JACKSON COUNTY ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING/WORK SESSION
Monday, September 21, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Community Room, Jackson County Courthouse
201 W. Platt Street, Maquoketa, Iowa
Optional Zoom access was available.

Commissioners Present: Chair Mike Burke; Vice Chair Monica McHugh; Emerita Kies participated via Zoom; Sandra Gerlach; Kristine Pfab

Commissioners Absent and Excused: Brian Venema; Tom Stewart

Staff Present: Becca Pflughaupt, Zoning Administrator

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mike Burke at approximately 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by McHugh and seconded by Pfab to approve the September 21, 2026 agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes of the August 17, 2026 meeting. Motion was made by McHugh and seconded by Pfab to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

WORK SESSION: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS

Zoning Administrator Pflughaupt explained that the proposed amendments were identified through day-to-day administration of the recently updated Zoning Ordinance. Staff noted that provisions that appeared reasonable in drafting can produce unintended or inconsistent results when applied to actual properties and potential development situations. The work session was intended to obtain Commission direction before preparing a formal redline. No public hearing or formal recommendation was held on the text amendments.

Alternative A-1 and R-1 Roadway Setbacks

Staff reviewed the Alternative Development Regulations that allow qualifying older lots to use reduced setbacks. Discussion focused on the current 10-foot roadway setback, the separate garage parking setback, private-road easements, small platted lots, traffic speeds, sight distance, parking, and the potential effect of sending additional requests to the Board of Adjustment.

The Commission directed staff to retain the current R-1 Alternative roadway setback and revise the A-1 Alternative roadway setback to 20 feet from the applicable road right-of-way or roadway easement, while retaining the County Engineer's existing authority to require a greater setback along a public roadway when warranted. Existing provisions allowing lawful nonconforming structures to be reconstructed within an existing footprint were discussed and were not proposed for removal.

Attached vs. Detached Accessory Structures

Staff reviewed the different setback treatment currently applied to garages, carports, and other accessory structures. The Commission supported regulating roofed or enclosed structures based on whether they are attached to or detached from the principal structure rather than by the name of the use or the orientation of a garage door. An attached garage or other attached roofed/enclosed addition would follow the principal-building setbacks. A detached accessory structure would follow the detached-accessory setbacks, including the applicable roadway setback.

Administrative Waivers from Public-Road Setbacks

Staff reviewed the Administrative Waiver process and proposed removing public-road setbacks from the setbacks that may be reduced administratively. The Commission supported retaining the Administrative Waiver for otherwise eligible side, rear, and similar setback situations, while requiring relief from a public-road setback to be considered by the Board of Adjustment through the Dimensional Variance process. Staff noted that County Engineer input would continue to be provided to the Board where roadway considerations are involved.

Retaining Walls, Grading, and Drainage

Staff explained that the Ordinance defines retaining walls but does not provide a clear framework for applying ordinary building setbacks to walls that may need to be located where a grade change, erosion issue, or drainage problem actually exists. The Commission generally supported not automatically applying ordinary building setbacks to retaining walls. Discussion emphasized keeping walls outside public rights-of-way and applicable easements, protecting neighboring property from adverse drainage impacts, preserving visibility, and obtaining County Engineer or other technical review when site conditions warrant. The Commission also discussed the practicality and cost of requiring civil-engineering plans for routine landscaping walls. Staff will further refine the threshold and review requirements.

Small Accessory Storage Structure Permit Exemption

Staff proposed exempting a one-story detached accessory storage structure of 120 square feet or less from the zoning-permit requirement when the structure has no permanent foundation and is used only for storage. Setbacks, easements, rights-of-way, floodplain requirements, and other location standards would continue to apply. The Commission supported the concept, noting that it is intended for small off-the-shelf sheds used for lawn equipment or seasonal storage rather than larger accessory buildings.

Relief Mechanisms and No Stacking

Staff proposed clarifying that reduced A-1 and R-1 Alternative setbacks may not be further reduced through an Administrative Waiver. The Commission discussed the example of a property already using an Alternative setback and then attempting to apply an additional percentage reduction through an Administrative Waiver. The Commission supported prohibiting that type of sequential stacking while retaining the ability to seek a Dimensional Variance from the Board of Adjustment where the applicable variance standard is met.

Accessory Dwelling Unit State-Law Conformance

Staff explained that the Accessory Dwelling Unit provisions need to be updated to conform to changes in state law that became effective after the County's November 2025 ordinance update. The change is intended as a state-law conformance item rather than a new local policy. Final wording will be reviewed as part of the amendment process.

Statutory and Procedural Citation Updates

Staff identified outdated or incorrect statutory references and procedural language that should be updated to current references. No policy change is intended. Staff stated that final legal wording would be confirmed with the County Attorney's Office before the formal public hearing.

Conditional-Use Setback Consistency

• Seasonal resorts: Staff clarified that the proposed changes apply to the reduced Note 3 seasonal-resort option, not the regular two-acre seasonal-resort standard. The Commission supported requiring both central water and central sewage service in order to use the reduced lot area and width and supported applying the regular A-1 Standard building setbacks to seasonal-resort structures. Discussion also touched on the definition and practical meaning of seasonal occupancy; no separate change to the definition was finalized during the work session.

• Multiple-family dwellings: The Commission supported requiring multiple-family dwellings to meet the same minimum building setbacks applicable to a principal dwelling in the same zoning district and development framework rather than the current 10-foot setbacks on all sides.

• R-1 conditional uses: The Commission supported replacing the five-foot rear setback in the R-1 Standard catch-all conditional-use row with the regular R-1 Standard principal-building setbacks unless a specific use has its own dimensional standard.

Housekeeping and Technical Corrections

Staff reviewed a list of scrivener and housekeeping corrections, including punctuation, missing words, incorrect internal cross-references, incorrect district labels, and an incorrect county name. A smaller group of technical corrections that could have operative effect will receive additional review.

WORK SESSION: UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS AND BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS

The Commission began review of a working draft for utility-scale solar energy systems. Staff explained that the draft was structured generally in a manner consistent with the County's wind-energy and high-density computing facility ordinance work where appropriate, but that the document remained preliminary. The Commission reviewed selected policy questions to provide working direction; no public hearing, final recommendation, or formal action was taken.

• Zoning districts: The working draft allows utility-scale solar to be considered by special exception in A-1, M-1, and M-2. Commissioners indicated support for also including C-1 as a district in which the use could be considered, subject to the same approval process.

• Project acreage: The draft contained a 640-acre project cap. Commissioners discussed significantly smaller limits and the amount of land appropriate for a single Jackson County

project. An 80-acre cap was suggested as a provisional working number for further drafting and discussion. The Commission emphasized that the number was not final.

• Separation between projects: The draft's proposed separation between separate utility-scale solar projects was discussed as a way to address concentration and project splitting. Commissioners questioned whether a mandatory separation requirement would be legally enforceable and directed staff to obtain County Attorney guidance before devoting additional work to that provision.

• Municipal buffer and notice: Commissioners supported retaining the draft's municipal-development buffer concept and the additional County courtesy-notice concept, subject to further refinement of the distances and procedures.

• Setbacks: The Commission discussed draft setbacks from nonparticipating occupied structures, nonparticipating property lines, public road rights-of-way, cemeteries, and public conservation/recreation land. A 1,000-foot occupied-structure setback remained a working number, but commissioners questioned whether the same distance is warranted for solar as for other facility types and whether measurement should be from the project component or project boundary. No final setback distances were selected. Staff will continue technical and legal review.

• Battery energy storage: The Commission discussed the relationship between solar projects and battery energy storage. Staff stated that battery energy storage is expected to be addressed in a separate ordinance, while coordinating overlapping siting and setback issues where appropriate. Commissioners emphasized obtaining local fire-department input regarding battery fire and emergency-response considerations.

• Agricultural soils and CSR2: The draft treats CSR2 and agricultural-resource quality as siting and layout considerations rather than an automatic prohibition. Discussion reflected concern about removing productive land from agriculture while also recognizing landowner circumstances and property rights. The Commission generally favored retaining a flexible siting-factor approach rather than establishing a hard CSR2 cutoff at this stage.

• Agricultural impact mitigation: The Commission reviewed draft protections for topsoil, compaction, drainage tile, vegetation, and weed control. Members questioned whether a permanent laboratory soil-monitoring program would be necessary or administratively practical and noted existing County weed-control authority. Staff will review the overlap with existing requirements.

• Landscape and visual screening: The Commission discussed screening for nearby occupied structures and examples of project-specific viewshed analysis. Discussion generally favored evaluating screening where solar facilities are materially visible from occupied properties rather than requiring blanket screening along every roadway or property edge. No final screening distance or standard was selected.

The Commission paused the solar discussion after reaching approximately the midpoint of the working draft and agreed to continue review at a future meeting.

ITEMS FROM STAFF

Zoning Administrator Pflughaupt stated that the next regular Zoning Commission meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The Commission discussed proceeding

with a public hearing on the zoning ordinance text amendments at that meeting after staff prepares the redlined language and obtains needed County Attorney review. Commissioners noted that the draft may still be revised based on additional comments before a recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION

No additional Commission items were presented.

ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

Chair Burke invited comments regarding matters not otherwise listed on the agenda. No additional public comments were received.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Gerlach and seconded by McHugh to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Becca Pflughaupt, Zoning Administrator

Adopted: 10/19/2026