



**CITY OF WALLED LAKE  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026**

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Chairman Schinzing.

**ROLL CALL:** Bashir, Martin, Mital, Schinzing, Swiatek, Whitt

**ABSENT:** Robertson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Planning Consultant Ortega, City Attorney Vanerian, and City Clerk Stuart

**PC 05-01-26 MOTION TO EXCUSE COMMISSIONER ROBERTSON FROM TONIGHT'S MEETING**

Motion by Swiatek, seconded by Martin, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To excuse Commissioner Robertson from tonight's meeting.

**REQUESTS FOR AGENDA CHANGES:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**PC 05-02-26 APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 14, 2026 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

Motion by Swiatek, seconded by Bashir, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve the April 14, 2026 Planning Commission minutes.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes (6)	Martin, Swiatek, Whitt, Schinzing
Nays (0)	
Absent (1)	Robertson
Abstain (1)	Amin

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:**

Provided during new business item #1.

**COMMUNICATION:**

Recording Secretary Stuart read into the record letter from Tina Thurston and Diane Biros and John Colleran regarding PC 318.

#1

*Dear members of City Council,*

*I'm writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed development by Livonia Builders for a planned unit development of a 96 residential apartment complex. At the vacant property located at Pontiac Trail and Maple Rd. where the former school once stood. My family lives on common St. which would be directly impacted by this development and we have serious concerns about the safety and livability of our neighborhood. If this proposal is approved. First and foremost, the anticipated increase in traffic is deeply concerned. Morning. Our street is already a single lane two way residential Rd. that experiences significant congestion, particularly due to the activity at the nearby church. This frequently causes backups when attempting to access Pontiac Trail. Adding the traffic associated with a 96 unit apartment complex will only exacerbate these issues, making daily travel more difficult and unsafe for residents. Additionally, making a left turn on to Pontiac Trail is already challenging due to the existing. Graphic pattern. The increased volume of vehicles from this development will worsen these conditions significantly. It is also highly likely that apartment residents will choose to use our residential streets to access Pontiac Trail southbound rather than utilizing Maple Rd. Further increasing traffic on our already strained roadway safety is our greatest concern. Our neighborhood does not have sidewalks and as a result, residents, including families with young children. Just walk on the road. My family in particular has three young children, a toddler and two infants. We we regularly walk them to the nearby park and the thought of the substantially increased traffic on our street poses a serious risk to their safety as well. To the other children and families in the area. We understand the need for thoughtful development, but we strongly believe that this proposal, as it currently stands, does not adequately consider the impact on existing residents, particularly in terms of Traffic Safety and neighborhood infrastructure. We respectfully urge the City Council to carefully consider these concerns. And to either reject this proposal or require significant revisions that address traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and neighborhood preservations thank you for your time and consideration.*

*John Colleran*

#2

*My name is Tina Thurston and I'm a resident on Delta Road in Walled Lake. I have lived in Walled Lake for over 25 years. I am against the apartments that are being proposed in the old Wall Lake middle school location next to Dairy Queen on Pontiac Trail in Maple Road. We have only so many vacant pieces of land left in our city, and I would prefer to see it to go to something that is not going to cause so much congestion in chaos. There are so many empty units around the city and in Wixom that it seems ridiculous to put almost 100 unit apartment complex in that location.*

*The traffic in our area has been steadily getting more congested. It seems most days you cannot get down Maple or Decker without waiting through three or four light cycles. The gas station going in at Maple and Decker across from the copper mug is going to cause more headaches and congestion. Maple and Decker is already a hot bed for accidents. I think you need to look at what's best for the city and not just the tax line. Putting a 100-unit apartment system in this location because congestion on roads that have no way to be expanded.*

*Tina Thurston  
Diane Biros*

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:  
PUBLIC HEARING**

Chairman Schinzing explained he will open the public hearing and have audience speak. He explained this is a preliminary process, the applicant is before the planning commission to have direction provided, no specific decisions are being made on this project this evening. He requested audience participants to be respectful and mindful of the three minute time allotment to address the commission.

- 1. PC 318 – 615 N. Pontiac Trail, 92-17-34-203-017  
Request: Commercial Planned Unit Development –  
-96 Unit Residential Complex  
Applicant: Livonia Builders**

*Open Public Meeting 7:48 p.m.*

Diane Roman – asked if the residents get to vote on this.

Chairman Schinzing said no, the Planning Commission will make the recommendation to the City Council, and they will make the decision if this moves forward or not.

