

**MINUTES OF THE AVON LAKE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
April 1, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Avon Lake Planning Commission was called to order on April 1, 2025, at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers, with Pro-Tem Raymond presiding.

**ROLL CALL**

Mr. Haas, Mr. Leitch, Mr. Orille, Mrs. Raymond, Mr. Smith, Mayor Spaetzel, Director of Law Ebert, Engineer Howard, and Planning & Zoning Manager La Rosa were present for the roll call.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Haas noted that there were no corrections, but he wanted to provide an update regarding the landscape plan in the Pulte development since his comments and concerns were in the minutes. Pulte representatives have met with the Homeowners Association of Current Village to review the landscape plan, discuss commitments, and address concerns. They also provided details on the lot line and explained the necessity of removing trees due to easements for utilities and road work. The representatives were responsive to the homeowners' concerns.

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded, to approve the February 4, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried (6-0).

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded, to approve the February 4, 2025, work session minutes as presented. The motion carried (6-0).

**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There was no general correspondence or announcements.

**COUNCIL REPORT**

Mr. Smith reported on a recent town hall meeting regarding issues in the Handford-Lear Road area. He noted that the meeting focused on a proposed traffic study and that the discussion was productive as the city continued to explore solutions.

Mayor Spaetzel added that the meeting took place on March 18, with many residents in attendance. A complete study of the Handford-Lear Road area was ordered and includes Walker, Lear, and Krebs Roads. The city received significant public input, and a follow-up meeting incorporated those comments into a revised scope that is now being reviewed by TranSystems.

## **SWEARING IN PUBLIC COMMENTORS**

Director of Law Ebert swore in applicants and audience members who planned to speak to items on the agenda.

## **NEW CASES**

**Case No. CPC-25-2, Pulte Homes of Ohio LLC, Zoning Map Amendment** for the property located at the southeast corner of Walker Road and Avon Belden Road (SR 83), changing from Single-Family Residence (R-1A) and General Commerce (B-2) to Multi-Family Residence (R-3). Applicable Code Sections: 1214.02: Code Text and Map Amendments apply.

Keith Filipkowski, representing Pulte Homes, presented the request to rezone the 11.86-acre site, which is located in the center of Avon Lake, specifically in Ward 2. This proposal follows up on the February 4th work session regarding the Harbor Crest Townhomes project. Mr. Filipkowski noted that the parcel size had been adjusted from 12.12 acres to 11.86 acres due to the exclusion of a northwest alcove section, which had previously been considered a pocket park.

The current zoning includes a Mixed-Use Overlay (MUO) and General Commerce (B-2) to the northwest, with R-1A Single-Family Residential to the south and southeast. The applicant has submitted a split and consolidation plat to unify the parcels, which was presented to the Development Review Committee on March 24th. The plat application is expected to be recorded administratively through the county.

The applicant is requesting an R-3 zoning designation, which would allow for a maximum of 146 units by right. However, Pulte Homes has voluntarily conditioned the rezoning to a maximum of 73 units, resulting in a density of 6.16 units per acre.

A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was submitted, along with a letter of clarification. The study initially accounted for 74 units, but as the plan was refined, the actual count was adjusted to 73. The study concluded that no turn lanes would be required and that the proposed development would not necessitate roadway improvements. Concerns from the Planning Commission's work session, including turn lanes on Avon Belden Road and adequate street widths for public safety access, were addressed. The roads within the development will have a 22-foot width, which meets safety standards.

Mr. Filipkowski emphasized that this meeting was focused on the zoning change, not the site plan approval. He urged the commission to consider whether the proposal aligns with the city's land use strategy. He also provided clarifications regarding the type of housing being proposed. The project will feature first-floor master units, which are expected to attract empty nesters rather than families with school-aged children. Recent data from Pulte's Avon Lake developments indicate that none of the last 25 homes sold through Pulte Mortgage included dependents.

Regarding affordability, Mr. Filipkowski presented data on the housing supply in Avon Lake. The current inventory for homes under \$500,000 is significantly lower than for homes priced above that threshold, with less than one month of supply in the lower price range. The proposed development aims to introduce townhomes starting at just under \$500,000, addressing the need for more affordable housing options in the community.

The applicant acknowledged the concerns raised in the work session and indicated a willingness to provide an updated traffic study that accounts for the adjacent Sandridge development's 28 units. Mr. Filipkowski requested that the Commission consider delaying its review of the TIA until the updated report is submitted.

Mr. Filipkowski elaborated on key considerations for pedestrian circulation, ensuring connectivity between various areas, including Avon Belden, Walker Road, and the Town Center. The sidewalk width has been expanded to six feet to enhance walkability and accessibility. The northwest corner's alcove is no longer available; instead, a pocket park will be relocated to the southern end, creating a more tranquil and usable space for residents.

Regarding fire safety and traffic concerns, the site plan has been adjusted to replace the previously proposed hammerhead turnaround with a cul-de-sac, which includes the pocket park. Parking was another consideration, with 25 designated common spaces in addition to garages and driveways, offering over 300 parking spaces for 73 units. While no specific code requirement exists, the provided parking was deemed sufficient.

The community boundary along the R1A district will include fencing and/or plantings to maintain a buffer. The development will feature nearly five acres of open space, constituting 39% of the total project area. The site plan has been modified to relocate the stormwater retention basin to the west side, making Avon Belden the primary entryway, aligning with feedback that it should serve as the prominent gateway to the community.

Architectural and landscape elements were discussed, including wrought iron fencing and consistent streetscape design. The pocket park will serve as a quiet retreat with seating areas and specimen trees. The residential product offerings remain unchanged, with design enhancements such as colored garage doors to reduce visual impact and increased landscaping between driveways to soften the streetscape.

The project team remains optimistic about securing rezoning approval in April and was available for questions.

The Commission members expressed appreciation for the thorough presentation and the responsiveness to previous work session feedback. Discussions primarily focused on the rezoning request, particularly the proposed R-3 designation versus R-2, with concerns centered around density, financial feasibility, and future land use restrictions.

It was acknowledged that the proposed density (6.16 units per acre) falls between the R-2 and R-3 designations, aiming to balance financial viability and community impact. Questions were raised regarding why an R-2 zoning designation would be financially unfeasible, with the developer explaining that a lower density (60 units) would make the project nonviable.

Concerns were noted about the potential for increased density in the future under R-3 zoning, with some members suggesting an R-2 designation with a variance request as an alternative. Law Director Ebert clarified that conditions imposed on the rezoning would be binding and restrict future density increases.

Commission members reviewed density comparisons with nearby developments, noting that the proposed density aligns with surrounding properties. Traffic concerns were mentioned, with a third-party review of the traffic study planned to address potential issues.

Some members emphasized the importance of tree preservation and buffering, particularly on the southern boundary.

Overall, the commission acknowledged the developer's efforts but debated the long-term implications of the rezoning approach, balancing financial, planning, and community considerations.

Debra Beard, after being sworn in, inquired whether there were other areas in Avon Lake with split zoning beyond the property under discussion. She was surprised to learn about the split zoning on Walker Road, where properties are zoned R-2, B-2, and R-1. She also expressed significant concerns about the traffic study, particularly regarding the same developer's project next to Huntington Bank. Mrs. Beard questioned why the traffic study did not account for those additional units and noted that traffic congestion in the area is already problematic, especially on weekends. She emphasized difficulties in turning onto SR-83 and criticized the lack of turn lanes. Additionally, she pointed out that speed limits in the area are not well observed.

Austin Page, Planning and Zoning Manager, responded to Mrs. Beard's zoning inquiry by identifying two other split-zoned properties in Avon Lake: the former Ahern's Banquet Center, which is split between industrial and commercial zoning, and a property near the power plant, which has both industrial and commercial zoning.

In response to comments, Mr. Filipkowski reaffirmed the commitment to providing an updated traffic report that addresses the development across the street, and he stated that collaboration with the city on traffic concerns will continue throughout the project. He also clarified that the R-1 zoning with conditions allows for a maximum of 73 units, not a minimum, which should be considered in discussions about creative planning. To illustrate efforts toward creativity, he presented a conceptual plan featuring a meandering trail designed to create a passive park-like experience, though he emphasized that this was just an idea, not a final design. He concluded by expressing interest in developing a high-quality project and requested that discussions on creativity not impede the rezoning process.

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded to recommend that the City Council approve Case No. CPC-25-2, Pulte Homes of Ohio LLC, Zoning Map Amendment for the property at the southeast corner of Walker Road and Avon-Belden Road (S.R. 83) from its current zoning designation to R-3, subject to the condition that the maximum density shall not exceed seven dwelling units per acre or a total of no more than 73 units. This recommendation is based on findings that the amendment aligns with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, provides a logical transition between commercial and residential areas, and meets the review criteria outlined in Section 1214.02 of the Planning and Zoning Code. The motion carried (4-2), with Orille and Smith dissenting.

**Case No. CPC-25-3, Ford Motor Company, Site Plan Approval** for the Construction of a Pre-Engineered Metal Building as part of the New 400 Building Project located at 650 Miller Road. Applicable Code Section: 1214.06 Site Plans apply.

Patrick Carney from Rudolph Libbe, Inc. presented the case and explained that the building measures 40 x 45 feet, and would be part of the final production process, where vehicles are checked before being transferred to North American Vehicle Logistics. This building would serve as the final step in production, where vehicles are either accepted into a holding lot or sent back to the plant for repairs if rejected. It will include two lanes for truck traffic and will be unoccupied except for the equipment necessary for the vehicle inspection process.

The building is located on the south end of the property, approximately 500-600 feet from Miller Road, near the existing Natville expansion. The new building will be positioned next to a single-lane 400 building and will add two lanes, with the existing building serving as a return lane for company vehicles or employee traffic.

Commission members expressed confusion over the location of the building due to unclear scaling in the plans. Additionally, questions were raised about the impact of relocated lighting on neighboring properties. It was clarified that the building will not have garage doors and will remain open with two lights.

The engineering department reviewed the site plans and noted some outstanding comments. The site plan was not yet fully approved, but these comments would be addressed in a revised plan before the project could move forward with building permits.

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded to approve Case No. CPC-25-3, Ford Motor Company and Rudolph/Libbe Inc., site plan for the Ford OHAP New 400 Building Project, located at 650 Miller Road, subject to the condition that all engineering comments be positively addressed before the plans are sent to the building department for permitting. The motion carried (6-0).

**Case No. CPC-25-4, Jake's on the Lake, Site Plan Approval** for the Construction of a Patio Enclosure and Building Renovation Project at 32485 Lake Road. Applicable Code Section: 1214.06 Site Plans apply.

David Mason of Mason Design presented the project, explaining that the south side of the building, including the deck, ramp, and HVAC equipment, will be removed and rebuilt. The new design includes a slight extension of the dining area to accommodate health requirements and additional space for guests. The building's exterior will feature an L-shaped dining area, a new ADA restroom, and a covered patio with large, openable windows and doors. The patio is designed to improve guest comfort by providing shade, while the interior improvements will allow for a better guest experience.

Jake Paul, co-owner of the restaurant, explained that the project will not significantly increase the number of guests or parking spots. The new addition is expected to improve the guest experience, reduce noise for neighbors by enclosing the patio area, and create a more modern, welcoming atmosphere. He emphasized that the restaurant already has a loyal local customer base, and no concerns have been raised by neighbors.

Several commissioners praised the design and noted that it would improve the patio area, making it more usable and reducing noise levels for nearby residents.

There was a question about whether the patio would be used year-round. Jake Paul clarified that while it would be open during cooler weather, it would not be used during the winter months.

Clarifications were made about the location of the new entrance and the service ramp, which is for deliveries and kitchen equipment only, not for customer use.

The new foundation will be typical masonry, and the patio addition will have a capacity of approximately 38-42 seats, similar to the current deck area.

Mr. Hass noted that he serves as the Planning Commission's non-voting representative on the Historic Preservation Commission. Jakes on the Lake is a historically significant building with a long-standing presence in Avon Lake. In the past, the Historic Preservation Commission approached the owners to gauge their interest in officially designating the building as historic. The decision ultimately rests with the owners. The historic designation can be particularly challenging for businesses, as it requires adherence to a certificate of appropriateness for any modifications. Since Jake's on the Lake has not been designated as historic, this requirement does not currently apply. However, past and future renovations or alterations could affect the building's historic integrity. If changes are substantial, the building may no longer meet the criteria for historic designation, potentially preventing Jakes on the Lake from ever receiving official historic status.

Commission members suggested using more natural, Ohio-native plants in the landscaping plan, especially around the addition, to align with city guidelines. The applicant agreed to consider this suggestion.

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded to approve Case No. CPC-25-4, Jake's on the Lake, Site Plan for the Construction of a Patio Enclosure and Building Renovation Project at 32485 Lake Road. The motion carried (5-0), with Haas abstaining.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

A proposal from Avon Lake Regional Water to vacate a portion of Alameda Avenue (a 50-foot right-of-way). Applicable Code Section: 1216.03 (c) Zoning District Map and District Boundaries, Vacation of Public Rights-of-Way apply.

Engineer Howard noted that the purpose of this vacation is to consolidate properties in the area for development, and he confirmed that the request was reviewed by DRC and there were no objections.

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded to recommend to the City Council to vacate a portion of Alameda Avenue (a 50-foot right-of-way). The motion carried (6-0).

## **DISCUSSION ITEM**

There were no discussion items.

## **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no general public comments.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Haas moved, and Mr. Leitch seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm. The motion carried (6-0).

  
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Planning Commission  
Pro-Tem Chairperson Raymond

  
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Recording Secretary  
Kelly La Rosa

