



CITY OF AUBURN HILLS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

March 5, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chairperson Beidoun called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: **Carolyn Shearer, Darlene MacMillan, Jack Ferguson, Cynthia Pavlich, Raymond Saelens, Sam Beidoun, Dominick Tringali, Greg Ouellette (arrived at 7:07 p.m.)**

Absent: None.

Also Present: Director of Community Development Steve Cohen, and Assistant Director of Community Development Devin Lang

Guests: 12

LOCATION: Council Chambers, 1827 N. Squirrel Road, Auburn Hills, MI 48326

3. PERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 5, 2025

Moved by Saelens to approve the minutes of February 5, 2025.

Second by Ferguson.

VOTE: Yes: Shearer, MacMillan, Ferguson, Pavlich, Saelens, Beidoun, Tringali

No: None

Motion Carried (7-0)

5. PETITIONERS

5a. Rezoning of Joswick Property (7:03 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for approval of rezoning from B-2, General Business District to R-1B, One-Family Residential District, or any other appropriate zoning district.

Mr. Cohen explained that this is a request from Castle Commercial Carpentry LLC to rezone a 15,950-square-foot vacant parcel (Sidwell No. 14-13-152-010) from B-2, General Business to R-1B, One-Family Residential District. The property is generally located at the northwest corner of Five Points Drive and Joswick Road.

The City's Master Plan depicts the parcel within the generalized border between residential and non-residential land use classifications. The plan was historically developed to be flexible, thus allowing the Planning Commission and City Council to address the zoning of property in these transition areas between land use classifications on a case-by-case basis. The subject parcel is too small to be developed with a viable commercial business.

Robert and Kathleen Neidzwiecki, Castle Commercial Carpentry LLC, 1787 W. Hamlin Road, Rochester Hills, MI 48307, were available to answer any questions the Commission had.

The Commission asked about the following:

1. Number of rental homes the applicant manages;
2. Rezoning from commercial to residential;
3. Size of home;
4. Whether there is a rendering of the floor plan;

The applicants explained that they currently own and manage seven houses, and this would be their eighth house. These residences tend to be occupied by long-term tenants. They are requesting the rezoning from commercial to residential because this piece is isolated from the rest of the commercially zoned area.

The applicants explained that the home will be a one-story with no basement, to fit into the surrounding neighborhood. It is an open floor plan, which provides a more spacious feeling. Mr. Neidzwiecki shared a rendering of the floor plan with the Commission.

(Mr. Ouellette arrived at 7:07 p.m.)

Mr. Beidoun opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m.

There being no public comments, Mr. Beidoun closed the public hearing at 7:08 p.m.

Moved by Shearer to recommend to City Council approval of the rezoning of Sidwell No. 14-13-152-010 from B-2, General Business District to R-1B, One-Family Residential District.

Second by Saelens.

**VOTE: Yes: Pavlich, Saelens, Shearer, MacMillan, Ferguson, Beidoun, Tringali, Ouellette
No: None Motion Carried (8-0)**

5b. Alo's Sports Bar – 3315 Auburn Road (7:11 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for Special Land Use Permit and Site Plan approval to renovate an existing building, improve the parking lot, and expand the existing outdoor seating area.

Mr. Lang explained that this is a request from Platon Rodriguez representing Alo's Sports Bar for a Special Land Use Permit and Site Plan approval to conduct a restaurant operation with outdoor seating at the vacant building at 3315 Auburn Road. The building is 6,371 square feet in size. The property is located at the northeast corner of Auburn Road and Parkways Blvd, and zoned D, Downtown District. The existing restaurant has a small outside seating area previously approved by the City Council in 2002. Alo's proposes enlarging this outdoor seating area and making significant façade and interior improvements to the building.

The expanded patio provides seating for approximately 104 individuals. Due to nuisance concerns associated with loud music near residential areas and the City park, outdoor speakers and other outdoor entertainment are not currently proposed for the outdoor seating area.

After evaluating several options with the applicant, staff recommend that the City Council allow the current outdoor seating configuration, which is physically separated from the building, to be implemented. This will support pedestrian thoroughfare and allow pedestrian traffic from Auburn Road to access the restaurant from the western side of the building.

The plan proposes removing eight existing parking spaces to improve site design, expand green space, and accommodate the expanded outdoor seating area. Downtown zoning does not require parking for this use; however, 33 spaces are provided with additional shared-use private parking to the east.

As part of this project, the property owner will abandon an existing water main running through the property. The City will work with the owner to reroute the water main within the existing Parkways Blvd. right-of-way.

Sal Lorenzano, DesignHaus, 3300 Auburn Road, Suite 300, Auburn Hills, MI 48326, and Nicholas Talmers, Talmers Auburn LLC, 555 Pleasant, Birmingham, MI 48009, were available to answer any questions the Commission had.

The Commission asked about the following:

1. The sidewalk separating the outdoor seating area from the building, allowing access to the public;
2. Lack of a canopy for sun screening;
3. Whether this property would be included in the proposed social district, if approved;
4. The history of the property;
5. Adequacy of parking.

Mr. Lang explained that the City ordinance requires that outdoor seating be attached to the building, but it can be separate at the discretion of the City Council. Mr. Saelens stated that he believes it cannot be set up so that it is accessible to people who are not patrons of the establishment. Mr. Lang stated that he would investigate this.

Mr. Lorenzano explained that umbrellas will be provided in the summer for the outdoor seating area.

Mr. Saelens expressed concern about the park's proximity if this property is included in the proposed social district. Mr. Cohen stated that any discussion of the proposed social district is premature as the City Council has not made any determination regarding the establishment of social districts.

Mr. Lorenzano explained that there will be a shared parking agreement with the other properties. Mr. Talmers stated that the shared parking nearby the restaurant and the overall downtown parking will be sufficient. Mr. Lang explained that when Rich & Associates conducted the parking study in 2024, this property was included as an eating establishment. Mr. Lang also stated that the parking deck, to be completed in 2026-2027, will add 117 spaces.

Mr. Talmers shared a historical perspective on the property and his current investment in the property.

Mr. Beidoun opened the public hearing at 7:27 p.m.

There being no public comments, Mr. Beidoun closed the public hearing at 7:28 p.m.

Moved by Pavlich to recommend to City Council approval of the Site Plan and Special Land Use Permit for Alo's Sports Bar – 3315 Auburn Road subject to the conditions of the City's Administrative Review Team. Second by MacMillan.

**VOTE: Yes: Saelens, Tringali, MacMillan, Pavlich, Shearer, Ferguson, Beidoun, Ouellette
No: None Motion Carried (8-0)**

5c. 975 South Opdyke Self-Storage Redevelopment (7:29 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for combined PUD Step One – Qualification/Step Two – Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a self-storage building addition and facility.

Mr. Cohen explained that this is a request from Etkin Real Estate Solutions for Planned Unit Development (PUD) Option approval to construct a 45,032-square-foot addition to the existing building located at the northeast corner of S. Opdyke Road and South Boulevard. The expanded building will be 149,865 square feet. The 13.37-acre site is zoned T&R, Technology and Research District. The new addition and part of the existing building totaling 107,613 square feet will be developed as a 702-unit, indoor, climate-controlled self-storage facility. The north 42,252 square feet of the building will continue to house automotive supplier Pierburg US LLC, which has been a tenant since 2008.

The building was initially constructed as a single-story Kmart retail store when it opened in November 1971. That store closed in November 1992. The building was converted into office space in the mid-1990s for GM University, EDS, and later a call center. The applicant has indicated that leasing office space is a challenge, with the widespread adoption of working from home significantly reducing the need for physical office space. Most R&D tenants looking for space today need high ceilings for lifts, cranes, racks, etc. Staff feel that this self-storage proposal provides a satisfactory solution for addressing reinvestment and utilization of the building and property, including the reduction of the parking lot surrounding the building.

The façade of the building will resemble a two-story technology building using high-end materials. The existing building will be painted to match the new addition. The applicant will add high-quality landscaping with additional green space and trees that exceed ordinance requirements.

This project will beautify the City's entrance at S. Opdyke Road and South Boulevard by removing excess parking lots and adding new trees, open space, and an updated prominent "Auburn Hills" gateway sign.

Josh Suardini, Etkin Management LLC, 150 W. 2nd Street, Suite 200, Royal Oak, MI 48067, was available to answer any questions the Commission had.

