



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

1000 Rochester Hills Dr
Rochester Hills, MI
48309
(248) 656-4600
Home Page:
www.rochesterhills.org

Chairperson Greg Hooper, Vice Chairperson Deborah Brnabic
Members: Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Marvie
Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Youth Representatives: Oliver Blakeley and Siddh Sheth

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hooper called the July 21, 2026 Regular Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 8 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer, Scott Struzik, Ben Weaver, Dale Hetrick and Gerard Dettloff
Excused 1 - Anthony Gallina

Others Present

Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2026-0317](#) June 16, 2026 Draft Planning Commission Minutes

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Brnabic, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik, Weaver, Hetrick and Dettloff
Excused 1 - Gallina

COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hooper noted receipt of the current issue of Michigan Planner magazine.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

2026-0318

Public Hearing and Request for Conditional Use Recommendation for Adagio Dance, a health, recreation and physical education facility under 5,000 square feet, to occupy space within the EC Employment Center zoning district at 1775 W. Hamlin Rd., Unit B, located on the south side of Hamlin and east of Crooks, Parcel # 15-28-102-016; Tony Haddad, Adagio Dance LLC, Applicant

(Staff report dated 7/14/26, Applicant's letter, Application, Plans, LLC documents, Environmental Impact Statement, and Public Hearing Notice has been placed on file and by reference became part of the record hereof.)

Present for the applicant were Tony Haddad, representing Adagio Dance, and Chris Pawlowski, commercial real estate broker with Signature Associates.

Chairperson Hooper welcomed the applicant team and called on Mr. McLeod to present.

Mr. McLeod stated that the request is for a conditional use for a health, recreation, and physical education facility within the EC Employment Center District. He explained that several years ago, the Ordinance was amended to require conditional use approval for any dance or physical activity facilities within the EC Employment Center District. He noted that while this request falls under the 5,000-square-foot provision, conditional use approval from the Planning Commission is still required. Mr. McLeod indicated that the subject property is 1775 West Hamlin, Suite B, which is part of a complex consisting of three buildings. He explained that the proposed tenant space is located in the southernmost building at the rear of the complex and provided an overview of the layout within the heart of the EC District along Hamlin Road, highlighting the surrounding industrial multi-tenant buildings on the south side of Hamlin Road.

Mr. McLeod noted that most surrounding structures are multi-tenant industrial buildings, extending the EC district designation southward toward Star Batt Drive. Providing a different visual perspective with Hamlin Road at the bottom and Star B0att Drive toward the top, he pointed out the three buildings within the subject complex. He noted that Unified Volleyball is located directly to the east, alongside a variety of other recreational uses situated both to the east and south. Referencing the zoning map, Mr. McLeod stated that the applicant currently occupies a 2,800-square-foot facility to the east at 1659 West Hamlin. He explained that the proposed 3,400-square-foot space would serve as an additional location, housing two main dance or workout areas in addition to administrative functions and waiting rooms. He noted that the overall complex contains 46,000 square feet across its three buildings. Mr. McLeod added that students using the facility range from ages five to eighteen, and based on supplemental information from the applicant, the 3,400-square-foot space would accommodate approximately 25 students across two simultaneous classes, along with four to five teachers.

Mr. McLeod noted that all proposed activities would be confined within the industrial tenant space itself, with no outdoor activities included. He mentioned that the applicant has been in operation since 2008 at their current location a few doors down at 1659 West Hamlin. Referencing the layout of the tenant spaces, Mr. McLeod pointed out that the proposed location is in the first tenant space of

the southernmost building. He stated that 18 parking spots are dedicated to this specific tenant space. He added that, as with most recreational uses in the area, the applicant's primary hours of operation, extending from 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., do not overlap with the standard business hours of surrounding industrial tenants, though some minor overlap would occur between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Finally, he estimated the current total occupancy of the overall complex to be approximately 50 to 60 percent.

Mr. McLeod noted that there are vacancies across the three buildings, but observed that the back portion of the property remained very tranquil during his visits leading up to the meeting. He reminded the Planning Commission that for all conditional uses, the Planning Commission must find that the request promotes the intent and purpose of the Ordinance, is designed, constructed, and operated to be harmonious with the existing context, is adequately served by public facilities, will not be detrimental or disturbing to neighboring land uses, and will not create additional public costs for facilities and services.