Bridgette Johnson - a resident of Walled Lake most of her life, recently, in the past 10 years, has moved to Spring Park. She recognizes the amount of traffic has been steadily increasing to a point where it's very difficult to turn left on Pontiac Trail. She said she agrees with both letters that were sent in. She would also like to bring to attention the airline trail that we're so proud of that we want people to ride their bikes or walk through our city and visit our businesses Casey's, Dairy Queen, Rancho Tapatio, and things like that. She said we want to bring people into our city through that airline trail, but bringing upwards of 200 more cars of traffic in an already incredibly busy intersection is irresponsible, and it's not safe. She thanked the Planning Commission for their time.

Tim Moore, 369 Decker – said he agreed with the prior comments about parking as well. He said his issue to discuss tonight is the new gas station going in, did anybody measure the distance

between the nearest house and this new gas station at Maple and Decker. He said because if it's within 1000 feet of a house, it's illegal. He said the city went through this years ago when applicants tried to put up a gas station at 14 Mile and Decker Road and at that time he lived in the condos nearby. He asked again if anybody measured the distance or not. He said it takes him 5 minutes to get out of his driveway. He said right now, with the traffic on Decker Road, at certain times of day, you sit through three or four lights. He asked if anyone did a traffic study on this because he doesn't know how they're going to be able to get people in and out of the gas station.

Cecil George said he does not live in this community, he lives in Lyon Township and is running for state Senate in District 13, which Walled Lake would be a part of. He said he had seen the Facebook post made by Dennis O'Rourke about the meeting tonight. He said he thought this was a good thing because, as a candidate, he is running on 4 pillars, one of them being the community has a right to know. He said because in his township they aren't sharing everything, so he loves what we are doing around here. This is what we want to see, because at the last township meeting, he attended he was not happy or pleased with what they'd been doing with, the data center stuff. He said he is happy about what we are doing here and how everybody is showing up. So good job for y'all.

Father Michael Savickas, 531 Common – said they have concerns about this project. He understands it has to be developed however it seems to him it could be better than what is being proposed, just in another apartment building. He said we already have a lot of apartments in the area and surrounding communities, and it seems we should move towards a community-oriented development. He asked how this apartment development enhances the Main Street community. He asked if the Downtown Development Authority reviewed this project or this concept. He said there is additional traffic, this is a problem. He said there is going to be a three-story building, the amount of asphalt, concerns come up about drainage. He said the proposed entrance on Common Street has been mentioned and is a safety concern. Why not have the entrance off Pontiac Trail. He asked if a traffic study was done. He said Walled Lake is losing its sense of community, we're turning into a city of transients, marijuana shops, and gas stations. He said we now have 6 gas stations within one square mile. He said there's a lot of rentals; it is a transient type of community now. He said the applicant's density is too high. He said the safety of children is a huge concern. He said this is not what the property is zoned for, there is no community enhancement with this proposal. He asked if this is a PUD, what is the significant recognizable benefit to the community they are proposing. He said their school has 220 students, that include pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and they use their facilities that are across the street across Common St. at Zeff Hall. He said staff and students cross this street to their play area many times throughout the day. He said the proposed entrance comes directly into their parking area across the street; this is a huge concern. He said there are concerns that currently there's some people that walk down Common Street to access the local marijuana shop, we don't know what kind of people are coming in there. He said there are serious incidents that occur can occur with schools, one just occurred in Bloomfield Hills and that certainly is a worry on the part of the parents at St. William School.

Patrick was here on behalf of Mr. Kushmer, who's been a resident of Walled Lake for almost 35 years. He said they feel similar to the concerns that were already raised earlier about traffic safety, congestion in the community, and better use for space. He said for a more communal purpose instead of enriching the tax base, enrich the community. He said he wanted to remind everyone of the deaths that occurred at Maple and Decker Road less than two years ago, the loss of Ms. Piper Carrothers. He said no tax base is worth someone's life.