The Commission asked about the following:

1. Whether there will be a one-story or two-story addition;
2. Rental cost for storage units;
3. The possibility of adding a second story of storage units;
4. Signage;
5. Units with drive-in access;
6. Time of access;

Mr. Suardini explained that the building is two stories high and looks like a two-story building from the exterior, but it is only one story. The facility is completely climate-controlled, has card access only, and is equipped with security cameras. There is also a covered drop-off area between the two buildings.

Mr. Suardini stated that the size of the units ranges from 5'x5' to 10'x30' and rent for between \$80 and \$350/month. This facility will have 702 units, which the market will typically bear. The market would not bear adding more units beyond 702, so they have chosen not to add a second story of units.

Mr. Cohen explained that the building signage does not affect the entry signage that Etkin has agreed to install. Mr. Suardini stated that until a third-party manager is chosen for the facility, the signage's exact content is unknown. Mr. Cohen noted that the "Auburn Hills" entry signage on Opdyke Road will only have the City's logo and no additional facility signage. The applicant has agreed to install the entry signage as a net benefit to the City.

Mr. Suardini stated that nine units will have drive-in access for potential indoor vehicle storage. Access to the facility is typically limited to Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and closed on Sunday. The drive-in units would continue to have access during hours when the office is closed.

Mr. Beidoun opened the public hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Edward Magaña, 733 Provincetown Road, Auburn Hills, stated that he lives behind the subject property. His only concern is the parking lot lighting, and he requested that downward shielding be used. Mr. Suardini stated that no lighting will be on the east side, and shielding will be installed on the west side. Mr. Cohen also stated that all missing trees will be planted, and missing light poles will be reinstalled per Ordinance requirements.

There being no further public comment, Mr. Beidoun closed the public hearing at 7:48 p.m.

Moved by Saelens to recommend to City Council approval of the combined PUD Step One – Concept Plan and PUD Step Two – Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit for 975 South Opdyke Self Storage Redevelopment subject to the conditions of the City's Administrative Review Team.

Second by Ouellette.

VOTE: Yes: Beidoun, Saelens, Pavlich, Shearer, MacMillan, Ferguson, Tringali, Ouellette

No: None

Motion Carried (8-0)

5d. Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance (7:50 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for approval of a text amendment to amend Article XII. T&R, Technology and Research Districts of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Cohen explained that this revision to the Zoning Ordinance has been primarily drafted to give the City Council full control and discretion over approving multi-family residential developments in the T&R District. Currently, multi-family residential dwellings are allowed on sites over 10 acres in size, provided a Special Land Use Permit is granted. There are no multi-family residential developments in the T&R District today.

In recent years, staff have received inquiries regarding the adaptive reuse of underutilized office buildings and associated parking lots. This amendment is intended to allow the City Council to consider and allow housing proposals, with a preference toward owner-occupied condominiums, via the Planned Unit Development Option in the T&R District on a case-by-case basis.

This amendment also makes a minor formatting change to the requirements for the outside storage of vehicles and removes stadiums and arenas from the zoning district since the GM VAA facility has replaced the Palace of Auburn Hills area.

Mr. Beidoun opened the public hearing at 7:56 p.m.

There being no public comments, Mr. Beidoun closed the public hearing at 7:57 p.m.

Moved by Ferguson to recommend to City Council approval of the enclosed Text Amendment to Article XII. T&R, Technology & Research Districts of the Zoning Ordinance.

Second by MacMillan.

VOTE: Yes: Tringali, Shearer, Beidoun, Ferguson, Pavlich, MacMillan, Saelens, Ouellette
No: None **Motion Carried (8-0)**

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7a. Motion – Cancel the April 9, 2025 Auburn Hills Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Ferguson to cancel the April 9, 2025 Auburn Hills Planning Commission Meeting.

Second by Saelens.

VOTE: Yes: Shearer, MacMillan, Ferguson, Pavlich, Saelens, Beidoun, Tringali, Ouellette
No: None **Motion Carried (8-0)**

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Cohen stated that the Planning Commission will soon begin reviewing and amending the Master Plan, with the intent to complete the process by the end of the year.

9. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auburn Hills Council Chambers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice Chairperson Beidoun adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Submitted by:

Susan McCullough, MiPMC III, CMC

Recording Secretary