified "conservation/set aside of natural features" as the single most important item on the approved list. The Commissioner went on to discuss lagging infrastructure and suggested a hiatus in new development may be warranted. Attorney Prado expressed caution about a hiatus because the County had a legal responsibility to balance private landowners rights with the public's desires.

Mr. Mucher suggested looking to other jurisdictions and their definition of public benefits for inspiration. Mr. Sweeney noted the professional agency also had sample agreements and reiterated it was important to include a County-relevant definition of public benefit in the LDRs. Mr. Day requested Mr. Sweeney put together a draft definition based on his experience that the PZC and BCC could refine. Mr. Sweeney referred back to the idea of tiers, noting the County had language that the benefit must be proportionate to the degree of which was being asked. There was agreement that affordable housing was top tier.

Mr. Votaw discussed affordability which he stated was of paramount importance. He noted that increased land values, regulations, and public benefits all affected the final cost of a home. He asked the Board to consider ideas on how to bring home prices down to the \$350,000 to \$450,000 range to be in reach for working professionals while still maintaining the County's environment. There was agreement that the County did not want to follow other areas which were congested and overdeveloped. Mr. Votaw suggested considering how the County could grow with grace, as expansion was inevitable, and PDs typically made up more than half of residential developments.

Commissioner Flescher requested specific guidance for staff, with Administrator

Titkanich pointing to the displayed lists of acceptable/not acceptable public benefits. The Boards noted the following acceptable benefits: enhanced stormwater treatment, upsized utilities improvements, right-of-way (ROW) dedication, conservation/ set-asides of natural land, dedication of land for public purposes, acceptance of off-site stormwater, and off-site traffic improvements above requirements. The following items were considered not public benefits: limited access to project improvements, and transit stops with a shelter.

Under final discussion of the topic, Mr. Stewart requested feedback from council regarding the need to allow staff flexibility to be innovative versus the exposure to risk by not being consistent. Attorney Prado agreed that public benefits may not need to be codified, but having approved guidance from the Board would establish boundaries and rationale for approvals or denials. Mr. Sweeney provided input on interconnectivity of developments in response to Mr. Votaw's question, noting it was not necessarily a goal but would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Administrator Titkanich advised that the American Planning Association may have guidelines for how to quantify the degree a benefit could be considered valuable to the public. Commissioner Earman suggested asking developers what they could do for the County when planning PDs rather than putting the onus on staff.

Having reached consensus on public benefit input, discussion turned to defining waivers (deviations) from the current zoning requirements. Mr. Sweeney presented staff's recommendations: input on specifying the degree at which each development parameter may be waived (as a percentage or a specific amount), and inclusion of an affirmative statement that building height could not be waived via the PD process. A slide of current development parameters that may be waived was displayed for feedback from the Boards.

Mr. Reams was cautious about defining hard limits on deviations. Mr. Sweeney suggested identifying caps on waivers which could then be incorporated into staff's analysis and serve as a baseline for comparison to applications. Under discussion, Mr. Stewart suggested a metric which would show deviation from the standard requirement as a means for evaluation. Mr. Campbell requested establishing a hard metric on minimum setbacks to ensure proper drainage and maintenance. Commissioner Moss told of a development which garnered negative public feedback and should not be repeated. Mr. Sweeney added the development had 50-foot-wide lots with a 5-foot setback. There was agreement

that 5 feet was too small of a setback; 7-and-a-half feet was suggested as a minimum for practicality. Attorney Prado encouraged setting guardrails to provide a consistent justification for decision-making. There was additional discussion on how to balance regulation with flexibility and affordability. Mr. Sweeney confirmed there was agreement that 7-and-a-half feet should be the floor for setbacks.

The third topic on the agenda was inclusion of affordable and/or workforce housing, largely considered to be the top priority public benefit. Staff recommended providing direction to specify what types of incentives were acceptable or preferred; staff's suggestions were displayed for discussion. Commissioner Adams discussed her work on the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) developing strategies such as density bonuses and mixed-use small lot subdivisions. She suggested a robust conversation was needed and encouraged all the Board members to think about how to encourage affordable workforce housing. Mr. Sweeney acknowledged incentives were one type of solution and also sought ways to encourage creation of affordable housing within the PD process. Discussion was had regarding a recently approved affordable housing project brought about as a small-lot subdivision as an example of success.

Commissioner Moss questioned staff's suggestion for off-site affordable housing on a different project site. Mr. Sweeney noted this had been suggested by developers, but there was skepticism among staff regarding it being actualized. Commissioner Adams agreed this would be a good tool and suggested involving community stakeholders to hash out viability and enforcement of such a plan. Mr. Stewart suggested collaborations with local non-profits where payments, land donations, or a trust fund model could be considered. The Board agreed with staff's suggested approaches as presented.

Minimum project size was the next discussion with staff recommending direction on whether PDs should require a minimum project size, and if that minimum could be reduced or waived for inclusion of affordable/ workforce housing. Mr. Sweeney discussed the time and resources required to shepherd a PD project and suggested a minimum of 40 acres for single-family homes and maximum of 40 acres for mixed-use PDs. Consensus was reached on staff's suggestion for minimum project size.

The fifth agenda item concerned compatibility with neighboring properties and

uses. Staff requested directions on what types of standards were acceptable or preferred, and asked the Board members to consider either a percentage or specific/defined of additional buffer width for every foot of reduced lot width. As with other items, staff sought to create guardrails to reinforce consistency in decision-making. Under discussion, Mr. Votaw received information from Mr. Sweeney that based on experience, the landscape buffers had to be in separate tracks that were owned and maintained by the homeowner's association (HOA). The Board members agreed with staff's suggestions.

The final topic was a catch-all of other procedural items, with staff making three suggestions: requirement of a neighborhood meeting hosted by the developer, encouragement of the conceptual PD process instead of the concurrent conceptual and preliminary PD process, and methods to increase public notice. Mr. Campbell asked Attorney Prado how to handle public outcry against a proposed development. Attorney Prado informed that only residents within a certain radius of a proposed development were considered a legally "affected person". The Board agreed the public meeting should be made a requirement. Administrator Titkanich added that neighborhood meetings encouraged communication at a point where the community's concerns could still be addressed. Mr. Votaw reported good results with contacting leadership from surrounding HOAs to increase communication with neighboring residents.

Mr. Sweeney then described the downside of allowing developers to apply for conceptual and preliminary PDs concurrently and requested input on disallowing this practice. He noted there were instances resulting in needless time expenditures. Mr. Lowther suggested informing developers of their odds of denial due to poor planning and allowing them to decide if the risk of applying for both was worth it.

Regarding increased notice, staff recommended making the developer pay and install larger signs, as well as having them pay for the increased cost to mail notices in a wider radius. Commissioner Moss preferred increasing the mail radius to match the area of the traffic study as well as larger signs on site. Attorney Prado advised the current mailing radius was 300 feet, and it could be adjusted by the Board, as well as noting any related increased costs were part of the applicant paying for their impact. Staff also suggested having the applicant create and maintain a project website. Administrator Titkanich suggested several reasons why a County-managed web site solution may be preferable; board

members weighed-in with their agreement on his suggestion.

The Chairman opened the floor for public comment.

Deb Robinson, President of Laurel Homes, spoke of her experience creating PDs and creating value for the community. She took exception to the suggestion developers should come to the table offering to pay for public benefits, and suggested these increased regulations were preventing the development of affordable housing. Her comments also addressed buffers, the creativity of PDs, cost to homeowners, public input, long lead times, and project websites.

Barbara Ruddy referred to a development with unattractive color schemes and suggested the County include restrictions in their code. She mentioned increased traffic from simultaneous development on Indian River Boulevard.

Richard Bialosky, Architect, discussed the subjective element inherent in PDs that allow creative design. He also spoke about affordable housing issues such as in-lieu fees and alternate housing types, and the public benefits of native Florida landscaping and green certification.

Nick Schroth, Commercial Real Estate Broker, discussed the effects of supply and demand on the development of affordable housing, effects of development time on housing prices, the cost of added requirements, the plat over sight plan concept, encouraging design variety versus maximum efficiency, and how a density reduction could be considered a public benefit.

Peter Hofheinz, Professional Land Planner, spoke in favor of considering density reduction as a public benefit, the value of extra time needed to review the uniqueness of PDs, the need to balance County requirements with cost, timing, and quality; he expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide the private sector's viewpoint.

James Shaw discussed the importance of agriculture in Indian River County and the Epic Estates Land Development Company.

Lois Wolf expressed concern for the loss of land, what constituted affordable housing, encroaching development, the attempted annexing of land by Epic Estates, and the need for better communication about upcoming development

projects. Ms. Wolf later received information regarding the rezoning process.

Peter Robinson, Laurel Homes, suggested allowing PDs to come before the Board earlier in the process to save time and encourage innovation, the need to expedite the zoning process, and the effect on business due to a lack of affordable housing.

Barry Garland commented on a new development of rental units as an example of affordable housing.

Kenneth Adair received information on the various ways affordable housing was defined.

Following public comments, Administrator Titkanich received confirmation that the Board members would like to have stakeholders (builders, engineers, planners) present to discuss some of the suggestions made at this workshop. An agreement was reached to hold the next workshop on January 22, 2026.

No Action Taken or Required

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Workshop was adjourned at 9:57 p.m.