Jean Victor, 740 Woods Court – said she is wondering what their plan is and how they plan to do anything with the increase in people on our roads, can the roads handle this increase. She asked if we could make the roads bigger, prepare our streets, water and sewer supply systems to handle this increase. They need to prove that the systems can handle one way or the other. She said not to mention the already added apartment complex by Walmart in Commerce. Another at Welch and Pontiac Trail, and the one behind the Meijers at Haggerty and Maple, how much more can we take. She said she does not disagree that everyone needs a place to live but be responsible for it. She said as responsible people of Walled Lake, we should do our due diligence to make sure that the water systems can support everyone. On the roads between M5 and Pontiac Trail, the traffic is horrendous. She is on the road be it 6 in the morning when she leaves, or four in the afternoon when she comes home, it's hard even to get out of her street and 3 times worse at Pontiac Trail right by where the apartments want to go. She said people need to do their due diligence, can we support it, the people, the roads, water, sewer uses. An additional 96 units could bring an additional 200 cars conservatively, it is not rocket science, we're a small community. She said we need to work together and make sure we can support what we want to do.

Danielle – said she appreciates what Father Michael had to say. She said she is a parent who lives in the Dairy Queen building and she can see lot from her house. She said for a fact it's hard for her to turn left out of where she lives right now. She agrees with what said by the audience and there could be better use for this lot such as a community area like Wixom does. There's also concerns about child safety at school. All three of her children go to the school and she would not be comfortable with people just walking around, like Father Michael said. That would probably become an issue. It would be really nice for the city to have something for the community rather than to just bringing in more taxpayers.

Drew Maltese said he lives on Osprey as a resident of Walled Lake for over 20 years now. He said there are many kids in the area, his kids are now teenagers. He has seen all the accidents and to reiterate what everybody said, his concern would be the traffic flow, the infrastructure and the high demand for this lake community that we're trying to change. He said he has been a builder for over 30 years. He has seen how downtown Northville has ruined their downtown with a huge, oversized development. They were a quaint community like Plymouth, who is still a quaint community. Northville is no longer that way. He said he hopes Walled Lake doesn't turn into Northville. He said he moved here because Walled Lake is a beautiful lake community. Thank you.

*Close Public Hearing 7:56 p.m.*

Mr. Mario Ortega, consultant planner for the City of Walled Lake, summarized his review of the applicant's proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the former school property.

Mr. Ortega stated that the site consists of one tax parcel totaling approximately 6.41 acres and is zoned Community Service. The property is currently vacant, generally consisting of a flat grass field with an existing asphalt parking lot and a fenced detention pond located in the northwest corner of the site.

The applicant is proposing construction of:

- 96 apartment units in six three-story buildings,
- a 4,000-square-foot clubhouse, and
- 216 parking spaces.

Three of the apartment buildings would contain 19 units each (11 two-bedroom and 8 one-bedroom units), while the remaining three buildings would contain 13 units each (6 two-bedroom and 7 one-bedroom units). Two-bedroom units are proposed at approximately 1,100 square feet and one-bedroom units at approximately 800 square feet. The buildings would include attached garages accessed from the rear. Mr. Ortega explained that the applicant is requesting approval through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, which allows modifications to standard zoning requirements in exchange for potential public benefits and development flexibility. He outlined the goals of the PUD process, including encouraging innovative land use, conserving resources, enhancing housing opportunities, and promoting development consistent with the City's Master Plan.

He further explained the three-step PUD approval process:

1. Preliminary site plan review by the Planning Commission,
2. Review and approval from outside agencies such as Oakland County, and
3. Final PUD site plan review and recommendation by the Planning Commission, with final approval authority resting with City Council.

Mr. Ortega reviewed the preliminary eligibility criteria and project design standards applicable to the proposal. He noted that one of the primary concerns is whether the development provides a "recognizable and substantial benefit" to the community, as required by the zoning ordinance. He stated that the current proposal appears to be a relatively typical suburban-style apartment development and that portions of the site fall within the Downtown Overlay District, where several standards have not yet been met. He identified concerns including:

- insufficient compliance with Downtown Overlay architectural standards,
- prohibited use of certain exterior materials,
- lack of detailed information regarding proposed masonry materials, and
- absence of enhanced design features expected under the PUD process.

Mr. Ortega also stated that the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed density and use would not create unreasonable impacts on public utilities and services. He recommended that the applicant provide utility capacity information to confirm that existing infrastructure can support the development. Regarding Master Plan consistency, Mr. Ortega noted that the Future Land Use Map currently identifies the property as "Public/Semi-Public," reflecting its former school use.

He stated that the City has not yet amended the Master Plan to identify an alternative future land use for the site, and therefore there is currently no clear Master Plan support for the proposed apartment development. He suggested that a Master Plan amendment or update may be appropriate before determining whether the proposal is consistent with long-term planning goals.

Mr. Ortega also identified additional concerns related to:

- economic impact,
- lack of usable open space,
- site access configuration, and
- compatibility with surrounding land uses.

He reviewed several requested deviations from ordinance standards, including:

- increased residential density,
- reduced setbacks,
- reduced building separation distances,
- increased building height, and
- reduced parking.

He stated that the zoning ordinance generally limits density to 10 dwelling units per acre on sites of this size, while the applicant is proposing approximately 14.88 dwelling units per acre. He explained that higher densities may be considered only when exceptional site design, high-quality materials, enhanced landscaping, additional open space, or other substantial public benefits are demonstrated.

Mr. Ortega also noted:

- the proposed building height of 38.7 feet exceeds the 30-foot ordinance maximum,
- the proposal includes 216 parking spaces where 230 are required, and
- the current site plan does not identify usable open space areas.

Lastly, he stated that the ordinance requires two separate access points from arterial or collector roads. While one access point is proposed from West Maple Road, he indicated that the second proposed access via Common Street may not satisfy the ordinance intent, particularly given the potential for access from Pontiac Trail. Mr. Ortega recommended that the applicant be given an opportunity to further address the PUD eligibility criteria and demonstrate substantial public benefits before the Planning Commission determines whether the site is eligible for PUD consideration. He then offered to answer questions from the Commission.

Chairman Schinzing confirmed the applicant was sent city consultant review letters and they have had since January 5, 2026.

Planner Ortega said yes.

Chairman Schinzing said it seems like from the required eligibility criteria and the design standards criteria, there's a lot of work to be done and he asked the applicant what their expectations are out of this meeting.

Danny Veri of Livonia Builders stated he was appearing on behalf of the property owner as the project's general contractor. Mr. Veri explained that the applicant has been seeking direction from the city since the initial submission in October and expressed frustration regarding delays and uncertainty surrounding the proposed PUD ordinance modifications. He stated the applicant received correspondence from the city in January but did not want to make substantial revisions before discussing the proposal directly with the Planning Commission and obtaining clearer guidance. Mr. Veri acknowledged the concerns expressed by nearby residents, particularly regarding traffic and neighborhood impacts, noting that he understood those concerns as a parent and homeowner himself. He stated the applicant was willing to modify the site access

configuration, including eliminating or relocating the outlet onto Common Street and potentially redirecting access to Pontiac Trail or Maple Road, depending on the Commission's preference. Mr. Veri advised that a traffic study was currently underway but had not been completed in time for the meeting. He noted that utility capacity reviews, including sewer and water service evaluations, are standard components of the development review process and would be addressed through the city's engineering review process. He further explained that the property currently lacks a conventional zoning classification because it was previously used as a school site. As a result, the applicant pursued a multifamily residential concept through the PUD process. Mr. Veri stated the development was generally modeled after the nearby Forest Brook development at Decker Road and Pontiac Trail in terms of building footprint and unit mix, though he emphasized the proposed architecture and exterior materials would be substantially different and more modern in appearance. Mr. Veri clarified that the development would provide 231 parking spaces and noted the project incorporated a mix of exterior materials, including full-bed stone, metal siding, and vinyl accents. He also stated the applicant was requesting variances similar to those previously granted for the Forest Brook development, including building height and building length allowances. Regarding community benefits, Mr. Veri stated the applicant was willing to contribute financially, \$250 a unit, toward public infrastructure improvements, such as roads or water mains. He said the applicant was and is seeking feedback and guidance from the Planning Commission regarding the direction of the project and the next potential steps in the review process.

Commissioner Amin questioned how the proposed residential development aligned with the existing Community Service zoning designation and asked whether the applicant had demonstrated consistency with the intent of that zoning district.

Planning Consultant Ortega explained that the PUD ordinance permits consideration of developments regardless of the underlying zoning classification. He noted that while the current zoning designation identifies the property for Community Service uses, such as a school, the PUD process allows flexibility if the proposed development is determined to be consistent with the City's planning objectives. Mr. Ortega further stated that the Master Plan currently identifies the site for Community Service uses and does not specifically provide guidance for alternative redevelopment scenarios on the property.

Mr. Veri stated the applicant could alternatively pursue rezoning the property to a multifamily residential classification in conjunction with the PUD request.

Commissioner Amin again asked what specific community benefit the applicant was proposing as justification for the increased density request.

Mr. Veri responded that the applicant proposed making a financial contribution to the City on a per-unit basis to assist with infrastructure impacts, including roads, water, sewer, and storm sewer improvements.

Commissioner Amin explained her concerns regarding the requested building height, density, and the absence of a completed traffic study. She explained the applicant was seeking approximately double the density otherwise permitted under the ordinance.

Mr. Ortega explained that the PUD ordinance allows a base density of 10 units per acre and that the subject site consists of approximately six acres. He stated the Planning Commission could recommend approval of additional density to the City Council if it determined the development provided a recognizable public benefit. Mr. Ortega referenced the criteria outlined in the review materials, including site design quality, architectural excellence, use of enhanced building materials, innovative design features, and the property's location within the Downtown Overlay District along Pontiac Trail. He further stated the current conceptual plan did not clearly identify or document the proposed public benefit and suggested the applicant provide a more detailed written explanation.

Commissioner Amin referenced Section 51.16 of the Zoning Ordinance and stated several required submission items remained outstanding in addition to the traffic study.

Mr. Ortega clarified that the applicant had submitted a conceptual preliminary PUD plan and stated the issue was the lack of required components including demonstrating public benefit. He again suggested the applicant provide additional written justification regarding the proposed community benefit.

Commissioner Swiatek clarified that the applicant's proposed contribution amounted to approximately \$250 per unit, totaling roughly \$24,000 toward public infrastructure improvements.

Chairman Schinzing asked Planning Consultant Ortega to clarify what aspects of the proposal were currently deficient relative to the Downtown Overlay District standards.

Mr. Ortega responded that additional information regarding the building facades and elevations would be necessary to evaluate compliance with the overlay requirements. He explained that the ordinance requires a minimum of 30 percent window coverage on front elevations and also restricts the use of certain exterior materials, including metal and aluminum finishes. Mr. Ortega stated the applicant had indicated some materials may consist of concrete masonry products, but further details would be needed regarding the percentage and distribution of materials on each elevation. He further noted that because the application was being reviewed as a PUD, the applicant could request modifications from some of those standards; however, the supporting details would need to be clearly identified on the elevation drawings for proper review.

Chairman Schinzing thanked the applicant for their patience throughout the temporary PUD moratorium process. He stated he did not believe the proposed amendments to the PUD ordinance would substantially affect the applicant's ability to move forward, noting that many of the changes were procedural in nature. He added that while additional design standards were being considered, the Downtown Overlay District already imposed relatively high design expectations, and he believed the applicant generally had sufficient direction to continue refining

the proposal. Chairman Schinzing further stated that, based on public comments received at the meeting, residents were seeking a more significant community benefit in exchange for the requested density and deviations. He commented that the currently proposed public benefit appeared relatively limited in comparison to the scope of the development.

Mr. Veri responded that the applicant was seeking guidance from the Commission regarding what type of community benefit would be considered acceptable. He stated that if the Commission identified additional expectations and the project remained financially feasible, the applicant would consider incorporating them. However, he expressed concern about continuing to invest substantial resources into engineering and consultant work if the proposed density of 96 units was considered unacceptable by the Commission.

Commissioner Amin questioned how the proposed apartment development would provide a greater benefit to the community than the existing Community Service designation for school use. She stated her concerns regarding the proposed building height, residential density, and potential traffic impacts associated with the project. Commissioner Amin further stated that the Planning Commission did not currently have sufficient information to determine whether the proposal met the eligibility requirements necessary for PUD consideration.

Planning Consultant Ortega stated that one challenge in comparing the proposal to the nearby Forest Brook development. He explained that the Forest Brook site contained existing wetlands and natural features that were preserved as part of the approved development plan. He explained that the Forest Brook development was designed to shift buildings toward the Decker Road and Pontiac Trail frontages while preserving wetlands and wooded areas on the site, portions of which also function as part of the stormwater management system. Mr. Ortega noted that preservation of those natural features contributed to the project's recognized community benefit during the PUD review process. Mr. Ortega stated that the subject property for the current proposal does not appear to contain significant natural features available for preservation. He explained that in situations where natural feature preservation is not possible, developers often provide alternative public or community-oriented amenities to establish a recognizable public benefit. Examples discussed included additional open space, active recreational areas, public gathering spaces, pedestrian connections or trail systems through the site, plazas, or similar community-focused amenities. Mr. Ortega further noted that because the site is located along two primary road corridors, the opportunity for a traditional natural park setting may be limited; however, incorporation of publicly accessible open space or plaza-style features could help address the community benefit component of the PUD request.

