



CITY OF IONIA

PLANNING COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

4:30 PM, Wednesday, April 29, 2026

IONIA CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bailey called the special meeting of the Ionia Planning Commission to order at 4:30 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call revealed a Quorum with Planning Commissioners Logan Bailey, Ryan Gregory, Tim Lee, and Judy Swartz present. Commissioners Michael Donaldson, Keturah Kelley, and Jason Perry were absent.

Staff Present: Precia Garland, City Manager; Jonathan Bowman, Assistant City Manager; Toby Hayes, Planning Consultant.

Members of the Public Present: Mike West, Allen Edwin Homes; Aaron Besmer, Allen Edwin Homes; Kathy VanSyckle (919 W. Main St.); Carol Campbell (151 Foxtail Dr.); Marta Glass (1933 Aspen Valley Ln.); Rodney & Carolyn Fox (214 Katherine Ct.); Glenn Joy (185 Katherine Ct.); Dale Kramer (9271 State Rd.); Tyler Vanhouten (1850 Herrity Ln.); Bruce Sibert (234 Reimer Dr.); Karen Erskine (181 Reimer Dr.); David Bosley (2217 Westover Dr.); Kurtis & Katelynn Bray (161 Foxtail Dr.); Terry & Kittie Goucher (2177 Westover Dr.); Kenny Livingston (200 Holiday Dr.); Merita Hart (1966 Aspen Valley Ln.); Karen Miller (2259 Westover Dr.); Bill Vaarberg, Berlin Township Trustee.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairperson Bailey introduced the agenda and asked if there were any requested changes. Planning Commissioner Lee made a motion, seconded by Planning Commissioner Gregory, to approve the agenda as presented.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ASSOCIATED ACTION

(V.1.) Public Hearing to receive comments on Ordinance No. 604 to amend Chapter 1292:

Austin Pines Planned Unit Development District Assistant City Manager Bowman provided a brief historical background on the Austin Pines Planned Unit Development District and introduced the new development. Bowman gave an overview of the City's approval process, including details

on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority's (BRA) review of an Act 381 Workplan connected to the development. He explained that the possible affordability component would be addressed by the BRA and City Council, but he described that the rental rates being considered are 120% Area Median Income (AMI). Bowman indicated that in 2025, the state's capped rental rate for 120% AMI in Ionia County was \$2,599 for a 3-bedroom home.

Land Planning Manager Mike West from Allen Edwin Homes presented the site plan and development proposal to Planning Commission. He explained the anticipated phasing and construction timeline.

Planning Consultant Toby Hayes reviewed a few of the key zoning provisions impacted by the development.

Chairperson Bailey opened the public hearing for comments on Ordinance No. 604 and the Austin Pines West Development Plan at 4:48 PM.

Notices were provided to all properties within 300 feet of the proposed development and many property owners attended the meeting, as indicated in the roll call attendance. A technical issue occurred with the meeting recording, so the robust number of comments have been summarized to the best of staff's abilities below:

The number one concern brought forth to the Commission was additional traffic that the development would cause to Foxtail and Reimer Drive. Additional concerns included driveway size, parking requirements, deterioration of Foxtail Drive, construction traffic, street parking, size of roads, number of units in condominium association, low-income housing, number of rentals, stormwater drainage, increases to property taxes, separation between Berlin Township and City of Ionia boundaries, and overall density. Many of the concerns mentioned were brought up numerous times.

In addition to the in-person public comments, a letter was submitted on behalf of Brandon Miller (4651 Richard Street, Holt, MI) and Ryan Miller (2259 Westover Drive). The letter referenced growing up in the area and appreciating the peaceful environment as well as concerns about the disruption of wildlife, increased traffic, higher property taxes, and Allen Edwin's reputation for poor quality construction. The letter advised against promoting future housing developments that will have negative impacts on Westover Drive and nearby areas.

Chairperson Bailey closed the public hearing at 5:29 PM.

The Planning Commission discussed the project and asked several questions related to traffic, access to the development, and ways to mitigate these concerns.

Mike West referenced the traffic study's results that indicated the development did not require additional access points.

City Manager Garland spoke to the adjacent Deerfield and Riverside property and its potential future development. She highlighted that future planning anticipates a connection from Austin Pines West through the Deerfield and Riverside property, allowing access to Hardwood Road and Riverside Drive when the State Land Bank facilitates the development of this property.

Bowman added that the results were sent to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for review as the impacted intersection is M-66. He noted that MDOT has jurisdiction over M-66

and did not have major concerns with the intersection besides extending the width to create a designated left turn lane. Bowman also noted that the existing Foxtail Drive is not wide enough for parking on both sides of the street. He clarified that the small extension to Foxtail would be the same width. However, all other public streets would be designed to the City's municipal standards, allowing space for parking on both sides of the street. Bowman mentioned that possible new signage could be posted to indicate that parking is only permitted on one side of the street. The numerous staff recommended conditions were highlighted for the Commission along with the development standards found in Chapter 1266 and 1276.

Planning Commissioner Lee made a motion, seconded by Planning Commissioner Bailey, to recommend that City Council conditionally approve the Planned Unit Development (PUD) amended Development Plan and final site plan for Austin Pines West, which includes 96 housing units located on parcel 34-201-025-000-001-01 and a portion of parcel 34-201-036-000-001-01. This decision was based on the findings that the proposed use and plan comply with the Site Plan Standards of Chapter 1276 and the PUD Development Requirements of Chapter 1266 of the Code of Ordinances, as detailed and discussed above, subject to the approval by staff of the conditions listed below.

1. The PUD will consist of 96 dwelling units on 26.33 acres (3.65 dwelling units/acre) in the form of 84 Single-family detached homes and 12 three-unit attached single-family building (triplexes).
2. Detached single-family lots shall be no less than 3,610 square feet in area and no less than 33 feet wide.
3. Detached single-family lots shall have front and rear yard setbacks of 20 feet and shall have a 5-foot minimum side yard setback with both side yard setbacks totaling 11 feet.
4. Detached single-family lots shall have a lot coverage of no more than 45%.
5. Detached single-family site condominiums shall not be greater than 35 feet in height.
6. Attached unit buildings shall have front and rear yard setbacks of 20 feet and shall have 15-foot setbacks for the perimeter of the attached unit development area.
7. Attached unit buildings shall have a lot coverage of no more than 45%.
8. Attached unit buildings shall not be greater than 35 feet in height.
9. No demolition or earthwork shall be undertaken on the site until a building permit has been issued consistent with this site plan approval.
10. Before permits are issued, the applicant must have paid all applications, permits, and other fees related to this request. The applicant shall meet the requirements of all other applicable ordinances, codes, and requirements of the City of Ionia. Final site plan approval and permits will be conditioned upon obtaining necessary permits from relevant agencies.
11. Internal streets will be designed to the City of Ionia engineering standards, subject to review and approval by the City Engineer.
12. Compliance with the lighting standards in Section 1286.03 is required.
13. All future signs must be in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 1284 of the City of Ionia Zoning Ordinance, in accordance with requirements for signs in residential districts.
14. SESC permits will be obtained from the Ionia County Drain Commissioner.
15. The Ionia County Drain Commission approves the plan as presented; otherwise, the applicant will be required to make the appropriate alterations to the approved plan. An approval letter from the Ionia County Drain Commission shall be provided to the City of Ionia before construction commences.
16. The Ionia Department of Public Safety approves the plan as presented and is satisfied that emergency vehicles and personnel will be able to safely enter and exit the development.
17. The Ionia Department of Public Works and Department of Public Utilities approve the plan

as presented and confirm that the rights of way, public roads, street lighting, sidewalks, street landscaping, water and sewer utilities, and stormwater facilities comply with all City standards.

18. Open space areas must be in perpetuity and maintained in a natural state and free of future development. The dedicated open space document shall be recorded with the Ionia County Register of Deeds, and the City shall be provided with a recorded copy.
19. A tree list shall be submitted and approved by City staff with a variety of trees to be used as street trees.
20. As noted by MDOT, the City requires the developer to widen the Foxtail Drive approach as shown on sheet 5 of GEO-650-D rather than re-striping for turn lanes.
21. Reimer Drive will not be used for construction traffic and will be gated for emergency vehicle use following construction.
22. Allen Edwin Homes must reasonably attempt to work with the State Land Bank for temporary use of their adjacent property to the west for construction traffic and staging.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

(V.2.) Public Hearing to receive comments on the Preliminary Austin Pines West Site Condominium Project Plan and Final Site Plan Review

Assistant City Manager Bowman explained that this agenda item is for the same plans previously discussed for the last agenda item. However, in addition to the ordinance amendment and Planned Unit Development Plan, the project includes a site condominium and traditional condominium. He noted that the City Attorney's Office had reviewed all submitted materials related to condominiums such as the Master Deeds, Condominium Association Bylaws, and Restrictive Covenants. Minor changes were passed along to Allen Edwin Homes for review.

The applicable city codes and state laws were reviewed by the Planning Commission in the provided memorandum from Planning Consultant Williams & Works. These included the City of Ionia's Chapter 1272 and 1232, Section 1224.02, and the Michigan Condominium Act.

Chairperson Bailey opened the public hearing for comments on the Preliminary Austin Pines West Site Condominium Project Plan and Final Site Plan Review at 5:44 PM.

Notices were provided to all properties within 300 feet of the proposed development and many property owners attended the meeting, as indicated in the roll call attendance. A technical issue occurred with the meeting recording, so the comments have been summarized to the best of staff's abilities below:

A couple members of the public provided comments related to street traffic and congestion. One person noted the garages from Allen Edwin being too small for vehicles, causing an increase in street parking. Another comment was made regarding the challenges of small condominium associations managing their common assets and requesting consideration for one larger association instead of two separate associations.

Chairperson Bailey closed the public hearing at 5:49 PM.

Bowman and Garland shared their contact information with the members of the public in attendance and encouraged anyone with questions to reach out to City staff.

Planning Commissioner Lee made a motion, seconded by Planning Commissioner Swartz, to

approve the preliminary site condominium plan and recommend that City Council conditionally approve the final site condominium project plan and traditional condominium for Austin Pines West, which includes 96 housing units located on parcel 34-201-025-000-001-01 and a portion of parcel 34-201-036-000-001-01. This decision was based on the findings that the proposed use and plan comply with the Site Condominium Standards of Chapter 1272, the Preliminary Plat Requirements of Section 1224.02, Chapter 1232 – Improvements of the Code of Ordinances, and the submittal requirements of the Michigan Condominium Act: Section 66 of Act 59 of 1978, as detailed and discussed above, subject to the approval by staff of the conditions listed below.

1. No demolition or earthwork shall be undertaken on the site until a building permit has been issued consistent with this site plan approval.
2. Before permits are issued, the applicant must have paid all applications, permits, and other fees related to this request.
3. All condominium document drafts must be submitted and approved by the City Attorney and approved by the City Council. Once the documents are properly recorded, the City shall be provided with a recorded copy.
4. All easements shall be granted to the City of Ionia and approved by the City Attorney and all other applicable approving authorities representing the City.
5. The applicant shall meet the requirements of all other applicable ordinances, codes, and requirements of the City of Ionia.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VIII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Judy Swartz: (1) Noted the need for additional housing in the community; (2) Thanked all the members of the public for attending the meeting.

Tim Lee: (1) Thanked the public for attending; (2) Invited anyone interested in making further comments to attend the upcoming May 6 and June 3 City Council meetings; (3) Recommended contacting City staff to anyone with additional questions on the proposed housing development.

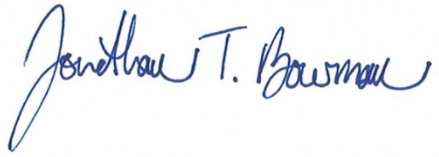
IX. ADJOURNMENT

Planning Commissioner Swartz made a motion, seconded by Planning Commissioner Gregory, to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan T. Bowman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jonathan T. Bowman, Recording Secretary
for Judy Swartz, Secretary