



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

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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, October 21, 2025

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hooper called the October 21, 2025 Regular Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 9 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer, Dale Hetrick, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver

Others Present:

Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

Chairperson Hooper welcomed everyone to the October 21, 2025 Regular Planning Commission Meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2025-0448](#) October 7, 2025 Planning Commission Special Meeting Minutes

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

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

COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hooper noted that the Commission received notice that the proposed Master Plan would be an agenda item for discussion at the next Shelby Township Planning Commission meeting. He mentioned that Commissioners received the latest edition of the Michigan Planner magazine.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Hooper called for public comment not related to items on the Commission's agenda this evening. Seeing no one wishing to speak, he closed Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS

2025-0449

Public Hearing and Request for Adoption of the 2025 Master Land Use Plan

(McLeod memo dated 10-15-25, Giffels Webster memo dated 10-15-25, Resolution of Adoption, Public Hearing Notice, and combined Meeting Minutes had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Present were Jill Bahm and Ian Hogg of Giffels Webster, the City's Planning Consultant.

Mr. McLeod stated that this process has been ongoing for the Planning Commission for approximately 1-3/4 years. He noted that the steps now include the Public Hearing tonight and sending it on to City Council for their adoption at the first meeting in November should the Commission feel comfortable moving forward to adopt it this evening. Should that be successful, the process would start all over again in approximately four years for the next update.

Ms. Bahm stated that she was delighted to be here for the Public Hearing after working on it with the Commission for almost two years. She commented that the process included many steps and much engagement, with many meetings and much discussion. She stated that they believe that it is a really good Master Plan, and commented that going forward the next steps will be diving into implementation for the things that have been deemed important. She thanked the Commissioners and members of the public who attended the Open House. She stated that the 2025 Master Plan Update reaffirmed the direction set in the 2018 Master Plan. She reviewed the Master Plan process:

- It was decided that a good approach would be the development of five different planning neighborhoods based on the high school districts in the city. This was deemed a good approach to help people better visualize how land use impacts their daily lives, and the high school boundaries would be identifiable to them.*
- The Master Plan focuses on the five main components of the community: Housing, Economic Development, Transportation and Mobility Preservation, Sustainability, and Community Amenities.*
- The Master Plan was combined with the other long-range plans that the City has taken on over the past several years to cross-reference all of the action strategies and provide a document that is a one-stop shop for action items to take forward.*
- Themes used during the process were to be age-friendly, sustainable, and innovative. Those themes were used as filters during the process, to ensure that public input would be aligned through those lenses.*
- After discussion with staff and the Commission during the process the one theme that seemed to resonate the most centered on what was termed "Timeless Tradition".*

- The ideas are to maintain stability in a suburban lifestyle in Rochester Hills, that single family housing would remain the main housing type, and pedestrian connectivity would be strengthened. This was one of the most significant departures in public feedback from the 2018 Plan, where concerns had been raised regarding traffic congestion and deer.

- Another shift in the last five years was a focus on preserving natural resources.

- Community Engagement included over 2,000 participants in five different phases that began in 2024. Feedback focused on increasing walkability and safety, preserving natural features, focusing on single family housing and maintaining stability, and a high level of satisfaction for residents.

- The Future Land Use Map is included as a part of one of the required elements of the Master Plan by State Law that illustrates the way that it is intended for the city to be built. The Future Land Use Map is different than zoning and is more of a guiding tool as opposed to a Zoning Map, which coordinates with laws and regulations. There were no changes to the planned residential densities from the 2018 map, and it really does not have significant land use implications or changes. The new Future Land Use Map consolidates categories to make things simpler and easier to understand. Any changes were made primarily to reflect the built environment, and nothing was changed to generate additional density, particularly from a residential standpoint.

- When discussing zoning changes relative to business districts, the idea of design standards emphasized that people are interested in seeing higher quality materials and designs that are durable, long-lasting and timeless.