Commissioner Swiatek explained he was hesitant to directly compare the proposal to the Forest Brook development, describing the projects as "apples and oranges." He noted that the nearby development across the street, Legato, originated many years ago and was approved under different standards and development conditions. Commissioner Swiatek recalled that portions of that site remained vacant and partially completed for an extended period before development activity resumed to complete building 5. Commissioner Swiatek stated that development standards and community expectations have changed significantly over time. He commented that it is difficult to rely on older developments as direct precedent because ordinances and design

expectations are continually updated and refined. Commissioner Swiatek emphasized that the current proposal must be evaluated on its own merits rather than by comparison to previous developments. He further noted that the property has historically served a community-oriented function, and any redevelopment proposal should carefully consider the site's role and impact within the broader community context.

City Manager Whitt stated that the Legato development property had also previously carried an underlying Community Service zoning designation and proceeded through the PUD process, although the project was ultimately not completed. He further referenced the East Bay development as another example of a PUD project that encountered separate issues during implementation. City Manager Whitt emphasized the importance of adequate guarantees and assurances when considering developments of this nature. City Manager Whitt stated that the City would not support approval of a proposal based solely on a monetary contribution to the community. He advised the applicant that, if additional guidance was needed, the applicant should instead consider proposing a more meaningful and lasting community benefit tied directly to the project and the site itself. He encouraged the applicant to return with a proposal that demonstrated a stronger public benefit and provided a compelling basis for the Planning Commission to consider recommending approval.

City Attorney Vanerian explained that the Planning Commission was currently in the initial stage of the PUD review process, with the primary focus being the project's eligibility criteria as outlined in the staff memorandum and discussed by Planning Consultant Ortega. He stated that several deficiencies related to those eligibility criteria had been identified during the discussion, along with concerns regarding compliance with applicable project design standards. City Attorney Vanerian further explained that the PUD process is generally divided into phases. He noted that once the Planning Commission determines a proposal satisfies the eligibility criteria, the review would then shift toward a more comprehensive evaluation of the project's design standards and overall site design requirements as established under the PUD ordinance. Regarding density, City Attorney Vanerian stated that the ordinance requires the applicant be given an opportunity to revise and resubmit the proposal in response to comments and concerns raised during the review process. He recommended postponing any determination on the preliminary review to allow the applicant additional time to address feedback from the Planning Commission, consultants, and staff, including concerns related to traffic impacts, which he acknowledged had been consistently raised throughout the discussion.

Commissioner Amin stated that eligibility for a PUD requires more than simply proposing development on the site and emphasized that the applicant must demonstrate a substantial benefit to the community.

City Attorney Vanerian responded that it would ultimately be up to the applicant to determine how they wished to revise or supplement the proposal. He stated the applicant had received feedback regarding both the eligibility criteria and the applicable design standards. He further noted the applicant may choose to provide additional information regarding the project's design, consistency with the Master Plan, appropriateness of the proposed residential use for the site, and

how the proposal responds to the property's current Community Service designation under the Master Plan.

**PC 05-03-26                    MOTION TO POSTPONE APPROVAL OR DENIAL OF PC 318  
PUD APPLICATION UNTIL FURTHER INFORMATION IS  
PROVIDED SHOWING ELIGIBILITY AND COMPATIBILITY  
CRITERIA**

Motion by Amin seconded by Swiatek, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To postpone approval or denial of PC 318 PUD application until further information is provided showing eligibility and compatibility criteria.

Roll Call Vote

AYES: (6)                    Amin, Robertson, Swiatek, Whitt, Bashi, Martin, Schinzing  
NAYS: (0)  
ABSENT: (1)                Robertson  
ABSTENTIONS: (0)

**DISCUSSION:**

**1. C-377-26 PUD Zoning Ordinance Amendment**

Chairman Schinzing asked whether members had an opportunity to review the materials distributed following the previous meeting. Chairman Schinzing noted that the Mayor had requested the Planning Commission move the process forward.

Commissioner Amin asked City Manager Whitt whether there would be an opportunity for Planning Commission members to attend training seminars or workshops to review the proposed ordinance changes and planning concepts in greater detail. Commissioner Amin stated she had only received the materials approximately two days earlier and had not yet had sufficient time to fully evaluate what information or standards may still be lacking.

City Manager Whitt stated that training seminars are regularly available for Planning Commission members and City Council officials, although the city had not recently coordinated one. He advised that staff would provide information regarding upcoming opportunities and training schedules.

