



CITY OF AUBURN HILLS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

September 10, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Ouellette called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: **Carolyn Shearer, Darlene MacMillan, Jack Ferguson, Cynthia Pavlich, Sam Beidoun, Dominic Patrus, Greg Ouellette**
Absent: Dominick Tringali, Raymond Saelens
Also Present: Director of Community Development Steve Cohen, Assistant Director of Community Development Devin Lang, City Engineer Hannah Driesenga, Director of the Department of Public Works Stephen Baldante, DPW Manager of Fleet and Roads Jason Hefner
Guests: None

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

3. PERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 6, 2025

Moved by Beidoun to approve the minutes of August 6, 2025.

Second by Ferguson.

VOTE: Yes: Shearer, MacMillan, Ferguson, Pavlich, Beidoun, Patrus, Ouellette

No: None

Motion Carried (7-0)

5. PETITIONERS

5a. Municipal Campus Fuel Island (7:01 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a new municipal fueling island.

This is a request from the Auburn Hills Tax Increment Finance Authority and Department of Public Works to construct a dual dispenser fuel island on the City's municipal campus, located at 1827 N. Squirrel Road. The new fuel island will only serve municipal vehicles.

The island will provide a secondary location for refueling municipal vehicles with gasoline, diesel and diesel exhaust fluid. This addition will reduce the City's reliance on its current fueling location at the Department of Public Works facility. Locating this resource at the municipal campus will enhance fleet operations, maintain the readiness of emergency vehicles, and reduce service interruptions caused by traveling off-site to refuel.

Locating a second fuel island on the municipal campus will reduce the inefficiencies of requiring the Police, Fire and Senior Services departments to travel 10-17 miles round-trip to refuel at the Department of Public Works facility in the northernmost part of the City.

To minimize the aesthetic impact of the fuel island, there will be maximum landscaping and screening, preserving many existing trees and associated vegetation and installing new plantings between the fuel island and the Community Center. The architectural design will also blend in well with the other buildings on the municipal campus.

The existing playground west of the Community Center will be removed. The Department of Public Works will work with the Department of Recreation and Senior Services to identify an appropriate location on the municipal campus for the construction of a new playground in 2026.

City Engineer Hannah Driesenga, Director of the Department of Public Works Stephen Baldante, DPW Manager of Fleet and Roads Jason Hefner were available to answer any questions of the Commission.

The Commission asked about the following:

1. The financial benefit to the City;
2. Choosing the supplier;
3. The number of vehicles per day;
4. Security of the area;
5. Hours of availability.

Mr. Baldante stated that the City Manager estimated that the financial benefit of installing this second fuel island will be realized in 4-5 years. He further explained that the choice of the fuel supplier follows the City's bid proposal process and that approximately 20 vehicles per day will use this new fueling island. The DPW vehicles will continue to use the original fuel island on Brown Road. However, this new fuel island will help with refueling snow plows working in the south end during storm events.

Mr. Hefner explained that there is a key required to access the fuel island and that the system is controlled through Fuel Master whereby each vehicle has a vehicle-specific key. The fuel island is available 24 hours per day. Mr. Baldante stated that security cameras may be considered in the future if necessary.

Mr. Ouellette opened the public hearing at 7:07 p.m.

There being no public comments, Mr. Ouellette closed the public hearing at 7:07 p.m.

Moved by Shearer to recommend to City Council approval of the Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit for the Auburn Hills Municipal Campus Fuel Island subject to the conditions of the City's Administrative Review Team.

Second by MacMillan.

VOTE:

Yes: MacMillan, Beidoun, Patrus, Pavlich, Shearer, Ferguson, Ouellette

No: None

Motion Carried (7-0)

5b. Text Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance (7:09 p.m.)

Public Hearing/Motion – Recommendation to City Council for approval of a text amendment to amend Article IX. B-2, General Business Districts of the Zoning Ordinance.

This revision will permit the outdoor storage of ice chests and propane tanks at gasoline service stations, provided they are screened from view with a masonry enclosure. Although outdoor storage and sale of merchandise and materials are prohibited at gasoline service stations, the issue has become an ordinance enforcement challenge for the City, as these items are often pushed outside by proprietors over time to create more space inside the convenience store for selling food, beverages and merchandise. These items are then placed on the sidewalk in front of the convenience store, which the Zoning Ordinance prohibits.

In 2019, Speedway proposed the enclosure solution outlined in this ordinance amendment to the Zoning Board of Appeals for its University Drive store, which was well-received. The City Council approved the project a few months later, but unfortunately, that rebuild project was a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic and did not move forward. The same solution was proposed via the Planned Unit Development option for a new Speedway (2019), later changed to Mobil (2024), on the west side of Joslyn near I-75. That project is preparing to begin construction.

Mr. Ouellette opened the public hearing at 7:15 p.m.

The Commission discussed the possibility of asking the service station owners to voluntarily clean up their properties and comply with the requirements. Mr. Cohen explained that this service has become commonplace at gas stations, and staff desired direction from the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the allowance of outdoor ice chests and propane sales, as well as a solution to manage them in the best way possible.

The Commission discussed the possibility of allowing propane sales and ice chests by right, provided they are placed in an aesthetically pleasing and safe/secure location. It may be possible to require them to be located on the side of the building, rather than at the front entrance. The Commission also discussed requiring ice chests to be located inside the building. Propane sales would need to be conducted outside of the building due to Building and

Fire codes. It was also noted that these items are often placed directly in front of the building, not only for the consumer to easily find, but for the safety and security of the clerks operating the convenience store.

The Commission discussed the importance of maintaining barrier-free access on the sidewalks in front of the convenience stores. Mr. Cohen advised that sidewalks in front of these stores range from five to seven feet wide, depending on when they were built and the ordinance in place at the time, and that the minimum continuous clear width for an accessible sidewalk is 36 inches (three feet).

It was noted that 18 public/oil-company branded gas stations operate in Auburn Hills (20, including membership-based Costco and Sam's Club), and almost every facility has ice chests and propane tank sales on the sidewalk in front of their business. As to how code enforcement would typically address the violation, Mr. Lang explained that there is a hierarchy of enforcement with the City, and this particular issue has not risen to a level of concern in recent years, as it has become commonplace for these businesses in and outside of Auburn Hills to utilize this type of outdoor sales.

The Commission asked Mr. Cohen to research additional options for them to consider that would be implemented by the Zoning Ordinance to permit the outdoor storage of ice chests and propane tanks at gasoline service stations, as this service provides convenience to Auburn Hills citizens and the general public.

There being no public comments, Mr. Ouellette closed the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Moved by Shearer to postpone recommendation to City Council regarding the enclosed Text Amendment to Article IX. B-2, General Business Districts of the Zoning Ordinance to the October 8, 2025 Planning Commission meeting.

Second by MacMillan.

VOTE:

Yes: Beidoun, Patrus, MacMillan, Pavlich, Shearer, Ferguson, Ouellette

No: None

Motion Carried (7-0)

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None.

7. NEW BUSINESS – None.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

9. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, October 8, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auburn Hills Council Chambers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Ouellette adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Submitted by:

Susan McCullough, MiPMC III, CMC

Recording Secretary