- Community identity was important, and the Brooklands was referenced as a type of development people want to see replicated in other parts of the community.

- Gateways and streetscapes were intended to tie in with the Master Plan.

- The Housing Plan is a new required element in the Planning and Enabling Act. Preserving the pattern of existing neighborhoods, the Plan allows a clustering or attaching of homes consistent with the existing residential density, resulting in more green space and giving more flexibility in the kind of housing that could be developed. This clustering would be primarily along major thoroughfares and not within existing neighborhoods.

- Historic preservation was consciously taken out of the 2018 Plan and has been added back in reflecting the importance of preservation for future generations of the historic structures that remain in the City.

- Three separate tiers of redevelopment include a tier one refresh or facelift, to determine what could be done to enhance a property perhaps in a maintenance phase. Tier two would reference outlot developments, perhaps parking lots that are underutilized or unused, and would continue ideas of pedestrian connectivity and design standards to ensure that they make a development or area more walkable. Tier three would be the full scale redevelopment of underutilized or obsolete sites, and may include public infrastructure, investment, traffic and parking management.

Ms. Bahm thanked those Commissioners who were able to attend the Open House and noted that they probably had 25 to 30 people. She stated that as tonight is the Public Hearing, after opening up comments to anyone in attendance, she would hope that the Commission would then consider taking action.

Mr. Dettloff asked what feedback was gained from the open house.

Ms. Bahm responded that some attendees had not previously been a part of the process and came to learn what it was all about. She added that they had a conversation with one person who questioned how the Plan would address housing, particularly with respect to the younger population.

Chairperson Hooper opened the Public Hearing at 7:17 p.m. After seeing that there were no speaker cards presented, and no one wished to address the Planning Commission on this item, he closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Neubauer noted that the next Council Meeting would be on November 10, 2025, and that this would be the last meeting of the current City Council. She commented that this version of the Plan is much more conservative and much more reflective of what the residents and City Council were looking for.

Ms. Bahm responded that as professional planners, it is their job to bring all of the information including what people are doing across the country and what people are doing with the kind of data that they have in terms of affluence in the community. She stressed that at the end of the day, this is the City's community and this is their plan.

Ms. Neubauer commented that she knows that at the last City Council meeting it was difficult, and she wanted things to go much smoother and suggested stressing traditionalism and a shift to the idea that the residents have guided the plan. She made the motion in the packet to approve the plan and move it to Council for November 10, 2025. The motion was supported by Mr. Dettloff.

Mr. Hetrick stated that he believes the plan is really great and incorporates many of the things that were battled over to get the plan to something that would make sense for the residents along with making sense from a planning and long-term development standpoint. He added that he believes that a slide shown that depicted the different types of homes including the traditional home and how a cluster home would create opportunities for more green space was excellent. He commented that one of the things that the Commission grappled with was how this different style of home would allow for a tighter grouping of homes yet provide more opportunity for green space and recreation, which was also a high priority in the planning process; and he suggested that this would also be helpful for City Council to understand how the plan will enhance opportunities in Rochester Hills.

Mr. Dettloff stated that he was really impressed by all of the community engagement efforts. He commented that he hopes that this plan will get a lot of recognition statewide as an example of how to go about doing a master plan.

Ms. Bahm responded that she would like to give a shout out to Planning staff for coordinating such a tight timeline to keep the process rolling.

Chairperson Hooper commented that this is the sixth Master Plan that he has been associated with on the Commission and would echo the comments that Giffels Webster knocked it out of the park. He stated that probably the most intense thing that a Planning Commission works on is a master plan update. He noted that the process has evolved to the point where it is a very intensive look within the city, and he stated that he definitely supports and recognizes what efforts have been done on behalf of the city.

After calling for a roll call vote on Ms. Neubauer's motion, Chairperson Hooper announced that the motion passed unanimously.

Following the vote, Mr. McLeod commented that Giffels' efforts on this were monumental and they did a fantastic job for the City. He stated that he has been a part of a lot of these plans over the years and it takes a lot of effort to get a product like this. He commented that they should be acknowledged for their efforts.

