

MINUTES OF THE AVON LAKE
PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION MEETING
OCTOBER 7, 2025

A work session of the Avon Lake Planning Commission was called to order on October 7, 2025, at 7:20 PM in Council Chambers with Chairperson Ma presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present for roll call were Mr. Haas, Dr. Ma, Mr. Leitch, Mr. Orille, Mrs. Raymond, Mr. Smith, Mayor Spaetzel, Director of Law Ebert, Community Development Director Esborn, and Planning & Zoning Manager La Rosa.

1. Elysium Café, Zoning Map Amendment

Ikir Lama, the applicant and owner of Elysium Café, appeared to discuss the potential rezoning of two residential parcels immediately south of the café property, which would allow for additional parking and a planned restaurant expansion.

Mr. Lama began by describing the existing conditions of the property and his vision for the expansion. The café currently operates along Lake Road, near Fay Avenue, and an existing masonry building is located behind the main coffee shop on the same parcel. The applicant explained that this rear structure, which is currently vacant, could be converted into a small restaurant featuring a full kitchen, seating for approximately twenty guests inside, and an outdoor pergola or patio area accommodating an additional fifteen seats. He stated that the restaurant would serve handmade pasta and other Italian dishes, with an emphasis on fresh preparation and a relaxed dining experience.

Mr. Esborn explained that he and Mr. Page met with Mr. Lama and his architect, Gary Fischer, to discuss possible configurations for the site. Because the café's parking lot is limited, the applicant is considering acquiring two adjoining residential parcels to the south to use for expanded parking. However, those parcels are zoned R-1C Single-Family Residence District, so their use for commercial parking would require a rezoning. The purpose of this work session was to gauge whether the Planning Commission might be open to such a rezoning before the applicant proceeds with purchasing the lots.

Commission members expressed strong appreciation for the success of Elysium Café and the applicant's desire to reinvest in Avon Lake. Several members commented that the café has become a community asset and that expanding its offerings could enhance the local business environment.

Questions focused first on how the new restaurant would function in relation to the existing coffee shop. The applicant clarified that the two uses would operate on different schedules—coffee service primarily in the morning and afternoon, and restaurant service during evening hours, likely closing by 10:00 p.m. This would allow the two businesses to share parking without overlap in peak demand.

Members asked about potential impacts to the adjacent residence on Fay Avenue, particularly noise, lighting, and late-evening activity. The applicant responded that he plans to provide a substantial landscaped buffer of at least 20 feet between the parking area and the neighboring property, with additional plantings or fencing if necessary. He also noted that dumpster placement and service times would be carefully considered to minimize disturbance.

Commissioners then asked for details about the rear structure, including its condition and adaptability. The applicant said that the building is structurally sound, equipped with electrical and gas service, and suitable for renovation. Only a small two-car garage attached to the rear would be demolished to improve access and circulation.

A key point of discussion arose when several members questioned whether the café's expansion could be accomplished without purchasing or rezoning the two residential parcels. One commissioner suggested that the applicant and his architect revisit the overall site layout to determine whether existing space could be reorganized to meet parking and circulation needs within the current commercial property. Ideas included reconfiguring the parking lot, shifting the patio location, or removing decorative stone and landscaping areas to gain a usable parking surface.

The applicant was receptive to this feedback, agreeing to work with his architect to explore whether a redesign could achieve his goals while avoiding the need for a rezoning. Commissioners emphasized that keeping the project within the boundaries of the existing business-zoned parcel would help protect the residential character of Fay Avenue, reduce potential neighborhood concerns, and likely streamline future approvals.

Additional questions were raised regarding potential alcohol service. The applicant explained that the café's previous owner retained a wine license, which may be transferred, but that his current intent is limited to serving beer and wine.

Mr. Esborn clarified that if a rezoning is pursued, the B-1 General Business District would be the most appropriate and least intensive classification, limiting future commercial uses on the site. Furthermore, if the café property and any newly acquired parcels were consolidated, the parking lot would be considered an accessory use, eliminating the need for a conditional use permit.

The Commission concluded by expressing appreciation for the applicant's willingness to adapt the proposal based on feedback. The applicant agreed to review parking and layout alternatives with his architect and return with a refined concept.

2. Case No. CPC-25-15, Shire Glen Green Management LLC, Major Subdivision Preliminary Plat for Calvary Court Subdivision located northeast of the Lear Road and Krebs Road intersection.