Chairperson Hooper thanked Mr. McLeod and asked the applicant if they wished to add anything before Board discussion began. Mr. Haddad stated that they had no additional presentation, but addressed a follow-up question raised via email regarding whether the facility would host competitions, recitals, or large events. He clarified that no recitals or competitions will take place at this location and that the space will strictly be used for dance training and instruction. He explained that any recitals are held at off-site facilities, such as schools, theaters, or event halls, which provide the proper setup, adequate space, and necessary insurance coverage. Chairperson Hooper concurred, noting that such off-site locations offer considerably more parking. Mr. Haddad agreed, adding that the proposed space is not set up for large events and that they prefer a larger venue rather than crowding attendees into a smaller room.

Chairperson Hooper opened the public hearing. Noting that no comment cards had been submitted and seeing no members of the audience wishing to speak, he closed the public hearing and opened the item for Planning Commission discussion regarding the conditional use recommendation.

Ms. Neubauer directed a question to Mr. McLeod regarding a statement in the staff report under the criteria section noting a point "of larger concern".

Mr. McLeod explained that the comment stems from discussions surrounding the Ordinance amendment three or four years prior regarding the City's finite supply of industrial land and building square footage. He noted that it is typically difficult for a municipality to create additional industrial areas, which are critical for supporting local industrial users, high-tech firms, and international leaders in technology and robotics. He stated that the concern is twofold: first, every recreational use absorbs physical industrial square footage that would otherwise be available to industrial users; second, mixing recreational and industrial uses can alter the overall character and operational feel of an industrial park, causing industrial tenants to express concern when operations designed for industrial activities begin interfacing with parents dropping off children.

Mr. McLeod continued, explaining that though it may not apply to this particular

use, issues arise when activities such as outdoor fitness training take place in parking lots while neighboring businesses are attempting to maintain standard industrial operations, raising the question of whether such uses hinder existing or prospective industrial users. He noted that the City's Economic Development Manager, Pam Valentik, is vocal about this dynamic, as industrial tenants who located in the City years ago may find the industrial character evolving into a mix of recreational and non industrial uses. Mr. McLeod stated that while an individual 3,400 square foot request may seem minimal, the cumulative impact of multiple approvals, such as Unified Volleyball taking up a substantial space nearby, can gradually alter the long term character of high tech industrial districts. He clarified that the intent is not to shut the door on such uses, but rather to ensure the Planning Commission and City Council keep these broader impacts in mind during their deliberations.

Ms. Neubauer clarified that the subject property is properly zoned for the proposed activity as a conditional use. Mr. McLeod affirmed this, emphasizing that conditional use approval allows the Planning Commission to evaluate appropriateness on a case by case basis depending on the specific building context and surrounding land uses. Ms. Neubauer noted that the applicant already operates a dance studio a couple of properties to the east and asked if other recreational facilities exist in this historically industrial area. Mr. McLeod confirmed that several dance studios and recreational uses are scattered among this section along the south side of Hamlin Road.

Ms. Neubauer expressed support for the application and indicated she would make a motion to recommend approval. She suggested that if the Planning Commission wishes to protect industrial land and address the concerns of Ms. Valentik regarding available industrial real estate, the Planning Commission should re-examine the Zoning Ordinance in those specific areas separately. She noted that proactively reviewing those zones as a body would streamline future decisions and provide greater clarity for prospective applicants. Mr. McLeod agreed that balancing recreational uses with the preservation of industrial space presents a double edged sword.

Mr. Gallina entered the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Mr. McLeod noted that while having numerous recreational uses in the area makes a request feel more compatible, the counter argument is that the industrial nature of the district may be degraded to the point where reclassifying it becomes a consideration. He noted that Ms. Valentik is preparing an economic plan, which will examine the trends, overall state, and recommendations for the industrial districts. He stated that those findings will dovetail into Planning Commission discussions and may lead to future Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Ms. Neubauer made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use, stating that the proposed facility is appropriate for the area and fulfills a strong community demand for youth dance programs. She noted for the record that the Planning Commission should address zoning in industrial areas to align the goals of planning, development, and economic development. She emphasized that addressing these zoning issues proactively will ensure cohesive decisions

between the Planning Commission and City Council without uncertainty regarding land use goals.