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

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

WHEREAS, the City of Rochester Hills Planning Commission may prepare and adopt a Master Plan for the physical development of the City, as empowered by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008; and

WHEREAS, the City of Rochester Hills contracted with a professional planning consultant to assist the Planning Commission with the technical assessments necessary to make the Master Plan for the City; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan process commenced with a kickoff meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council on January 29, 2024;

WHEREAS, throughout the planning process, 23 events and opportunities that resulted in more than 2,000 public interactions were made regarding the development of the Master Plan, including focus groups, surveys, open houses, etc.; and

WHEREAS, throughout the development of the Master Plan, three (3) main planning themes were applied to each decisionmaking process. These themes are being Age-Friendly, Sustainable, and Innovative; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the input received through the numerous public events and opportunities, a community vision emerged, Timeless Tradition, being a vision to maintain stability and the suburban lifestyle in Rochester Hills, while strengthening pedestrian connectivity and preserving natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the City's Master Plan has been presented as a series of neighborhoods, allowing residents, property owners, and business owners to review planned land uses, policies and implementation items within their specific area of the City more easily, while still maintaining the ability to review the plan as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the final format of the City's Master Plan is an interactive online experience, encouraging residents, property owners and business owners to learn more about the Master Plan through engaging online mapping; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public open house to present the draft Master Plan on October 7, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on its proposed 2025 Master Plan on October 21, 2025.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby adopts this Master Plan for the City, along with the text, maps, charts, graphs, and other descriptive materials contained in the Plan.

2025-0450

Public Hearing and Request for Conditional Use Recommendation for alcoholic beverage sales for onsite consumption that is ancillary to an otherwise permissible use (cafe/restaurant) for the Highland Room, located within Unit #1 of the newly constructed Gerald building, on the south side of Auburn and west of Dequindre, zoned BD Brooklands District, Parcel ID# 15-36-230-001 (formerly 1760 E. Auburn); Mike (Manish) Chaudhary, the Highland Room (RH), LLC, Applicant

(Staff Report dated 10-15-25, Applicant's Letter dated 9-18-25, Proposed Floor Plan, Menu received 10-2-25, Environmental Impact Statement, Development Application and Public Hearing Notice had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Present for the applicant were Mike Chaudhary, Applicant for the Highland Room LLC, and Hassan Haider, DMC Group Consultants.

Chairperson Hooper introduced this item as a request for conditional use recommendation for alcoholic beverages for onsite consumption ancillary to an otherwise permissible use for the Highlands Room located within one unit of the newly-constructed Gerald Plaza on the south side of Auburn, west of Dequindre in the Brooklands District. He invited the applicants forward.

Mr. Chaudhary indicated that he is the applicant for the special use permit, and Mr. Haider will be the banquet manager. He commented that they should be looking for a certificate of occupancy for their residential units in the Gerald within another three to four weeks.

Mr. McLeod noted that The Highland Room, if approved, would be the first tenant within the Gerald Plaza. He pointed out the location of the Plaza relative to the neighboring properties and uses, and noted that building parking for this particular use would not only be on the street, but would be within the City parking lots immediately south of the proposed use. He commented that it has been a long time coming for that part of the city. He reviewed the proposed layout for the Highland Room, noting that it is a very limited space of one unit at approximately 1,260 square feet with limited capacity of approximately 33 people. He reviewed the proposed hours of operation as 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., and noted that a full range of breakfast, lunch and dinner options would be provided. He mentioned that they were asked to clarify their menu options as they seemed a little light initially. He noted that staff originally thought they

would be bringing in a liquor license, and found out earlier today that they will be asking for a quota license from the City.

Chairperson Hooper noted that this item requires a Public Hearing, opened the Public Hearing at 7:32 p.m., and stated that he did not receive any cards and sees no one wishing to speak. He then closed the Public Hearing. He asked Mr. Chaudhary to respond to Mr. McLeod's comments.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that they have gotten a lot of calls regarding the residential units; however, most people want to see one of the units finished so they will be staging one of the units in the commercial space next week. He mentioned that they received a call regarding locating a physical therapy location there, which he is personally not in favor of having as they want local businesses. He stated that they are going to be pushing a big marketing campaign for the commercial and residential spaces soon.

He stated that they have already invested a lot of money into the plaza, and the idea is to bring some fusion cocktails and finger foods. He commented that he learned that there is an opportunity for a quota license available and noted that they just acquired a license for a location in Wayne County.

Chairperson Hooper noted that he serves on the Liquor License Technical Review Committee, and pointed out that in order to obtain a quota license, they would have to have a recommendation from that body as well. He stated that they have not met regarding a request. He stressed that he did not want to give the applicants any false impression that they would just apply and get a quota license. He explained that the number of licenses is based on population and only so many are allocated every ten years.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that he understands, and that this is all based on the quota license. He stated that if he does not get the quota license, he will be dropping the plan.

Ms. Brnabic asked for an explanation of the hours, noting that it was mentioned that for the daytime hours it would be a non-alcohol establishment.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. they would be opening the cafe primarily for coffee and snacks. After 4:00 p.m. they would be serving alcohol.

Ms. Brnabic noted that it was also stated that there may be social gatherings, night events, evening drinks and a cocktail lounge. She asked if the proposed seating of 33 persons is a maximum capacity.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that because the space is smaller, they are trying to offer it for professionals who can come in the evening for a quiet time. He explained that the idea is not to make it more of a sports bar, and he did not anticipate a lot of people coming. He mentioned that occasionally they might be watching a game. He stated that they are looking at 25 to 30 people for the capacity. He stressed they would be serving different kinds of fusion drinks.

Ms. Brnabic asked if there were any plans for expansion.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that at this point there were no plans. He stated that they would like to keep this at the same capacity because this would be their second cafe bar and they do plan to open in other cities.

Ms. Brnabic asked if the only access to the cafe would be the front entrance.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that it would be.

Ms. Brnabic asked if this was a mini version of the banquet cafe they opened in Highland Park.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that the Highland Park location is bigger, with 5,000 square feet of banquet space attached to a 2,200 square foot cafe they are building. He noted that they are awaiting approval to begin construction.

Ms. Brnabic stated that she does not have any problem with this and would support it.

Mr. Hetrick expressed appreciation to Chairperson Hooper for explaining that they will go to the Liquor License Technical Review Committee as a part of the process going forward. He asked staff to confirm that adequate parking was reviewed for the facility given the parking onsite is primarily for residents of the building.

Mr. McLeod responded that within the Brooklands District there is no differentiation between different types of retail or office and it is a standardized number for all uses. He commented that any non-residential use that is allowable within the Brooklands District would automatically fit within the parking calculations that were originally approved as a part of the building.

Mr. Struzik asked that a couple of typographical errors be corrected in the packet and in the proposed resolution prior to this item moving on to City Council. He commented that this building is awesome and he believes that the business would also be awesome and something he wants to see replicated along the Auburn corridor. He made the motion in the packet to recommend City Council approval of the conditional use.

Ms. Neubauer seconded the motion, and pointed out the typographical errors to be corrected, including errors on the development application itself she wanted to see corrected.

Ms. Brnabic commented that she is happy to hear that the applicants are supporting more of a mom-and-pop business, and mentioned that she is hoping for a bakery.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that the tenant will have cookies and cakes. He added that the goal is to have small businesses and the whole purpose of the building in this area is to meet the vision of the Brooklands which the City has had from day one. He commented that their goal is to make it lively and bring

different vendors who have different local products so it can create employment and have a good impact locally.

He mentioned that they have another project near Wayne State University, and mentioned that this is a big concept coming up from Detroit's Midtown and downtown.

Ms. Brnabic asked if there were any plans for outdoor seating.

Mr. Chaudhary responded no.

Ms. Brnabic asked if that changed in the future whether they would have to come back before the Planning Commission.

Mr. McLeod responded that technically outdoor seating is an ancillary use; however, with alcohol sales that changes and he would believe that they would have to come back. He commented that if it were just coffee at lunchtime, it would be able to be reviewed administratively.

Ms. Brnabic stated that outdoor seating would have to terminate at 4:00 p.m. before alcohol sales began.

Mr. McLeod responded that it would be difficult to enforce; however, they would consider a request at that time. He noted that generally speaking any expansion to the outside would probably come back before the Commission.

Chairperson Hooper pointed out that Condition No. 2 of the motion states that if the use changes it would have to return before the Planning Commission. He stated that he wanted to caution the applicants that obtaining a quota license is not a process of just making an application for it and it would be given to them.

Mr. Chaudhary responded that he understood.

After calling for a roll call vote, Chairperson Hooper noted that the motion passed unanimously. He thanked the applicants for their investment in the Brooklands.

Mr. Chaudhary commented that it was a pleasure to be before the Commission again. He mentioned that he was before the Commission 12 months ago after their site plan had expired, and he is happy to say that his team has done a great job. He commented that the elevator should be coming in shortly and that is the last piece they need to wrap up construction.

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

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

Resolved, in the matter of File No. PCU2025-0005 (The Highland Room), the Planning Commission recommends to City Council Approval of the Conditional Use to allow sales for on premises alcoholic beverage consumption associated with a restaurant/cafe use,

based on documents received by the Planning Department on September 18, 2025 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 restaurant use should have a positive impact on the community as a whole and the surrounding area by providing additional eating and gathering opportunities within the Brooklands District.
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. In addition, a use of this nature falls in line with the vision of the City's redevelopment of Auburn Rd. and the Brooklands District, to make the area more vibrant and walkable, and a restaurant use will help facilitate that.
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, in the determination of City staff, the intensity of the use changes or increases, in terms of traffic, noise, hours, lighting, odor, or other aspects that may cause adverse off-site impact, 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 and conditions for possible revocation, modification or supplementation.

DISCUSSION

2025-0455

Zoning Ordinance Use Discussion

(McLeod Memo dated 10-15-25 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Mr. McLeod noted that every once in a while Staff receives questions at the counter, calls or emails regarding some uses that do not necessarily fit nicely within the Ordinance. He added that uses continue to evolve and some of the requests are challenging to Planning Staff.

He noted that one use requested of late is an EV charging station as its own use. He likened it to a fuelling station, but with EV chargers instead of gas pumps. He explained that a national brand would like to come into the city; however, they asked that their name and potential location not be disclosed yet. He commented that Staff has categorized this particular use as a gas station, or similar to, because there is nothing in the Ordinance referencing a primary use as an EV charging station. He stated that the premise would be that there is a building that would house sitting space, or a co-work space, for those who might be waiting for their car to charge up for perhaps 15 to 30 minutes. He noted that the particular model in question would bring in vending machine offerings of coffee and snacks as ancillary items; however, the primary use would be to charge a vehicle.

He stated that while Staff made the determination that this is most like a gas station, there are differences. He stated that traffic patterns are different, and people would be going in and out much more slowly as fill-up time is longer. He mentioned that this particular brand offers an app where a space can be reserved for a specific time. He added that environmental concerns are shifted as there will be no gasoline products that could potentially contaminate the ground from a spill; however, there is a potential issue of using high voltage energy. He pointed out that there would be canopies.

Mr. McLeod noted that the proposer does not feel that their concept is that of a gas station and feels that their primary use is as a retail operation and that the chargers are ancillary.

He stated that Staff wanted to get the Planning Commission's perspective on how to approach this, as there could be 10 to 12 chargers and a building. He suggested that the Commissioners express their thoughts on whether new provisions are needed or to simply concur that it is almost like a gas station.