Engineer Kevin Hoffman of Polaris Engineering and developer Ed Pavicic presented the concept for the 9.3-acre site located northeast of the intersection of Lear Road and Krebs Road. Mr. Hoffman explained that the property is currently zoned R-1A Single-Family Residence District, and the plan presented is consistent with that zoning. The proposed layout includes 14 single-family lots, each designed to meet or exceed minimum area and frontage requirements. Lots 4

through 14 are standard frontage lots along the new cul-de-sac, while Lots 1 through 3 are configured differently due to the site's shape and an existing driveway easement.

Mr. Hoffman noted that Lot 3 fronts directly on Krebs Road, while Lots 1 and 2 are accessed by a shared private drive that would also serve an adjacent property owner to the south. The purpose of the shared drive, he explained, is to limit the number of new curb cuts on Krebs Road and preserve traffic safety.

Mr. Hoffman also discussed coordination with Avon Lake Regional Water and the Service Department regarding utility connections. The City had requested looping the water line to Lear Road, which the applicant incorporated into the latest plan. The sanitary sewer extension remains under review, as a recent update from Avon Lake Regional Water indicated that a connection from Krebs Road may not provide adequate basement service due to elevation differences. The development team will continue coordinating with the City to identify the best routing option before formal submission.

Mr. Pavicic provided additional background on the project's evolution. He explained that he had previously attempted to acquire adjoining land to the north to allow for a larger subdivision or an additional road connection, but was unable to reach an agreement with the property owner. As a result, the proposed design maximizes the potential of the property while maintaining full code compliance.

Commission members generally agreed that the standard lots (4 through 14) were well designed, but several expressed concern about the configuration of Lots 1 through 3. Multiple members questioned whether the City's zoning code allows flag lots, noting that the code may prohibit them outright unless a variance is granted. Members also raised practical concerns about emergency access, garbage collection, and vehicle circulation on the shared private drive.

Law Director Ebert confirmed that flag lots are not permitted under the zoning code without a variance, and that the proposed layout would likely require additional review or redesign to comply.

Other commissioners asked how mail delivery and addressing would work for those lots, and whether the shared drive would be maintained through a homeowners' association (HOA). Mr. Hoffman replied that the development would include an HOA responsible for stormwater facilities and maintenance of the shared drive, and that the drive's width (20 feet) had been reviewed by the Fire Department to ensure sufficient emergency access.

The discussion then shifted to the site's wetlands, topography, and drainage. Mr. Hoffman confirmed that a wetland delineation had been completed and that the layout avoids the wetland area behind Lot 4. Detention would be provided through an on-site stormwater basin located near the northeast corner of the site.

Commissioners also discussed potential traffic and access issues. Mr. Haas asked whether the existing stub street from Schiller Court could eventually be extended to connect with the site. Mr. Pavicic said that while he had attempted to acquire the intervening parcel to allow that connection,

the property owner declined to sell, making such an extension infeasible at this time.

Mr. Hoffman reviewed specific lot frontages, noting that all standard lots meet the 100-foot minimum when measured at the rear setback line, even where curves created narrower frontage at the street.

Mr. Pavicic then introduced a broader idea for consideration: whether the project might be eligible for the city's Residential Planned Development (RPD) zoning option, which allows greater flexibility in lot layout, open space design, and community amenities. He explained that under the current R-1A zoning, the project yields 14 lots, but under an RPD framework, he could potentially add modest neighborhood features such as small parks or a clubhouse while maintaining overall low density. Staff responded that the RPD designation requires a minimum of 15 acres, though the Planning Commission has discretion to consider smaller parcels in medium- or high-density areas identified in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Because this property is designated as low-density residential, applying RPD standards would be difficult and might require both a zoning amendment and a variance. Several commissioners agreed that introducing a brand-new zoning tool on a small project might not be advisable, but they appreciated the applicant's willingness to explore creative planning approaches. Mr. Esborn recalled that a prior proposal for this same property, an assisted-living facility, had been denied several years earlier by the Zoning Board of Appeals after seeking a use variance.

Overall, the Commission supported ongoing refinement of the subdivision plan but highlighted the importance of resolving the flag lot issue, confirming utility service feasibility, and clarifying maintenance responsibilities for the private drive. The applicant agreed to continue coordinating with city staff and will submit an updated design that addresses the concerns raised.

3. SolSmart, NOPEC Cohort

Mr. Esborn explained that the SolSmart program, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, helps cities evaluate and update their local codes to make solar energy installation easier for residents and businesses. As part of Avon Lake's participation, a team of technical reviewers from SolSmart, working through their national partners, conducted a comprehensive review of the City's Planning and Zoning Code to identify any provisions that might unintentionally limit solar energy use.

Mr. Esborn explained that the SolSmart reviewers analyzed the zoning code line by line, focusing on definitions, permitted uses, height limitations, and lot coverage standards related to solar installations. Their findings were compiled into a report prepared by Mrs. La Rosa, which was included in the meeting packet.

He told the Commission that this discussion served two purposes: first, to meet the program requirement of presenting the code review publicly, and second, to allow the Commission to react to the specific recommendations. The report identified several areas for improvement, including clarifying the definition of solar energy systems, exempting rooftop solar panels from height limits, and excluding ground-mounted systems from lot coverage requirements when they are installed over permeable ground. The reviewers also noted that Avon Lake's code currently does not contain

a process or standards for large-scale solar facilities, which could be added to create a clearer permitting pathway.

Mr. Esborn stated that his view was to treat the SolSmart review as an opportunity to learn how the city compares to other communities and to identify where Avon Lake might consider small adjustments in the future.

Commission members discussed the findings. One member asked how often the City receives applications for solar panels. Mr. Esborn responded that Building Official Austin Page has handled a few, but they are infrequent. Another commissioner asked whether any applications had been denied under the current code; Mr. Esborn said not to his knowledge.

Several commissioners noted that many of the recommendations appeared to concern topics not currently posing problems in Avon Lake. Mr. Orille remarked that some of the suggested changes seemed a little broad, while Mrs. Raymond observed that because technology evolves quickly, it might be better to leave the code somewhat flexible rather than making detailed changes now that could require future revisions. Mr. Smith agreed, pointing out that the zoning code had been comprehensively updated in 2022 and that reopening major sections may not be necessary at this point.

Mayor Spaetzel commented that much of the review aligns with Avon Lake's current practice simply because the code doesn't specifically prohibit solar installations. He said he does not see evidence that the City's current regulations are preventing residents or businesses from adding solar systems. Mr. Haas compared the situation to the City's prior discussion about backyard chickens, suggesting that Avon Lake should observe what similar communities do before adopting major changes. He also suggested focusing on the industrial districts first if solar use expands. Mr. Leitch asked about the practical value of participating in SolSmart, and Mr. Esborn responded that the primary benefit is having access to comparative data and best practices from other cities, as well as regular workshops and guidance on solar permitting. Mrs. Raymond followed by asking whether there was a tangible benefit to achieving SolSmart designation, such as funding or recognition. Mr. Esborn said the designation primarily serves as a benchmarking tool and does not currently include direct financial incentives.

The consensus of the Commission was to continue participating in the SolSmart program to gain information from peer communities, but to hold off on any zoning code amendments until there is a demonstrated need.

4. Historic Planning Commission, Appointment

Mr. Haas explained that the Planning Commission has one designated non-voting representative who serves on the Historic Preservation Commission. He currently holds that position, having stepped in following the passing of a former member who had been active in both architecture and historic preservation.

Mr. Haas described the work of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) as meaningful but manageable, noting that it meets approximately eight times per year, takes a short summer and

winter recess, and generally conducts efficient meetings lasting about an hour. The HPC primarily reviews applications from property owners seeking historic designation for homes identified on a county-generated list of structures built in the early 1900s or earlier. He said that while many of the most eligible properties have already been designated, the Commission continues to work with residents who express interest and partners with the Avon Lake Historical Society on preservation projects and artifact collection.

He added that serving on the HPC is an opportunity to learn about the city's history and stay connected with community preservation efforts. The workload is light, with minimal preparation time required for meetings.

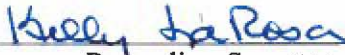
Following Mr. Haas's summary, Mrs. Raymond volunteered to serve as the next Planning Commission representative on the Historic Preservation Commission once Mr. Haas's term concludes. Mr. Haas and other Commission members thanked her for volunteering.

Mr. Esborn and Mayor Spaetzel noted that staff will begin the process of identifying a replacement for Mr. Haas on the Planning Commission later this year, as his term is nearing completion. The group briefly discussed the typical appointment process, which includes public notice, submission of a letter of interest or résumé, and interviews conducted by the City Council.

With no further discussion, the meeting concluded.



Planning Commission
Chairperson Ma



Recording Secretary
Kelly La Rosa