



# Rochester Hills

## Minutes

### Historic Districts Commission

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Home Page:  
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*Chairperson Jason Thompson, Vice Chairperson Julie Granthen*  
*Members: Katherine Altherr-Rogers, Yousif Elias, Bryan Lemanski, Kelly Lyons, Michael McGunn, Dr. Richard Stamps, Charles Tischer*  
*Youth Representative: Brennan Deel*

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Thursday, July 10, 2025

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

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## CALL TO ORDER

*Chairperson Thompson called the Historic Districts Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Michigan time.*

## ROLL CALL

**Present** 6 - Yousif Elias, Julie Granthen, Kelly Lyons, Richard Stamps, Jason Thompson and Michael McGunn  
**Excused** 3 - Katherine Altherr-Rogers, Charles Tischer and Bryan Lemanski

## Others Present:

*Chris McLeod, Planning Manager*  
*Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting*  
*Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary*  
*Brennan Deel, Rochester Hills Government Youth Council Representative*

*Ms. Altherr-Rogers, Mr. Tischer, and Mr. Lemanski provided prior notice that they would not be in attendance and were excused.*

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2025-0286](#) May 8, 2025 Draft HDC Meeting Minutes

**A motion was made by Stamps, seconded by Elias, that this matter be Approved.**  
**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 6 - Elias, Granthen, Lyons, Stamps, Thompson and McGunn  
**Excused** 3 - Altherr-Rogers, Tischer and Lemanski

## COMMUNICATIONS

*None.*

## PUBLIC COMMENT

*None.*

## NEW BUSINESS

### 2025-0287

Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness - File No. PHDC2025-0005 - to construct a storage building for Yates Cider Mill at 1950 E. Avon Rd., located on the south side of Avon and west of Dequindre, zoned NB Neighborhood Business with the MR Mixed Residential Overlay, Parcel No. 15-13-427-002; Mike Titus, Yates Cider Mill, Applicant

*(Staff Report dated 7-1-25, Location Map, CBI Letters dated 7/7/25 and 5/8/25, HDC Application, Plans, and Historic Mill-Canal Photo had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)*

*Chairperson Thompson introduced this item and noted that it was a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a storage building at Yates Cider Mill. He invited the applicants forward and asked for the Staff Report.*

*Present for the applicant were owner Mike Titus and Robert Clark, CBI Design Professionals.*

*Ms. Kidorf noted that this is a fairly straightforward application and is a compatible addition to the Historic District.*

*Mr. Clark stated that he is the architect for the Yates project, and noted that they are anxious for this addition as it will improve the busy fall season and provide storage for the amount of equipment and apple bins that are required for the process.*

*Dr. Stamps thanked the applicant for mixing historic preservation with a successful business model. He commented that Yates has become a pillar of identifying the City of Rochester Hills, and stated that photos of Yates Cider Mill are used to reference the city often in the news. He added that recently the County was putting together a strategic plan on how to capture tourism and historic preservation, and Yates was nicely represented. He noted that he liked the way that the architectural approach was not to totally mimic the old but have it compatible and contributing appropriately to the shape with gable roofs and other features.*

*Ms. Lyons commented that the retaining wall which is also the foundation feels a little imposing and asked the applicant to comment on the challenges of the contours of the site.*

*Mr. Clark responded that the difficulties of the site topography are significant. He explained that between the old mill building and the fudge shop is a service drive that cannot really be adjusted based on topography, and it leaves a vertical rise of about six feet in a very short distance. He added that the elevation of the building itself cannot change because of a steep slope condition on the north side of the building. He stated that they went round and round with the civil engineers about all kinds of issues including accessibility, and noted that the Fire Department had a few issues that had to be resolved as well.*

*Ms. Lyons stated that the foundation wall is showing up as very stark and concrete and asked if there could be something else done to change the feeling.*

*Mr. Clark responded that there is not a lot that can be done with grading because it would violate the retaining wall height requirements from the City. He suggested that the only thing they could do is paint it to tone down the new concrete feel or perhaps add landscaping.*

*Ms. Lyons questioned how the side elevation shown on Page 21 of the plans depicts how the retaining wall drops down, and stated that she was not clear as to the surface between the retaining wall and the building foundation.*

*Mr. Clark responded that this is basically a series of tiered small landscaping walls. He noted that there is a cut through grade so that the slope coming up is earth and agreed that this could be planted.*

*Mr. McGunn complimented the applicants, noting that it is a difficult process and their solution is very impressive. He thanked them for building a compatible structure as opposed to throwing up a pre-engineered building to hide things.*