Planning Consultant Ortega added that organizations such as the Michigan Association of Planning offer conferences and educational sessions, typically held in the fall, along with online seminars and other planning resources. He stated that membership in the association can be beneficial and noted that he also provides on-site training sessions. Mr. Ortega further referenced resources available through the American Planning Association, including on-demand educational materials.

City Manager Whitt commented that conferences are often valuable for networking and professional connections, while the training sessions themselves can provide useful technical guidance. He encouraged Commission members to identify additional online training opportunities and bring them forward for consideration.

Commissioner Amin stated she intended to review educational resources and planning standards in greater depth before the next meeting. She further suggested that Planning Commission members be provided with City-issued email addresses so members could share planning-related materials without using personal email accounts.

Planning Consultant Ortega cautioned that Planning Commission members are subject to Michigan's Open Meetings Act requirements and explained that deliberations among members are intended to occur publicly. He stated there are numerous guidelines governing electronic communications among members to ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Commissioner Amin requested potential dates for future training opportunities and commented that design standards often involve subjective interpretation. She noted that, based on her prior experience with planning and development standards in other communities, she intended to compile examples and materials she found useful for future discussion with the Commission.

Chairman Schinzing then asked City Manager Whitt how the Commission should proceed with discussions and coordination moving forward.

City Manager Whitt stated that Planning Consultant Ortega's time is billed to the city and suggested coordinating discussions through City staff to help manage consultant time efficiently. He further stated that Planning Commission members are subject to the Open Meetings Act and that communications are subject to Freedom of Information Act requests, including communications sent through city issued emails and personal email accounts. City Manager Whitt stated he supported providing City-issued email accounts for Planning Commission members and indicated staff would coordinate creation of those accounts.

Chairman Schinzing stated that members interested in obtaining City email accounts should coordinate with City Clerk Stuart and work with Planning Consultant Ortega regarding scheduling future training sessions and discussions related to ordinance updates.

City Attorney Vanerian clarified that distributing informational materials among members is generally permissible but cautioned that issues arise when email communications evolve into deliberative discussions involving a quorum of members. He advised that informational distributions should generally include all members and stated that care should be taken to avoid extended email discussions involving four or more members simultaneously.

Commissioner Amin asked specifically what materials or topics were intended for future discussion.

Chairman Schinzing responded that Planning Consultant Ortega had been asked to prepare a draft set of commercial design standards for future Planning Commission review and discussion.

City Attorney Vanerian explained that under the current PUD process, the Planning Commission conducts both the preliminary review and the final review before forwarding the matter to the City Council for final action. He stated that, following preliminary review, the applicant typically prepares a final site plan incorporating all required modifications and conditions imposed during the review process. City Attorney Vanerian further explained that the proposed ordinance revisions would alter that sequence. Under the revised process, the Planning Commission would first conduct a preliminary eligibility review and then forward a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council would then make its determination regarding the PUD request and the PUD would be returned to the Planning Commission for final site plan review and approval of the detailed development plans. He noted that the final site plan submission would incorporate all required revisions, conditions, and approved modifications.

Chairman Schinzing asked what would occur if the City Council rejected a proposal during that process and whether the matter would return to the Planning Commission.

City Attorney Vanerian responded that the City Council would retain discretion to either refer the matter back to the Planning Commission for additional study and recommendations or deny the request outright. City Attorney Vanerian stated that the proposed redlined ordinance revisions were intended as a starting point for discussion and were designed to reduce discretionary decision-making by strengthening and clarifying the eligibility criteria required upfront. He explained that the revisions also included expanded objective design standards, additional requirements related to requested modifications, and provisions requiring City Council consideration of Planning Commission recommendations before approving deviations from established standards. He further noted that the revisions addressed the contractual nature of PUD developments by more clearly defining the development agreement and associated obligations.

Chairman Schinzing acknowledged that the proposed revisions involved a substantial amount of material for the Planning Commission to review and stated that the revised process would place greater responsibility on the Planning Commission. He emphasized the importance of members carefully studying and understanding the proposed ordinance changes before determining whether they supported the revised review framework.

Commissioner Amin stated that the city should strengthen and more clearly define the community benefit requirements for future PUD applications. She expressed concern that simply constructing a new apartment development should not, by itself, qualify as a sufficient public benefit. Commissioner Amin stated that applicants should demonstrate tangible and meaningful benefits to the community, such as preservation of natural resources or other lasting public improvements. She further noted that many PUD proposals generate significant public opposition from nearby residents. Commissioner Amin stated applicants have the ability to develop properties under existing underlying zoning classifications without seeking PUD approval.

Planning Consultant Ortega responded that the Planning Commission retains the authority to evaluate PUD requests and make determinations based on the information and supporting materials provided by applicants. He stated that the city already has certain standards in place and that the proposed commercial design standards currently under discussion were intended to raise the minimum expectations for development quality. Mr. Ortega explained that developments proceeding through either the PUD or CPD processes would be expected to meet or exceed those enhanced standards.

Commissioner Amin stated that architectural or structural design elements alone should not automatically constitute a community benefit and reiterated that the benefit should provide a broader value to the community itself.

Commissioner Swiatek then asked Planning Consultant Ortega whether the Planning Commission has the authority to determine that, although an applicant may have provided some form of public benefit, it may not be the type or level of benefit the Commission believes is appropriate or sufficient for approval of a PUD request.

Discussion was had on what is a desired community benefit, what is a high benefit.

Commissioner Martin said that other communities have been referenced in comparison, based off of our geographical location, what are the comparable items reviewed.

Mr. Ortega explained those communities of the same age, progress in development such as Walled Lake being a built our community. Comparing different tools, the approach is a very wide-open spectrum, it can be very specific if the PC wants that.

City Manager Whitt stated that the Planning Commission would not support allowing a developer to construct a project of the proposed scale in exchange for a \$24,000 contribution. City Manager Whitt emphasized that because the development itself would have a long-term, permanent impact on the community, any corresponding public benefit should likewise provide a meaningful and lasting benefit to the city. City Manager Whitt further noted that the applicant was currently under contract with the school district to purchase the property, but the transaction had not been finalized and would remain contingent upon project approvals. He also expressed concern regarding situations where approved developments are not fully completed and stressed the importance of financial guarantees, bonding requirements, or other assurances to protect the City and ensure completion of approved improvements.

Commissioner Swiatek stated that he had recently spoken with Pastor Mike at the nearby church, who reportedly was unaware of the proposed development. Commissioner Swiatek said that nearby businesses and properties, including the local Dairy Queen and Stanley Commons condominium development, experience ongoing parking shortages. He noted that portions of the former junior high school site and adjacent church parking areas are currently being utilized for overflow parking associated with nearby uses. Commissioner Swiatek questioned whether there may be an opportunity to address broader parking deficiencies in the area as part of any future redevelopment of the property. He asked whether discussions could occur with nearby property

owners, including the Dairy Queen and condominium association, regarding potential parking solutions or shared parking arrangements.

City Manager Whitt acknowledged that parking deficiencies in the area were apparent and noted that prior decisions made regarding surrounding developments contributed to the current conditions. He further explained that the City Council had previously attempted to preserve the former school property located at 615 North Pontiac Trail for community-oriented purposes. To City Manager Whitt explained the City explored acquiring the property after the school district indicated plans to demolish the building, with discussions including potential reuse as a community center. However, the school district ultimately used bond funds to demolish the structure. City Manager Whitt reiterated that the Planning Commission would not likely support approval of a 96-unit development based solely upon a limited monetary donation to the City.

Commissioner Amin stated that, based on her development experience, the City should strengthen the PUD ordinance language to better protect the City from potential legal liability and clarify applicant obligations. Commissioner Amin also stated that Mayor Gunther had expressed concerns regarding portions of the current ordinance language and its potential legal implications.

Planning Consultant Ortega stated that the proposed ordinance revisions were intended to provide greater clarity regarding motions, review standards, and procedural requirements in order to address perceived loopholes and ambiguities within the current PUD ordinance.

During further discussion regarding public benefit examples, the concept of providing additional public parking as part of a development proposal was referenced as a potential qualifying community benefit if incorporated into the site design.

Chairman Schinzing concluded that, under the existing PUD ordinance, the Planning Commission already possesses sufficient authority and criteria to deny a proposal outright if it determines the application does not adequately satisfy the ordinance requirements.

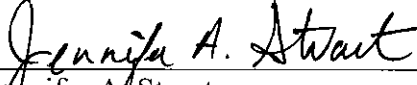
## **2. C-378-26 CPD Zoning Ordinance Amendment**

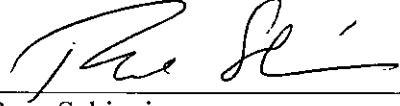
No discussion or action.

**COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:**      None

**PC 05-04-26                    ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Amin, seconded by Bashi, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 10:35 PM

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer A. Stuart  
City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Russ Schinzing  
Chairman