Chairperson Hooper asked if it is anticipated that people will be getting out of their vehicles and going inside, working or using a laptop.

Mr. McLeod responded that is correct. He noted that the proposed buildings would be relatively small in the 2,000-3,000 square foot range and a full-blown convenience store would not be expected. He explained that in this case it would be more of a vending machine operation, with press button operation for coffee or a sandwich.

Chairperson Hooper commented that in his view it looks more like a car wash where at some locations, you drop your car off and sit in a lounge while the car is being washed and detailed. He stated that he did not know if that makes a difference between a gas station and a car wash as far as setbacks and ordinance requirements.

Mr. McLeod responded that he did not think it would make a huge difference; however, he pointed out that gas stations have a one-acre minimum and there is not necessarily a minimum for a car wash.

Mr. Dettloff asked if this idea exists in any nearby communities.

Mr. McLeod responded that he does not know of one right now within southeast Michigan, and commented that Michigan has typically been a bit slow in the EV market. He mentioned that some of the southern states and California sees these types of uses popping up. He noted that the intent is not to cater the ordinance to a specific user, but it should be brought to the Commission's attention. He reiterated that in Staff's mind, it has been thought of as a gas station whether it is gas or electricity coming out of the pump; however, it is a question of whether the Planning Commission feels this is one of those elements where the Ordinance should address it more specifically.

Mr. Dettloff asked if there were any specific locations discussed.

Mr. McLeod responded that there were; however, the company asked that they not be discussed.

Mr. Hetrick stated that it looks and feels like a gas station with a canopy. He commented that he is surprised that it would be a vending machine convenience store and thought it would be more high-end. He stated that while the environmental issues will not include underground tanks for gas, he would question how power would be delivered to the pumps and whether they would need their own generator connected to DTE to power 12 pumps.

Mr. McLeod responded that there would probably be a significant transformer on site. He mentioned construction in the Meijer parking lot along Auburn and noted that they will be installing 10 EV charging stations as an ancillary use with no building and commented that there are transformers in cabinetry in addition to the actual charging pumps. He added that there would be visual clutter having 10 or 12 different vehicles all charging at the same time. He mentioned that eventually he thought that there would be more of a convenience store with a coffee brand or something similar as an ancillary use.

He stressed that the main purpose is EV charging and the question is how to address it and make sure that it fits the aesthetic, design appearance and context for Rochester Hills.

Mr. Hetrick likened the environmental issue of a giant transformer as a similar concern to an underground tank.

Mr. Struzik stated that while he can see that it is similar to a gas station, there are some key differences including turnover time that will evolve over time. He pointed out that charging technology and capacity for vehicles is changing, and mentioned that there is a lot of capitalistic pressure as to whoever can get charging down to a shorter period of time. He noted that Rochester Hills residents would probably charge their vehicles at home and these chargers will be more of a planned trip where someone maps out a fast charging facility en route up north. He commented that this could be a way to convert some of the underutilized parking lots and further attract people to existing businesses.

He expressed concern over power delivery to nearby residents and commented that he would hate to see something come in that could cause brownouts in

nearby neighborhoods. He suggested that a power expert come in for the first couple of requests to assure that there is nothing to be concerned about. He added that he would question whether the Fire Department has the expertise and equipment to address an incident at a charging facility. He questioned whether these facilities would have some sort of power storage as they may not be pulling power off of the network in real time. He commented that while this is not a reason to turn such a development away because this is obviously a technology that will be seen more and more, he would want to ensure that they are ahead of the first incident rather than reacting to it.

Ms. Neubauer stated that she has some of the same concerns, and noted that she has gone through Fire Ops and learned that electrical car fires are dangerous and difficult to put out. She added that they do not have all of the equipment and supplies now that they need and the Fire Millage is already going up. She questioned the impact on the power grid, stating there are already consistent outages in neighborhoods. She suggested that considering it a gas station was like putting a square peg in a round hole and commented that she would rather have a specific ordinance to address this type of development. She commented that she would like more research on this type of development and noted that while Rochester Hills is innovative, she hates being the guinea pig on this type of thing.

She stressed that with all of the transit taxes, parks taxes, and millages going up, this is something the City cannot afford if the Fire Department needs additional equipment to cover an emergency. She added that she would question the aesthetics of a power plant in the middle of the community. She stated that she is not comfortable classifying it within the gas station ordinances and would want more information and discussions with Engineering. She commented that she did not think DTE would be a neutral source of information, and stated that someone needs to be consulted that would not financially benefit from bringing in an EV station.

Chairperson Hooper stated that he agrees with all of the comments made this evening, and that the City would need some kind of draft zoning ordinance amendment to address this on the issues of capacity. He mentioned that in engineering, when every project came before them, they would have to provide hydrant pressure and electrical usage capabilities. Should they not have a certain pressure or voltage or amperage that can be supplied, it either nullifies the project or requires additional capital investment to make it work.

Mr. McLeod stated that this is not intended to be a one-and-done conversation and this is just the start of the discussion.

Chairperson Hooper moved on to the next topic, consideration for a cat cafe.

Mr. McLeod explained that this use was prompted by a discussion in the Brooklands and stated that these are a trend at cafes now. He commented that the cafe portion is a coffee shop and the cat portion is the keeping of cats. He explained that the cats are permanent residents there and are available for adoption. He noted that while the cafe portion is easy, the cat portion of keeping animals there overnight for multiple days, weeks or even months can be labeled

as a kennel. He pointed out that within the ordinance, kennels are only allowed in a certain districts, one of the industrial districts, large residential lots, or the highway business district. He asked if this is a use similar to a pet store which would be allowable generally in any of the commercial districts. He stressed that for kennels, for long-term keeping of animals, or for multitudes of animals, those are designated for only certain areas of the city and not for the Brooklands, not for Community Business, and not for Neighborhood Business. He noted that it is one of those questions as to what is the primary use and what is the ancillary use.

He mentioned that his wife is a veterinarian, and he noted that she was following a case where one was removed from a mall because of odor emanating from the use itself causing complaints from adjacent tenants. He stressed that some of that probably has to do with operations and whether it is run poorly, but it is something to consider. He mentioned that there is one in Washington Township, the one he referenced was in Clinton Township, and he believes that Troy allows them.

He noted that it is a question as to whether the Planning Commission has any desire to weigh in, whether they want additional research, or additional ordinance provisions.

Chairperson Hooper asked about how Petco deals with dogs in cages overnight, and asked how that would be different.

Mr. McLeod responded that Petco is different because of the primary versus ancillary use. He noted the question for a cat cafe or dog cafe is what is the primary use, and whether you are going there to get a cup of coffee or play with the cat. He stated that it is probably a little of both. He asked if the Commission wanted more research or if they do not want to address it at this time.

Chairperson Hooper asked if it was similar to a service animal.

Mr. McLeod responded that it is not necessarily designed to be a service animal, while some people may see it as anecdotally therapeutic. He commented that some people find it relaxing to go sit amongst cats and drink coffee.

Mr. Struzik stated that he is in favor of the cat cafe concept and has been to one before. He explained that they visited one and a couple of years later ended up getting a cat. He commented that he does not see this working in an industrial area and would imagine that it would be better in a commercial corridor with some walkability such as the Brooklands. He suggested it might be a conditional use and commented that saying that it is a kennel is scary. He stated that cats are not very loud so he would not be worried about noise. He noted that as long as they are secure he is not worried about smell or what would happen in a neighborhood.

He mentioned that his neighborhood has five or six neighborhood cats and they do not have any rodents in the area. He commented that he thinks the primary

use is to sell items and coffee or have pet supplies and toys, and not necessarily to sell or adopt cats. He suggested it could be a conditional use for a commercial corridor in a retail establishment.