*Ms. Lyons asked what would be going on in the attic space.*

*Mr. Titus responded that it would be for dry goods storage such as napkins, pallets for the donuts and other inventory. He explained that this storage would hopefully replace trailers that they have for storing inventory. He noted that they have five semi-trailers in the fall and keep three over the summer for the inventory, and commented that it should be a huge gain in aesthetics.*

*Ms. Lyons asked if they will regret not having an elevator.*

*Mr. Clark responded that they have a unique situation with big barn doors on the north side that will allow things to be moved by a high-low from that spot.*

*Ms. Lyons asked if they would be using a pallet jack upstairs.*

*Mr. Titus responded yes.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen made the motion in the packet to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lyons.*

*After calling for a roll call vote, Chairperson Thompson announced that the motion passed unanimously.*

**A motion was made by Granthen, seconded by Lyons, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 6 - Elias, Granthen, Lyons, Stamps, Thompson and McGunn

**Excused** 3 - Altherr-Rogers, Tischer and Lemanski

**Resolved**, in the matter of File No. PHDC2025-0002, that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the

construction of a storage building and related parking lot and landscaping changes at 1950 E. Avon Road, Parcel Identification Number 70-15-13-427-002, with the following Findings and Conditions:

- 1) The Yates Cider Mill Historic District is a non-contiguous historic district; and
- 2) The proposed construction of the storage building and associated parking lot expansion and site changes **ARE** appropriate in materials, massing, size, location, and scale; and
- 3) The proposed project **DOES NOT** destroy any historic or character defining features of the historic district; and
- 4) The proposed construction of the new storage building and associated landscape changes as proposed **IS** in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines, in particular standard numbers 9 and 10 as follows:

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## DISCUSSION

### 2025-0204

#### Discussion of HDC Mission and Goals

*(McLeod memos of 5/1/25 and 7/3/25, Draft HDC Minutes of 5/8/25 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)*

*Mr. McLeod stated that the Planning Commission is nearing the end of the Master Plan process, and noted that they want to ensure that the Plan incorporates the ideas and thoughts of each aspect of what the City should be doing. He pointed out that in 2018, the historic elements of the plan were not necessarily carried within the plan at that time. He stated that the Master Plan as of now does a much better job of that, and talks about developing specific guidelines for each of the contiguous historic districts within the city and then assessing the need for specific overall guidelines for Rochester Hills that would be more generally applicable to the non-contiguous districts as it pertains to people coming forward with additions and modifications. He suggested a straw vote to ascertain if this is what the Commission as a body would like to be a part of developing.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if a joint discussion with the Study Committee might be warranted.*

*Mr. McLeod responded that if this is something that the Commission decides they want to go forward with, the logistics can be determined later when the time comes. He explained the elements of the master plan relative to land use,*

*rezonings for economic development, and encouraging bringing in new and different businesses, and noted that this would be specific to the historic district.*

*Ms. Lyon suggested that a prioritized list be discussed with pros and cons first before deciding.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that for historic properties it would be to ensure Historic Districts Commission review is fully integrated into the site plan review development process for non-residential historic resources in the City, and gave Yates as an example that will ultimately be going to the Planning Commission. He stated that they want to make sure that something the Planning Commission may say they want to see on the site is not in conflict with what the HDC wants or is approving. He noted the idea is that everyone needs to work in unison, and offered the example of the Planning Commission calling for brick while the HDC notes that a building should look a certain way and should not have brick. He pointed out notes he just wrote about landscaping and the color of the foundation of the Yates storage building to add to his site plan review notes.*

*Ms. Lyons stated that it should be for all properties, residential and non-residential.*

*Mr. McLeod added that the goal is to develop ways to further promote the existence and importance of the historic resources in the city. He noted that the next goal is working with Oakland County to promote historical assets as well as for tourism. He commented that he thinks that there needs to be a further integration between what happens here at the HDC and what happens at the Museum for instance. He stated that he thinks that it is a matter of ensuring that they are doing everything they can to promote the historic resources and utilize them the best way possible to not only convey the history of the city but also to promote people coming to and exploring the city. He suggested more could be done with social media, and mentioned bringing more people to the Earl Borden awards or more so bringing the awards to them to further the acknowledgement of the city's historic resources.*

*Ms. Lyons suggested that perhaps there should be a report presented for open comment time of things going on or coming before the HDC. She stated that it promotes communication across the channels and feels more actionable than idyllic.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen suggested encouraging the Rochester-Avon Historical Society to keep up with the Commission as well as with the Museum. She stated that perhaps if the Society was aware of the meetings or what was on the agenda, perhaps the Commission would receive more public comment.*

*Ms. Lyons stated that she believes what makes people upset is when they are uninformed. She concurred with creating an integration plan so that there is a process to ensure projects that are going to move forward and go through the Planning Commission have a sequenced flow of expectations. She noted that this impacts how the HDC is perceived by the rest of government.*

*Mr. McLeod reviewed items on his list that have been incorporated into the plan, and those that are not technically in the draft as yet but up for discussion.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if it would be possible to have an HDC member as a non-voting liaison to the Planning Commission when historic items are appearing on their agenda. She commented that they might be able to answer a lot of questions and explain rationale for their thoughts.*

*Mr. McLeod suggested also having the minutes available for those items that cross before both Commissions. He stated that he liked the idea of having a representative attend the Planning Commission on those nights when an agenda item was posted, noting that while staff could speak to an item, it might be a bit more meaningful or powerful coming directly from an HDC member.*

*He commented that increased communication in getting out to the residents was something that the HDC mentioned previously, noting that a potentially fall meeting or open house forum was suggested.*

*Dr. Stamps asked if a list exists of all of the historic resources.*

*Mr. McLeod responded that they have the survey from 2002.*

*Dr. Stamps stated that he wants to know how many structures or buildings are within the city and how many are in the Historic Districts. He commented that he thinks it will be less than one-tenth of one percent. He stressed that this could communicate to the rest of the community that these are rare and unique pieces and they need to save whatever they can. He added that the Earl Borden Awards recognize the efforts of citizens that are doing this work.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen commented relative to the concept of tourism, and said that she wondered if they could get permission of the homeowners, perhaps even as a fundraising event for the Museum, to do a walk of historic locations and charge a ticket fee, recalling that the community used to have a Holly Walk benefiting the library. She commented that people from all over could see what historic buildings and areas that are in the city.*

*Ms. Lyons asked for more discussion on working with the County.*

*Mr. McLeod noted that as the County is developing a plan for tourism, one element is the historical resources found throughout the County. He noted that the city has three large historical resources including Meadow Brook, Yates, and the Museum. He explained that the County will be creating programming once their plan is set and he believes that it is a matter that the Commission gets on board to appropriately handle cross-promotion and working in unison to provide support to implement tourism opportunities.*

*Ms. Lyons questioned terminology on Mr. McLeod's list regarding the HDC reviewing options regarding improving and maintaining the alleyway running parallel to Runyon and East Tienken, and suggested that using the term "develop" (or "development") would be a stronger word. She suggested the HDC could work with whoever they have to work with to have someone fund the*

*alleyway. She commented that reviewing is a passive action and looks like they are not doing anything and some action should come from any review.*

*Dr. Stamps suggested that the word "review" be changed to "propose" or "determine options for".*

*Mr. McLeod directed the discussion to the Stony Creek Historic District, and commented that the main issue that comes up is how to address Tienken Road and whether there would be a way to accomplish some sort of pathway or sidewalk. He asked if the Commission felt passionate about this issue; and if so, the second phase would be to figure out a way to do it.*

*Ms. Lyons suggested a design competition with an application fee, raising funds.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen cautioned that the design entries may not be good.*

*Ms. Lyons suggested that it could be a forum for community feedback. She commented that she would love to propose a solution, but she has been over there and is not certain that she has one.*

*Mr. McLeod noted that when the Village received the Earl Borden Award two years ago, he was out there taking pictures to be used in the presentation. He stated that he had two different residents come out to speak with him, appearing to be on the defensive because they thought the road was changing or a pathway was coming into their front yard. He stated that one of the reasons why nothing came of their last walkthrough with Mr. McKay is that he just does not think that there is the desire. He suggested that this is one of the projects that will take time to grow on the residents, and hopefully they will see that the benefits will outweigh the potential negatives. He noted the challenges and commented that it might be a very creative solution with potentially a three-foot sidewalk in some areas. He added that it is not a good situation with people ducking around trees and almost hanging into the road with big trucks going by.*

*Dr. Stamps commented that as Tienken is a County road, there are some very strict guidelines on pathways. He noted the gaps on Avon at a couple of locations, and mentioned that they tried to come up with some more creative and narrow solutions. He stated that the County was difficult to work with.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that it will bring many different people together, and commented that as soon as one mentions "creative solution" on a road or pathway project, the price could go up. He noted that the point of the Master Plan is to determine whether this is something that the HDC would want to go after, and then to subsequently figure out the logistics of how to make it happen. He asked what other thoughts the Commissioners had about good things to implement.*

*Dr. Stamps suggested whether it would be appropriate to address a millage for historic preservation. He commented that if Oakland Township can do it, it might be considered even if it would not have to be that big. He stated that when he approached the subject 14 years ago, it was determined that the economy at*

*the time was not good. He suggested that perhaps next year in the 250th Anniversary of the country, there may be a little more sensitivity toward history and historic resources. He noted the proposal that came out of Detroit to have a millage imposed on Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties to support the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Historical Museum, and the Holocaust Museum. He stated at the time there was quite a bit of kickback that Oakland County should receive a percentage of the millage coming back to the people who were taxed; however, this idea did not make it out of committee discussions.*

*Mr. McLeod noted that this suggestion may not make the Master Plan, but he would see where the idea will go. He asked Ms. Kidorf which of the ideas on his list she thought should be included.*

*Ms. Kidorf mentioned that as a local government, there are some survey requirements that should continue that fall under the Historic Districts Commission or Study Committee as a part of the responsibilities under the Certified Local Government program. She commented that she saw the list as fairly proactive, and more proactive than other communities she has seen.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that he is not saying that this discussion was final and closed in terms of the Master Plan process, and explained that the Planning Commission and City Council will hopefully send out for public comment in the coming month or so. He noted that the Commission could provide additional comments to bring to the Master Plan. He stated that he will formalize this list and send it out to the Commissioners. In answer to a question on the format, he explained that the Plan will be very different and will not include a PDF paper copy. He stated that it will be completely web-based and GIS-based.*

*Ms. Lyons asked for an explanation of the "neighborhoods" contained in the plan and asked if a new high school was in the works.*

*Mr. McLeod responded that the Plan was broken up into five different "neighborhoods" that come together as one big plan. He mentioned that they used the high school boundaries as they are noticeable and visible to the residents, and pointed out that Rochester High School's district is so large, it was split at Rochester Road into East and West.*

*Ms. Lyons suggested that the HDC list should include headings and sub bullets, such as "Address Resident Issues", and a list underneath. She stated that a shorter list may be more effective. She noted that improving communication is an issue where they need to do better, and everyone will be happier.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that he likes the specificity of the Master Plan, and commented that if having only general comments nothing will ever get done. He noted that he will formalize his list in the next couple of days and send it out to everyone, and will bring it into the Master Plan discussion at the Planning Commission level as well. He added that he will figure out a timeline for any additional Commissioner comments to be submitted. He noted that one of his missions with the Master Plan is to ensure that a major portion of this community is represented.*



**Discussed**

*Mr. McLeod stated that nothing specific is yet in for August. He noted that the Barn on Crooks Road will be coming back as they are working on their application.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen suggested policing or ensuring that enforcement of the requirements of the Historic District standards are included as a bullet point in the Master Plan lists.*

*Dr. Stamps asked if there was a date set for a meeting with the Stony Creek residents.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that there was not one set yet. He noted that as it is already July, he would look toward fall. He noted that October 9th is a regular meeting night.*

*He mentioned that there was no definitive date for a public meeting regarding Adams Road, and commented that their committee is meeting next week to discuss a date, perhaps in August.*

*Dr. Stamps asked if they were proposing to dismantle the stone walls and rebuild them. He commented that it sounds like the decision has already been made.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that of the five alternatives developed, any of the alternatives other than to do nothing have no way to save the wall with modern day engineering standards. He noted that comments from the Road Commission are that there is no funding for any of this, and this is the first very long step of what option will serve Adams best. He commented that what they have gotten to at this point is very minimal impact or change which is why they chose a three-lane option with roundabouts. He noted that he does not want to call this option preferred, but that option is the leader at this point. He stated that there were a lot of people at those meetings as well that said they wanted five lanes. He commented that there are two sides to the equation and they blended together to come up with an option to see how the public feels about it. He noted that it will probably be presented in mid-August.*

*Vice Chairperson Granthen commented that they would not even consider a green arrow into Oakland University to stop traffic backups, noting that it is difficult to turn left into campus during certain times.*

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

*- Regular Meeting, August 14, 2025, 7 p.m.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Lyons, seconded*

*by McGunn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.*

*Minutes were prepared by Jennifer MacDonald.*

*Minutes were approved as presented/amended at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Regular Historic Districts Commission Meeting.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Jason Thompson, Chairperson*