Chairperson Hooper asked for a second to the motion, which was supported by Mr. Dettloff. Opening discussion on the motion, Chairperson Hooper noted that the Planning Commission has discussed this economic dynamic repeatedly over the years. He explained that recreational tenants often seek space in industrial districts because it is less expensive than commercial districts where such uses typically belong. He suggested that preserving the local job base may eventually require changing the Zoning Ordinance to prohibit these uses in industrial districts. Observing the concentration of recreational uses between the volleyball facility and the applicant's existing studio, he remarked on how much the area has evolved and agreed that the body should study a potential Zoning Ordinance change. He then called on Ms. Brnabic.

Ms. Brnabic thanked Chairperson Hooper and recalled prior discussions held during joint meetings with the City Council where Ms. Valentik was present. She noted that both bodies previously agreed that existing, operational recreational uses should be permitted to remain and renew leases at their current locations without conflict with the City. However, she suggested that adding a new location within an industrial district introduces a different consideration. Addressing the applicant, she noted their history in business since 2008, including a previous location on Star Batt Drive, and asked how long they have operated at their current Hamlin Road location. Mr. Haddad replied that they initially signed a five year lease followed by a three year renewal, keeping them at their current site until the following April. He explained that because there is no expansion space available in their current building, they began seeking an additional site to accommodate their growth for the upcoming season. Ms. Brnabic verified that they have been at their current Hamlin Road location for approximately eight years. Mr. Haddad confirmed that time frame.

Ms. Brnabic noted that she supported the application and had visited the site, but sought clarification on a minor inconsistency regarding student ages, as the application letter referenced ages five to 18 while also mentioning four-year-olds. Mr. Haddad explained that four-year-olds occasionally attend summer introductory classes, but students do not formally enter the "pixie dancer" program until they turn five years old. He noted that a child might start at four years and 11 months during the summer and turn five by the time the competitive season begins. He added that younger dancers participate in only one competition and do not travel.

Addressing the location, Mr. Haddad stated that they intentionally chose a space at the far rear of the complex to avoid interfering with front facing Hamlin Road businesses. He reiterated that all activities will occur entirely inside the building. Furthermore, he highlighted that the selected rear corner provides ample room for parents to stop, drop off students, turn around, and exit easily without causing congestion, noting that the adjacent building is vacant and only one other tenant operates nearby.

Ms. Brnabic asked about the scheduling of classes for younger dancers, noting prior mention of earlier hours, and inquired whether classes ever occur at 2:00

p.m. Mr. Haddad stated that younger dancers generally attend classes from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and confirmed that standard classes do not run at 2:00 p.m. He explained that the 2:00 p.m. time frame was included to accommodate potential summer schedules or special programs that might occur a few days out of the year, but reiterated that the majority of regular programming takes place between 4:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Ms. Brnabic asked whether the absence of outdoor activities is a current condition or a permanent policy. Mr. Haddad confirmed that dance classes are never conducted outdoors, though students may briefly step outside for fresh air.

Ms. Brnabic referenced the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and asked how frequently special rehearsals or events occur at the location. Mr. Haddad clarified that no special events are held at the site. He explained that special rehearsals occur approximately four times per year on weekends prior to major competitions, typically running from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on a Saturday or Sunday. Ms. Brnabic noted that the designated parking is sufficient for the schedule and pointed out a minor variance between the proposed hours listed as 2:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. versus 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the EIS. Mr. Haddad explained that the broader range was provided to allow for occasional instances where they would arrive earlier, or for private lessons extending until 10:00 p.m. He added that the site is secure, well lit, and kept locked, with staff ensuring no individuals are left alone. Ms. Brnabic expressed her support for the application, noting that while she supports the request, she appreciates the broader discussion regarding industrial land uses and agrees the Planning Commission should address those concerns moving forward.

Mr. Hetrick thanked Mr. Haddad for his nearly decade-long commitment to teaching dance to children, highlighting the importance of the discipline, fitness, and time management skills instilled through dance instruction. He asked how frequently students would travel between the applicant's existing studio and the proposed new location. Mr. Haddad stated that students will never travel between the two buildings during daily classes. He explained that a student's schedule will assign them to a single building for the entire day, eliminating any need for students to walk back and forth between locations.

Mr. Hetrick agreed that walking between the buildings is not ideal and expressed appreciation for the security-minded approach to keeping students within one building per day. He noted that the primary hours of 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. would result in minimal overlap with surrounding commercial businesses. Mr. Haddad reiterated that selecting a space at the far rear of the complex keeps drop-off traffic away from Hamlin Road. Mr. Hetrick noted his site visit, observing that nearby restoration businesses operate far enough from the proposed site to avoid interference. He voiced full support for the motion and thanked the applicant for serving local youth.

Mr. Struzik noted that recreational uses can function well within industrial parks depending on site conditions, though he recalled past applications he did not support due to existing congestion and full parking lots from existing uses like gymnastics facilities. He stated that based on his site visits, the proposed

location does not face those issues, the existing business types are known, and the hours of operation are harmonious with surrounding tenants. He acknowledged the difficulty in balancing a strong industrial base with the community's desire for local services like dance and volleyball.

Mr. Struzik suggested that the applicant encourage the landlord to improve the property's landscaping, noting weeds in the parking lot, or potentially hire a landscaping service directly. Mr. Haddad welcomed the recommendation. Mr. Struzik urged the applicant to monitor customers to prevent parents from dropping off students at adjacent properties and letting them walk across the grass, emphasizing the importance of not impacting neighboring businesses without an agreement. He also highlighted Condition 2 in the proposed motion, noting that if the use becomes more intense than represented, the Planning Commission and City Council retain the authority to revisit the approval. Expressing confidence that issues would not arise, he voiced his support for the request.

Chairperson Hooper asked Mr. Pawlowski whether he was representing the broker or the property owner. Mr. Pawlowski confirmed that he represents both. Chairperson Hooper suggested that Mr. Pawlowski encourage the owner to tune up the parking lot, noting that it looks tired. Mr. Pawlowski agreed and stated he would make a comment to the owner. Chairperson Hooper noted that the Planning Commission prefers to avoid having the City Ordinance Enforcement Officer issue citations. He and Ms. Neubauer clarified that any enforcement citations would be issued directly to the property owner rather than the tenant. Mr. Haddad stated that they plan to breathe life into the building. Chairperson Hooper acknowledged his comment and called on Mr. Dettloff.

Mr. Dettloff asked Mr. McLeod if any existing industrial tenants in that specific stretch of buildings had voiced concerns about the recreational use. Mr. McLeod stated that he was not aware of any complaints regarding this particular complex. However, he noted that Ms. Valentik has begun hearing generalized commentary that the overall character and feel of industrial areas is evolving. He emphasized that such changes occur gradually over time rather than overnight. Mr. McLeod reiterated that while this issue was not previously a concern, phrases like "evolve" and "changed over time" are increasingly part of local discussions. He clarified that these observations are not directed at any single application, but noted that incremental decisions have a cumulative impact. He concluded by stating that if the City accepts this evolution, operations continue as normal; if the City determines action is needed, adjustments will be made through the Zoning Ordinance, enforcement, or other policy measures.

Mr. Dettloff asked Mr. Haddad where the facility's students reside. Mr. Haddad stated that the majority of students are local, estimating that approximately 80 percent live within a two-mile radius along Hamlin Road. He noted that a few students travel from Bloomfield, Romeo, and Macomb, but emphasized that staying within their current geographic area is critical to maintaining families' daily schedules. Mr. Dettloff expressed full support for the request and reiterated the importance of improving the property's aesthetics.

Ms. Denstaedt asked how long the proposed space and surrounding suites have been vacant. Mr. Pawlowski responded that Suite 1775B has been vacant for approximately five months, while Suite 1775A has been vacant for about two years. Ms. Denstaedt noted the balance between maintaining vacant space versus bringing in a paying tenant. She then asked whether the applicant would consider consolidating all operations into 1775 West Hamlin and relinquishing their current location if the entire building became available. Mr. Haddad replied that consolidating into a single building would be ideal, as operating across two separate locations is disconnected. He explained that with 20 additional dancers joining for the upcoming season, available space is limited. Mr. Haddad then asked if expanding into additional space at the new building in the future would require returning to the Planning Commission. Mr. McLeod clarified that conditional use approval is specific to the location and square footage cited in the application (Suite 1775B). He explained that if the applicant expands into adjacent tenant spaces, they would need to go through the conditional use review process again for the additional square footage.

Mr. Weaver asked when the facility would be operational if approved, noting that the applicant had mentioned their season begins in August. Mr. Haddad stated that they hope to be functional by September. He explained that no construction is needed for the space, as the buildout will only require painting, cleaning, replacing tiles, and laying down a dance floor. He added that they will continue operating at their current location until the new space is ready. Mr. Weaver joked that the applicant would be ready as soon as the landscaping is cleaned up. Mr. Haddad agreed and noted that the instructors are eager to use the new space.

Chairperson Hooper noted the active motion on the floor made by Ms. Neubauer and supported by Mr. Dettloff to recommend approval of the conditional use with six findings and two pre-printed conditions. Seeing no further discussion on the motion, he called for a roll-call vote which passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Recommended for Approval to the City Council,. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 9 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik, Weaver, Hetrick, Dettloff and Gallina

Resolved, in the matter of File No. PCU2026-0004 (Adagio Dance), the Planning Commission recommends to City Council Approval of the Conditional Use to allow for a health, recreation and physical education facility, based on documents received by the Planning Department on July 2, 2026 with the following findings:

Findings

1. The proposed use will promote the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The existing building and proposed conditional use have been designed and is proposed to be operated, maintained, and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate in appearance with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, and the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the

use.

3. The proposed addition of a health, recreation, and physical education facility will provide expanded services being sought within the greater Rochester Hills community. The proposed use at this location represents an existing City of Rochester Hills business that is already located in the City and due to its success is seeking a larger, more efficient and effective building.

4. The existing development and proposed use are served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, water and sewer, drainage ways, and refuse disposal.

5. The existing development and proposed use should not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring land uses, persons, property, or the public welfare as the existing building and the surrounding buildings already include several other health, recreation and physical education type uses. Those other uses are of such a nature that they shouldn't necessarily be impacted by the introduction of the proposed use, as there is no proposed outdoor activity area, and the proposed limited number of persons to be serviced within the building largely do not directly conflict with normal business hours for the existing industrial type tenants.

6. The proposal will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

Conditions

1. City Council approval of the Conditional Use.

2. If outdoor use areas are proposed or if the intensity of the use increases to include operations such as competitions or occupancy greater than 45 people (based on available dedicated parking) for other events or uses inconsistent as those presented as part of this application (etc.), City staff may require and order the conditional use approval to be remanded to the Planning Commission and City Council as necessary for reexamination of the conditional use approval.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. McLeod provided an update regarding four master planning initiatives being conducted simultaneously by the City over the next year: the Master Transportation Plan, the Safe Streets for All Plan, the Recreation Plan, and the Sustainability and Stewardship Plan. He clarified that these processes do not involve the Master Land Use Plan. Mr. McLeod noted that the official website for these planning initiatives had gone live and would be featured on the City's homepage and social media platforms. He encouraged all Planning Commissioners, as well as their families and friends, to participate in the interactive online survey accessible through the "Get Involved" link on the project webpage.

Mr. McLeod explained that the survey is comprehensive in order to capture feedback across transportation, parks, and stewardship. He highlighted an interactive online map feature, similar to the tool previously utilized for public involvement on Adams Road, that allows users to drop location specific comments regarding any of the four master plans directly onto the map.

Demonstrating an example where a resident requested increased park trails behind the municipal building on City property, he noted that users can post a comment, select a specific comment category, or choose "other" for different topics. He stated that residents can request items such as recycling bins, tree plantings, or pollinator gardens at exact locations, with the option to include their name, contact information, and additional details. Mr. McLeod added that separate interactive maps exist for parks and recreation, transportation, and transportation safety, with relevant elements of sustainability and stewardship incorporated into each topic.

Mr. McLeod encouraged the Planning Commissioners to share the link with friends and family, describing it as an opportunity to provide input on desired traffic lanes, speed bumps, or new park locations. He stated that the goal is to gather maximum public input, noting that the survey will remain open through August 31st and the interactive mapping tools will remain active at least that long. He explained that the survey timeline is critical for the Parks and Recreation Department to meet State guidelines and deadlines. Mr. McLeod noted that the landing page serves all four master plans, which will eventually branch out to be managed by the Planning Department, Parks and Forestry, and the Department of Public Services (DPS). He confirmed that staff would email the link to the Planning Commission the following day and offered informational cards featuring QR codes for any Commissioners wishing to distribute them to community members. He then noted he would briefly go through a few additional items given the lighter agenda.

Mr. McLeod provided an update on several site plans currently in the pipeline that will eventually come before the Planning Commission. He noted that a second phase of the Cedar Valley apartment complex near Eddington Farms, which was originally planned with a part two that never got built, is now coming back. Additionally, the gas station at 1020 West Auburn Road on the northwest corner is seeking to redevelop its facility. A concept plan has also been submitted for a retail facility at 996 East Auburn Road, located at the southwest corner of Auburn Road and John R Road. Regarding the old Priya site and historic Lorna Stone House at the southwest corner of Adams Road and South Boulevard, originally proposed as a senior complex and previously brought forward by a developer who took it through the Historic District Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, that apartment project has been shelved and is expected to return in a new form closer to the original active senior living concept, though formal plans have not yet been submitted.

Mr. McLeod reported that Penelope's Place is scheduled to return to the Planning Commission for its August 18th meeting, following direction from City Council and formal correspondence from the City Attorney. In response to an inquiry from Ms. Neubauer asking if any senior living proposals would come forward before an upcoming millage vote, Mr. McLeod confirmed that only Penelope's Place is scheduled for the August 18th meeting, while the other projects remain in the pipeline. He noted that after a quiet period, staff has processed many site plan submittals over the last two weeks. Mr. Hetrick, Ms. Brnabic, and Chairperson Hooper commented on the long development history of the Lorna Stone House property, noting that at least four or five different projects have been proposed for that site over the last 25 years.

Ms. Brnabic asked whether the plans for the old Priya site had changed since the proposal appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Mr. McLeod explained that while official plans have not yet been submitted, the developer intends to maintain the existing building footprint relative to the roadways. He noted that because the developer has completed approximately 80 percent of the engineering plans, they want to avoid discarding that work and are attempting to adapt their building within that established footprint. He added that depending on the extent of the structural changes, staff will determine whether the proposal must return to the ZBA, though it will definitely require a return to the Historic District Commission (HDC). He explained that staff will evaluate the project once the formal plans are submitted.

Ms. Neubauer commented on serving on both boards and shared feedback she received directly from local firefighters regarding growth in the City. While acknowledging property owners' rights to develop their land, she noted that firefighters expressed concern regarding height and density in proposed apartment complexes and senior living facilities due to current staffing shortages. She stated that even if an upcoming millage passes to fund 12 additional personnel, the fire and EMS department experienced 224 unanswered calls the previous year, with the majority occurring at senior living facilities.

Ms. Neubauer emphasized that the Planning Commission needs to remain cognizant of density and height, particularly regarding senior living developments and apartment complexes, as these facilities generate the primary demand for fire and EMS services. She stated that local emergency personnel are currently unable to keep pace with these demands. Ms. Neubauer added that even if the proposed fire millage passes, the department would only receive six personnel at a time, equating to two per shift, which may still prove insufficient to meet community needs. She urged the body to keep public safety as their primary consideration when evaluating upcoming site plans in the pipeline, emphasizing that protecting residents must remain the top priority alongside property development rights.

Ms. Brnabic recalled past discussions regarding the heavy burden placed on emergency services by senior facilities and asked whether the City has the right to limit the future construction of such facilities if an overabundance exists, particularly when public safety is impacted. Mr. McLeod clarified that while the original Priya proposal was an assisted living facility, the incoming proposal for that site is intended as an age restricted (55 and up) active adult community rather than assisted living, featuring no communal dining rooms or medical care services. Addressing Ms. Brnabic's question, he acknowledged that the operational burden of assisted living facilities, where staff often call emergency services for minor non-emergency assistance, is a widespread issue faced by municipal fire departments across the region. Mr. McLeod stated that while the City likely cannot implement an outright ban, it could explore regulating such developments through conditional use provisions. He suggested that conditional use criteria could include heightened scrutiny based on response times within specific fire districts or the existing concentration of similar facilities in a given area.

Mr. McLeod noted that potential ordinance reviews could examine geographic concentration, evaluating whether specific areas, such as the southwest corner of the City, already host a high volume of facilities, and considering whether new proposals should be directed toward fire districts better equipped to handle them. Ms. Neubauer urged that this evaluation be fast-tracked due to current emergency response and staffing constraints across the City's five fire stations. She noted that regardless of whether a site is assisted living or a 55 and up community, senior developments increase call volumes. Furthermore, she highlighted that structures exceeding two stories require an additionally dispatched ladder truck or engine, which strains resources when shifts are minimally staffed. She recommended considering conditional use requirements for high-density residential, apartment, and senior/elder care developments to ensure public safety remains the top priority.

Mr. McLeod said there also needs to be balance and explained that public feedback gathered during master planning processes consistently demonstrates a strong desire among residents to remain in Rochester Hills as they age. He cautioned that placing strict limits on senior and older adult housing options could hinder the City's ability to accommodate multi-generational living and allow longtime residents to stay in the community.

Ms. Neubauer suggested reducing project density as a solution, such as capping a project at 25 units instead of 55, or requiring facilities to maintain higher levels of supportive medical staff on-site to handle non-emergency assistance directly rather than calling city emergency services. Mr. Weaver agreed with requiring on-site staff, noting that having municipal emergency crews dispatched for non-emergency tasks like helping a resident back into bed risks leaving the rest of the community unprotected during a simultaneous emergency. He suggested that on-site personnel could evaluate situations and determine whether calling 911 is actually necessary.

Mr. McLeod noted that emergency responders must always answer callouts due to potential health risks and legal liabilities if a genuine issue exists. Mr. Struzik added that facilities often shift liability to the city by having municipal emergency personnel perform lift assists rather than their own staff.

Ms. Neubauer argued that strict density limits or higher operational requirements would encourage developers seeking high-density projects to build elsewhere while keeping Rochester Hills focused on safer housing alternatives like ranch-style homes for aging in place. She reiterated her safety concerns regarding unanswered calls, multi-truck dispatches for multi-story buildings, and mutual aid obligations with neighboring communities like Troy. Chairperson Hooper noted that these emergency response and staffing challenges have been ongoing issues in the city for over 20 years.

Chairperson Hooper expressed a preference for hearing directly from the Fire Chief rather than rank-and-file firefighters regarding call volume concerns. He pointed out that the current debates around millages, senior population percentages, mutual aid, and emergency service burdens are identical to the arguments raised during the 2008 fire millage increase. He shared that when he previously suggested billing senior facilities or residents for non-emergency

fall/lift assists, past chiefs opted against it because the facilities serve city residents.

Ms. Neubauer noted that the senior population percentage has grown higher between 2008 and 2026, and urged the Commission to factor public safety into future development votes.

Mr. Weaver reiterated his proposal to use density as leverage, suggesting that developers be restricted to 25 units unless they agree to provide on-site staff to assist residents with non-emergencies.

Ms. Neubauer asked Mr. McLeod to explore options for addressing the issue, to which Mr. McLeod noted that finding a universal solution to senior facility emergency demands is a widespread challenge faced by many municipalities.

NEXT MEETING DATE

August 18, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Planning Commission and upon motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, Chairperson Hooper adjourned the Regular Meeting at 8:00 p.m.

*Greg Hooper, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary