



## Council Minutes – Special Meeting

January 20, 2026

Mayor Spalding called to order the New Albany City Council Special Meeting of January 20, 2026 at 5:03 pm at the New Albany Village Hall, 99 West Main Street, New Albany, Ohio. Staff attending were City Manager Joseph Stefanov, Law Director Benjamin Albrecht, Development Director Jennifer Chrysler, and Clerk of Council Jennifer Mason.

### **ROLL CALL:**

The following Mayor/Council Members answered Roll Call:

Mayor Sloan Spalding	P
CM Marlene Brisk	P
CM Michael Durik	P
CM Chip Fellows	P
CM Kasey Kist	P
CM Matt Shull	P
CM Andrea Wiltrot	P

### **ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

NONE

### **HEARING OF VISITORS:**

#### Shaun LaJeunesse

Mayor Spalding welcomed Mr. LaJeunesse, thanked him for his service to the city on the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). He explained that council would ask 3 questions of every candidate and, based on the answers, the conversation could go in a different direction.

Mr. LaJeunesse introduced himself and recounted moving to New Albany in 2014, coaching soccer and lacrosse, serving on the Personnel Appeals Board (PAB), and then being appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals for 5 years. He was recently reelected as chairperson the BZA.

Regarding Planning Commission (PC)'s role in city government, Mr. LaJeunesse saw the BZA as being a steward and executing on the strategic vision of the town. He thought of the BZA as the "JV" of the PC. The PC was the next logical step in his contribution back to New Albany. He took his job seriously. He praised council and city staff for the work they had done. He was impressed with the beauty and planning of this town and wanted to be a part of it.

Regarding experience with zoning and land use, Mr. LaJeunesse stated the BZA regularly participated in zoning classification and land use decisions. The BZA interpreted city code, seeing what made sense when comparing the code to factors, and made objective decisions when applying the codes across the town. During his 5 years on the BZA, 2 years as chair, he had seen quite a few significant matters.

Regarding New Albany's future, he thought about the strategic plan. The town had done an excellent job in planning. The area where he was hesitant was the infrastructure that supported that development. Power was an issue in the United States that would probably trickle down to New Albany. New Albany was building significant centers out east. These centers required water resources. He noted there was congestion and traffic. He knew the town had been building; there was the roundabout off of SR 605 taking traffic away from the town center. These were things he was concerned about.

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Regarding recent PC or City Council decisions, he didn't think there were any council decisions he disagreed with. The hamlet approval was a contentious decision by the board. He believed council did its due diligence and made the case for having the hamlet as part of the community. He thought council was worried about affordability. Most could hardly afford to live in this community and benefit from the great amenities. That was another area he was concerned about.

Regarding the central role of city government, he saw the primary role as setting the standard and setting the vision of community; whether it was schools, space, development - commercial or residential; making sure it was diverse, making sure people in the community were getting the best for their tax dollars.

Regarding any BZA decision where he disagreed with staff, he referred to a case with a pool on a 5-acre property. The owner didn't want to put a fence around the pool. He voted against that. For him, it came down to safety, because a 5-acre parcel was not above city code. From a land use perspective, that was an important decision.

Regarding why he wanted to be on the PC versus the BZA, he was told by the person who previously held the PC position that he'd be a great fit to take his place. Mr. LaJeunesse was thinking about his next logical step to continue his service to town. He started with the PAB, then the BZA. PC was the next logical step, he was told. He thought council was doing great job, so he wasn't really interested in that right now, but, who knew, in 4-5 years, there might be an opportunity to be on council.

Regarding what the city could be doing to make affordability better, he thought mixed-use development like the hamlet would bring housing prices down. Rather than spending \$1 million for housing in New Albany, there was another option - there was an apartment for \$250,000 which made a lot of sense, especially in a mixed-use community where one could get those types of residential housing.

As a final comment, Mr. LaJeunesse was committed to giving back to community. He had enjoyed his time here and wanted to participate in this community, making sure the strategy - the vision that we were setting, was executed.

### Molly Scott

Mayor Spalding explained that council would ask 3 questions of all the candidates. He thanked Ms. Scott for her commitment to city and service with Healthy New Albany, the Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB), the State Route 62 Focus Area Steering Committee, and the community gardens. Council Member Kist noted he knew Ms. Scott from the SAB. He reiterated there would be 3 standard questions and then council could ask additional questions.

Regarding Planning Commission (PC)'s role in city government, Ms. Scott talked about reviewing the PC description from the city's website. She would explain the PC's mission as guiding how the city grew and as doing more long-term planning. She believed the job of the PC was to advise city council to consider the land use and strategic planning, and to give council recommendations on future development. She had been fortunate to see the progress and see things working in the city; see people on city council and city boards. She'd had good experience and would like to continue that.

Regarding New Albany's future, she referenced the Engage New Albany strategic plan. She also thought it was important to understand how to navigate the city's website and information as educational tools. The city was on the right path as it continued to update with the strategic plan as needed - keep that as the foundation and structure for everything else the city did around it. She had enjoyed being a part of keeping the community engaged and

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keeping that transparency with the city's constituents. The US 62 Focus Area planning was an amazing experience in understanding all the different things that impacted how the city grew. It was important to have trusted leadership and connected vision. She understood this was an appointed position, with a different role than an elected or hired position, and it was important that all systems worked together. That was something she was interested in.

Regarding what she would change, she described herself as a visionary person. With her background in nature education, she understood the importance of planting a tree and maybe never seeing what happened with it but hoping that tree did great things where it was planted. She looked at city planning like that. She was interested in being involved and aware, through the PC, where the city was going with next strategic plan. She thought, as the city changed and started to meet some of the development goals, the city needed to stop and take a minute and think about person to person development as well. That was something she was interested in and would want to engage with more in the future.

Regarding experience participating in hearings or reviews involving zoning classifications and land use decisions, she described preparing for this interview with her corporate lawyer husband who worked in real estate development. She learned from him, actively reviewed the strategic plan and past PC, council, and other meeting minutes. She understood how important it was that it all connected, including the SAB. She had attended several PC meetings regarding trees and tree removal. She recounted attending a meeting where there was a helpful discussion with a family and AEP. She appreciated how the PC did a good job of explaining who was responsible for what. Attorneys knew this stuff. When people came in for residential matters, the PC really explained it to them. The city council person talked to them in a relatable way and encouraged engagement. When she was reading past meeting minutes, it felt like people were heard. Whether the applicant was a large company, a small business, or an individual, it was important to take how we used this land seriously as these decisions were being made - thinking about the past, where we were in the present, and how it could be in the future. She thought we were headed the right way and was excited to learn more.

Regarding the role of city government, she replied that its role was understanding legislation, understanding the processes and procedures, recognizing how we followed the laws – which New Albany did well. It was easy for people to diminish the role of government, but understanding civics was important to remind people to engage with one's community and to be respectful to those stepping up to serve in that capacity. Government was about the direction of the laws and was the leadership of the community.

Regarding her observations as a resident on the US 62 Focus Area Plan Steering Committee, she stated she learned more through that process than any board or city she'd been involved with. People didn't understand how complex these decisions were. It was easy to say, "Let's not put any houses anywhere." She understood there would be development. Keeping people engaged created investment and understanding. Sometimes, city government was seen as "those people." It was important to help people to be more engaged and to understand the process. That's why she was here. She wanted to learn more about the PC and offered her background and unique overall experience.

As a final comment, Ms. Scott noted there were a lot of tree discussions at PC and SAB; she paid special attention to that topic. As a nature educator for children and adults, and a small business owner, she knew this land and had so much respect for it. There would be development, but let's do it the best that we can.

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### Taru Saigal

Mayor Spalding thanked Dr. Saigal, and her family, for her involvement over the years, both with the IDEA Panel and emceeing the Diwali celebration, an event that was well-received every year. He explained that council would ask a few standard questions and then would open it up to council members.

Dr. Saigal introduced herself as a physician. She had been living in the New Albany community since 2017. She worked at The Ohio State University. She'd been serving on IDEA since 2023, engaging a lot of community members. It had been beautiful and growth for her, as well.

Regarding Planning Commission (PC)'s role in city government, she saw it as guiding policy, planning, and the long-term vision for the city's development. It was a bridge between residents and city council. It ensured that methods and development decisions were reviewed consistently, fairly, and in line with the city's goals. It was often the first public checkpoint that involved a detailed technical review and public hearing so that the projects were vetted before going to council. Broadly, it shaped how the city felt, worked, and grew, but at the granular level, it came down to walkability, accessibility, density, and city services. It tied economic growth with the needs and voices of people who lived here.

Regarding New Albany's future, she wished the future had roadmap and some of that was outlined in the Engage New Albany strategic plan. Other than that, the city was actively writing and drawing in real time. In projections. New Albany was expected to grow to 15,000 residents; employment could double as city expanded its footprint. That showed the growth and opportunities and what challenges may come. Looking north of SR 161, there was the International Business Park, and the city had done tremendous work there - from Abercrombie & Fitch to 16 industrial clusters; big companies coming and already there including Google, Amazon, Meta - and Hims and Hers were coming. The city needed to continue diversify the business park. It needed to move with the speed of the business, making sure that New Albany remained reliable and predictable to attract more and diverse companies to come and invest in that area. There was the US 62 corridor and US 62/SR 161 interchange area, and the gateway. The gateway was going to be a transportation node and be a high-visibility area. The city had to make sure that the visibility and architectural features fit the architecture of New Albany. Looking south of SR 161, the Village Center and mixed-use developments were coming there, including Mershad and the Hamlet at Sugar Run. That would impact the demographics there - perhaps more young professionals and older people who wanted to downsize. Traffic would be increasing there, and she hoped to see more infrastructure in the area. Nationwide Children's Hospital was coming. The Market Street Extension had done wonders for the traffic and congestion there. She saw growth and more traffic in the area. Looking to the east, Beech and Mink Roads, the road network was expanding there. That would be a potential area for business park expansion. On the west, Bevelhymer/Walnut Street area, that would be the recreational area of the community with the fieldhouse located there. Infrastructure was needed there. It was a lot of growth in terms of residents and infrastructure and demographics.

Regarding what she would change, Dr. Saigal stated she wouldn't change the overall direction we were heading in. New Albany was a master planned city which worked well, but she would like to have some guardrails in place. Before, we had moderate density coming into the area with the mixed-use developments. She would make sure that the city's infrastructure was proactively ready to minimize disruption and discomfort to residents. She knew that Meta had committed to long-term carbon-free energy, so she would make sure that those were not just the targets, but that they were met in a timely fashion. She'd make sure that the mixed-use developments fit well into the neighborhoods where they were going; maintaining Georgian architecture. When the city revised the Engage New Albany strategic plan, she wanted the youth and high school students to be part of that process because they would bring a new perspective.



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Ms. Saigal asked what council thought was the hardest part of this role which most people are not aware of. Mayor Spalding responded that she had experienced it through the hamlet development process. He described sitting on the dais and hearing from others, it could be difficult. At the end of the day, we were friends, neighbors, and colleagues all trying to make right decision. Sometimes, one had to make a decision on the best or right thing to do, and it wasn't always the most popular. Council members concurred.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Mayor Spalding moved that council go into executive session pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 121.22(G)(1) for discussion regarding appointment of a public official. Council Member Wiltrot seconded and council voted with 7 yes votes to go into executive session at 5:51 pm.

Mayor Spalding moved that council come out of executive session and resume the regular meeting. Council Member Shull seconded and council voted with 7 yes votes come out of executive session and resume the regular meeting. Council resumed the regular meeting at 6:31 pm.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

NONE

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further comments and all scheduled matters attended to, Mayor Spalding moved and Council Member Shull seconded to adjourn the January 20, 2026 special council meeting at 6:31 pm.

ATTEST:

  
Jennifer H. Mason, Clerk of Council  
Sloan T. Spalding, Mayor

03 FEB 2026  
Date

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Regarding PC land use and zoning classifications, she responded she did not have much experience with zoning. She had medical background. She was a quick learner; she operated in complex environments; she worked with multiple stakeholders and competing priorities; and she did a lot of technical documents in her work. She had foundational knowledge of zoning; she was not starting from a clear slate. She would bring the health care and wellness knowledge which was one of New Albany's pillars. She thought that PC's work was closely aligned with public health. She believed there was already strong zoning expertise on the commission. The commission didn't have a medical background. In her clinic, she told people that they needed to walk, exercise, meet people, and eat healthy food. A lot of this was not in her patients' or her control. These were social determinants - how we needed to have good spaces, sidewalks, trails, connectivity, and places to meet. She had been on the medical side of the table and she wanted to be on other side of the table to make a difference. She knew that city staff, architects, and engineers also guided and contributed to PC. She was not trying to duplicate the existing expertise, but to fill in a gap.

Regarding people not agreeing with or liking decisions, she stated she had worked with multiple stakeholders including patients, staff, New Albany leadership, medical students and residents – they came up with things that don't align all the time. Perspective-taking and consensus building were important. If someone was requesting a variance, there were criteria and scenarios in which those should be granted. She was aware of the framework in place. Following that framework and then perspective-taking and consensus building were things she did well.

Regarding the role of city government, she stated that governance was for final decisions. The Planning Commission recommendations went to city council for the final decision. She knew city council took care of everything in terms of roads or the final density of an area or whether the city needed more resources - like more schools. The final decision came down to the government and the PC shaped those discussions.

Regarding recent Planning Commission or City Council decisions, she had reviewed the PC minutes from last year and was happy to see there weren't many points of contention. She saw genuine and thoughtful discussion. When the Hamlet at Sugar Run was coming, she was skeptical. She was concerned about how it would fit in the neighborhood, the density, traffic congestion, safety, if it would fragment the area, and walkability. After talking to city staff, reviewing the proposal, and discussions, she came to know it was moderate density would not really strain the school. There would be changes for area traffic, there would be a great park. She had come around. She described how it looked like an uptown node rather than a downtown body. She thought it would be complimentary and she was excited about it. Recent rezoning on New Albany Condit Road from rural residential to infill planned unit developments - those were great decisions. Rose Run phase 2 was amazing with the Veterans Memorial. These were all things she agreed with and was excited about.

Regarding how she became interested in PC, she described living in New Albany, north of SR 161, since 2017. She and her husband were raising 3 young children. She hoped to stay and for her children to grow and work in the area. They were really invested in the community. Where she lived was a high-pressure growth area – with the US 62 corridor and everything coming there. The PC should have representation from people from that side so that the city understood what was going on in day-to-day life. Whether planning for that area or for people coming there, it was really important to have representation. She could offer the family focus lens because she had 3 children who saw things differently. She had skills and experience in her background. She would bring fresh eyes and fresh perspectives that maybe the city had not seen. Also, she had worked with a lot of the underserved population in and outside of her job. She had a deep awareness of who was missing from the room and whose voice needed to be represented. She would be the voice of some people who could come and represent themselves, but also of those missing from the table.