Ms. Neubauer stated that she had recently been invited to visit a cat cafe and was unable to do so as she had to meet a client in the hospital who had cat scratch fever after being scratched by a cat. She asked if they would be declawed and would be safe, if they could bite, and who might be liable. She commented that she would rather go to the Humane Society to get her cat fixed and suggested that this could invite problems. She stated that she is not against animals, but is not sure how it would work sanitary-wise or liability-wise should a child grab a cat by the tail and get scratched. She suggested that she would like to get more information and would pass on considering this for now.

Ms. Denstaedt mentioned that she has a friend who just opened a cat cafe in Holland in a strip mall, and noted that her friend had to bring OSHA in and install special air filtration. She stated that they have some walk-ins but visits are by reservation, and explained that they are working with a local Humane Society. She noted that since they opened in April or May, they had 60 cats adopted, so there is a transition of cats going in and out. She stated that the Humane Society her friend is working with only allows kittens in one spot and adult cats in another, and pointed out there is a lot of regulation. She noted her friend has prepackaged food and coffee. She commented that her friend does not allow little kids. She asked if they are working with a local Humane Society, how many cats they are allowing, and whether regulations could be established to limit the number of cats there at any one time.

Mr. Hetrick stated that while he recognizes that it is not a kennel, these cats are coming from somewhere and he would ask whether they have been vaccinated and been to a veterinarian as the last thing he would want is for someone to become ill. He commented that some of the regulatory issues brought up are important, and those fall in the category of a kennel. He stated that his guess would be that the shelter has to do many of these things before they can actually release an animal. He suggested that he would not want them to pick up strays and throw them in a cage.

He commented that density is an important concept if it is going to be done in a commercial location, as it would not be good to have a 1,000 square foot cat cafe with 50 cats in it. He suggested that the regulatory part would have to be quite stringent, almost in the order of a kennel, and stated that one would have to be very careful regarding the papers on the cats being adopted into the cafe.

Mr. Weaver stated that he does not see this as a kennel as people would not be dropping off their pet while they go on vacation. He commented that this is more of an adoption type facility. He asked who would do the regulating and if it would have to be something that the City would be taking on and mandating. He stated that they would perhaps have to dig deeper into regulation and how to ensure they are going through the proper channels and undertaking the proper steps for safety. He added that he would expect that visitors have to sign waivers.

Ms. Neubauer noted that even if someone signs a waiver they can still sue. She asked if the City would be putting itself in a situation where regulation would create another thing for the City to do.

Mr. Weaver suggested looking into whether there is a larger Federal or State arm that regulates pet adoptions or the Humane Society.

Ms. Neubauer added concerns regarding food preparation and animals.

Mr. Weaver noted that the Commission had similar discussions regarding density for the keeping of chickens and asked how to determine the appropriate number of cats.

Mr. McLeod stated that this would have to be researched, and commented that there are drastic differences between dogs and cats as dogs generally have to go outside. He added that the noise issue would be a further point of discussion.

Mr. Gallina stated that he is not opposed to cat cafes with the right benchmarking and research. He commented that if it is a trend, he is not opposed to looking into having something like this in the city; however, it has to be done the proper way. He pointed out that clearly the person opening one in Holland had a lot of hoops to jump through and the City could set its own standards as well. He commented that it is an interesting concept and he would like to hear more.

Ms. Brnabic commented that she agrees with a lot of the concerns expressed. She concurred with the sanitary factor because cats are cats and they walk on counters and anywhere they want. She commented that finding out what regulations and restrictions are needed would help her to make a better decision; and she is not a fan at this point for those reasons.

Chairperson Hooper asked if Mr. McLeod had enough input to move forward with the investigation of this idea. He subsequently closed the discussion for this topic.

Discussed

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Regular Meeting, November 18, 2025, 7 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Planning Commission and upon motion by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, Chairperson Hooper adjourned the Regular Meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Greg Hooper, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary