

**CITY OF GRAND HAVEN  
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025**



The regular meeting of the Grand Haven Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Dora at 7:00 pm. Upon roll call, the following members were present:

**Present:** Joe Pierce, Dan Borchers, Vice-Chair Ryan Galligan, Tamera Owens, Jennifer Smelker, David Skelly, Magda Smolenska, Chair Mike Dora.

**Absent:** Amy Kozanecki

**Also Present:** City Planner Brian Urquhart, Mayor Bob Monetza.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by **Skelly**, seconded by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, to approve the August 12, 2025 meeting minutes. All ayes. **Motion passes.**

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, seconded by **Smelker**, to approve the agenda. All ayes. **Motion passes.**

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**Call to the Audience: First Opportunity:**

Jim Hagen, 400 Lake Dr., spoke concerning the site plan review for 524 Washington and stated he was in favor of the parking lot.

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**Public Hearing:**

**Case 25-31: A rezoning application from Moderate Density Residential, MDR, to Beechtree, B for a portion of 601 S. Beechtree (parcel #70-03-28-277-017).**

Urquhart introduced the case. Steve Musiall of 601 Beechtree, submitted a zoning change application to rezone a vacant portion of their parcel at 601 S. Beechtree St. (parcel #70-03-28-277-017). The Clover Bar is situated at the northeastern portion of the property, leaving the remainder parcel a rarely used parking lot and wooded area. The parcel is oddly shaped, with a significant portion located behind 1428 and 1420 Waverly Ave., and abuts up to the cul-de-sac of Woodlawn Ave. The total parcel is 1.4 acres, and the portion to be rezoned is approximately 0.59 acres. By rezoning the parcel to Beechtree, the applicant may split off the property for potential development that is permitted in the Beechtree district. The applicant has indicated they are leaning towards a multiple-family attached dwelling. The MDR district does permit multiple-family dwellings, but only along a Key Street.

Sec. 40-121.A. listed the standards for the Planning Commission to consider for rezoning requests:

1. If the proposed zoning amendment is consistent with the city's adopted master plan.

Comment: The City adopted the Master Plan in May 2023, and the future land use classification for this parcel is. Service/Residential. Beechtree is identified as a potential compatible zoning district in the Zoning Plan on page 125 of the Master Plan.

2. If the proposed zoning amendment is consistent with recent development trends in the area.

Comment: The rezoning would allow for best practice of keeping a parcel within the same zoning district. It is unknown why the zoning map bisected the parcel into both MDR and B zoning districts. It may be a mapping error. However, amending the parcel to become entirely Beechtree would be consistent with recent development trends in the area.

3. If the zoning amendment is compatible with existing or future land uses in the vicinity of the subject site or throughout the zoning district(s) affected by the proposed amendment. Comment: The future land use map lists these properties as Service/Residential use.

4. If existing or planned public infrastructure, including streets, sanitary sewers, storm water, water, sidewalks, and street lighting are capable of accommodating potential changes in land use resulting from the proposed amendment. Comment: 601 S. Beechtree can be fully served by a major street, fire protection, sanitary sewer, street lighting, water, and emergency access.

5. If the proposed amendment is consistent with the intent and purpose of this ordinance and whether the proposed amendment would protect the health, safety, and welfare of the city.

Comment: Rezoning the property from MDR to B would not compromise the public health safety, and welfare. Rezoning would also provide clarity to have a single parcel within the same zoning district.

Applicant was available to address any questions.

The City has not received any correspondence regarding this case.

Chair Dora opened public meeting at 7:07 p.m.

No public comment.

Motion by **Owens**, seconded by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, to close the public hearing. All ayes.

Public Hearing closed at 7:08 p.m.

The commissioners were unified in their opinions this would be a great way to move forward and were okay with proceeding.

Motion by **Pierce**, seconded by **Smelker**, to recommend approval to City Council a zoning map change from Moderate Density Residential, MDR, to Beechtree, B for a portion of 601 S. Beechtree (parcel #70-03-28-277-017) based on the following findings:

1. The rezoning complies with the standards in Sec. 40-121.A.

**Roll Call Vote.**

**Yeas:** Pierce, Smolenska, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens, Dora

**Nays:** None

**Motion passed.**

**Case 25-32: A special land use request for an accessory dwelling unit at 533 Lafayette (parcel #70-03-20-483-021).**

Urquhart introduced the case. Applicant Renee Denslow is requesting to construct a garage with a living space above the dormered attic on the property 533 Lafayette Ave, Grand Haven, MI. The structure is measured at approximately 30' x 30' (900 square feet) and will not exceed the 20' height limitation to comply with local zoning and building codes. In addition, the proposed structure will meet the minimum 3' side and rear setbacks to meet the required guidelines. Accessory dwelling units are permitted as a special land use in the Southside District.

Section 40-525 of the Zoning Ordinance provides a list of building regulations and conditions that comply with dwelling requirements for accessory dwelling units. The review of the Special Land Use Permit application is also subject to the standard regulations and conditions of all Special Land Uses outlined in Section 40-116.03. The applicant has provided a narrative that responds to these review standards.

The city has not received any public comments regarding this request.

Renee Denslow was available for questions.

Dora opened a public hearing at 7:12 p.m.

No comments.

Motion by **Pierce**, seconded by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, to close the public hearing.

All ayes.

Public Hearing closed at 7:13 p.m.

While commissioners did not have any further questions, many wish the site plan was included in the packet. Chair Dora stated that Urquhart could handle this administratively for approval.

Motion by **Smolenska**, seconded by **Borchers**, to approve Case 25-32: A special land use request for an accessory dwelling unit at 533 Lafayette (parcel #70-03-20-483-021) subject to the following conditions:

1. *Applicant shall record the Deed Restriction as required per Sec. 40-525.4 of the zoning ordinance.*

**Roll Call Vote.**

**Yeas:** Pierce, Smolenska, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens, Dora

**Nays:** None

**Motion passed.**

**Case 25-33: A site plan and special land use for an automobile gas station at 1102 Robbins Rd. (parcel #70-03-33-201-001).**

Urquhart introduced the case. Richard McMahon, of Casey's Retail Company, on behalf of property owner Comerica, has submitted a special land use permit application and site plan review application to construct automobile gas station at 1102 Robbins Rd. (parcel #70-03-33-201-001). A gasoline station is permitted in the Commercial district as a special land use per Sec. 40-414.01.B.

The Zoning Ordinance provides regulations and conditions for a gasoline station found in Sec. 40-506. The review of the Special Land Use Permit application is also subject to the standard regulations and conditions of all Special Land Uses outlined in Section 40-116.03. The applicant provided responses in the narrative.

**Adjacent Zoning**

**North** Commercial

**East** Commercial

**South** Commercial

**West** Commercial (Grand Haven Township)

**Adjacent Uses**

PNC Bank

Business Center

D&W Foods

D&W Gas Station

The parcel is 1.7 acres. Per Sec. 40-506, the minimum lot size for a gas station is 15,000 sq. ft. The parcel certainly meets this standard.

1102 Robbins Rd. is home to the vacant Comerica Bank, which has been unoccupied for numerous months. Sheet C-100 depicts the demolition plan will remove the entire building, asphalt, and others, with minimal grading occurring.

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Casey's is proposing a 2,852 sq. ft. type C-store gas station building, which includes 1,550 sq. ft. of retail space. The total building height is 24' 5". The gas station canopy contains dimensions of 102' x 24' with 4 fuel dispensaries. The canopy sits at a height of 15 ft. This meets the standards for the Fire Marshal as shown in the circulation plan on sheet C-102.

Sheets A-201 and A-202 show the north, east, and west walls are clad with rowlock brick, with a redstone color. Whereas the south wall will be clad with Hardie-plank lap siding of a lighter tan shade. The roof is shingled and set at a 6:12 pitch.

The cladding and accent/trim materials for the Commercial District are met. However, the transparency requirement is not met. The elevation drawing shows the west wall will have a transparency of 43%, and the north wall will have a transparency of 45%. The minimum is 60% for ground floor primary walls. The Planning Commission may reduce this amount to 40%. However, the plans call for faux windows on the north and west walls. Faux windows are considered decorative and do not permit light from entering the building, therefore, the faux windows shall not count towards the transparency calculations.

Ground Floor Transparency		PC reduction limit	Proposed
Min./max	60%/85%	40%	Less than 40%

Based on the proposed site plan, the applicant will need to apply for a variance from the ZBA or submit an amended site plan.

Sec. 40-604.C, a gasoline station requires 1 space per 150 sq. ft. dedicated to retail activity. Therefore, 1,550 sq. ft. of retail space / 150 sq. ft. = 10.33 or 10 spaces. The applicant is proposing 14 spaces located in front of the building. The parking spaces will be protected by bollards to prevent vehicles from encroaching onto the sidewalk.

No curb cuts will take place. Access to the gas station will utilize the existing entrance off 172nd Ave. and the shared driveway with the business center off Robbins Rd. The existing ingress/egress easement off Robbins will remain in place, providing access from the east. All drive aisles will satisfy the fire truck, fuel truck, and dumpster truck movements.

The plans call for a 51' x 14' loading space near the west entrance of the building. The hours of operation have not been fully indicated; however, it is expected that loading will occur during overnight and early morning hours.

According to the plan, 10 wall pack lighting fixtures will be placed along all four walls of the building. The parking lot will be illuminated by 5 light fixtures along the perimeter. All lighting will comply with Sec. 40-317, requiring 100% cut off at the horizontal plane. A photometric plan has

been provided. The signage plan calls for a 58.85 sq. ft. wall sign on the north wall. Two gas station signs on the west and east sides of the canopy, totaling 80 sq. ft. A 25 ft. tall pylon (pole) sign is proposed near the NW corner of the site. The sign exceeds the maximum 20 ft. height of a pole sign. Furthermore, the pole signs are permitted in the Commercial District, only in lieu of a ground sign on lots abutting US-31 with at least 90 ft. of frontage. It is known the area is characterized by existing pole signs; however, any new development will need to satisfy the ordinance. A variance would be required from the ZBA.

A 20 ft. x 20 ft. dumpster enclosure is shown east of the building on sheet C-101. The dumpster enclosure will be comprised of block/brick, satisfying the ordinance.

Sheet C-301 depicts a large underground storm water detention area located in parking lot around the gas station canopy. The DPW has reviewed and approved this design.

Sheet C-701 shows some landscaping and trees will be retained, particularly near Robbins Rd. The landscape plan calls for trees comprised of red maples and honey locusts, and shrubs planted along the exterior of the parking lot and in the lawn area around the building. This satisfies the ordinance.

The plan calls for mechanical equipment located on top of the roof on the north wall. Sheet A-202 shows the equipment will be screened with 73" tall aluminum material.

Sheet C-707 depicts snow will be stored in the NE corner of the site.

Urquhart also added that he would like to see hours of operation for deliveries.

The City has not received any written correspondence.

Paul Hansen, Casey's CSO, and Richard McMahon, of Casey's Retail Company, were both present to answer any questions.

Hansen added further clarification for the faux windows which were there due to restrooms, offices, or a freezer and cannot be transparent. The same is true for the faux windows on the back of the building. They plan to request a variance for the ZBA.

Dora opened a public hearing at 7:27 p.m

Jim Hagen, 400 Lake, commented on the safety turn radius for tankers.

Motion by **Pierce**, seconded by **Skelly**, to close the public hearing.  
All ayes.

Public Hearing closed at 7:29 p.m.

Borchers commented that his concerns regarding the faux windows were addressed. He also mentioned that the sign height would need to be looked into and is in favor of a closed dumpster. Borchers also mentioned he would prefer brick be used on the back of the building and voiced concerns regarding the safety turn radius.

Owens also expressed concern about the turn radius and would like the back of the building to be integrated with the front.

Smolenska stated she had no issues regarding the project other than the sign and the transparency.

Pierce appreciated the explanation of the faux windows, and also wondered about adding faux windows on the back of the building for aesthetics. He also asked for clarification on hours of operation.

Paul Hansen spoke again, stating that the intent would be open 24 hours and could be reduced depending on the market. He also mentioned that delivery hours would depend on the truck route.

Smelker stated that the sign would need to be addressed according to the ordinance. She mentioned that she understood the transparency.

Skelly concurred with most of the other commissioners. He did mention he would like to see some improvements to the back of the building. He also asked for an explanation of how the design was chosen for the community and wondered about fuel delivery times.

Hansen stated that this would be a newer and nicer model and that deliveries would be once or twice a week, depending on consumption.

Vice-Chair Galligan agreed with Pierce and Smolenska. He also mentioned his concern regarding the sign's size but deferred to the ZBA to look at the standards and determine the variance.

Richard McMahon stated that the same brick used on the front of the building can also be used on the back side, but he would not support adding faux windows to it. He also added that grocery delivery would be once a week, and fuel deliveries would be coordinated between the dispatchers and the delivery drivers based on non-high-traffic times. Deliveries can also be adjusted.

Chair Dora stated he did not have much to add to the comments that have already been mentioned. He did say he had concerns regarding the layout, specifically the pump area. He mentioned there could be difficulty getting in and out of that area. He also agreed to Smelker regarding the sign but is also deferring the ZBA to review and the transparency variance.

Richard McMahon mentioned that, unfortunately, due to the site, not much could be done to adjust.

Motion by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, seconded by **Smolenska**, to approve Case 25-33: A site plan and special land use for an automobile gas station at 1102 Robbins Rd. (parcel #70-03-33-201-001) subject to the following conditions:

- 1. All conditions of the BLP, Fire Marshal, and DPW are met.*
- 2. The Planning Commission may reduce the transparency requirement for ground floor primary walls to 40% based on the character of surrounding uses, existing and planned pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns. Any additional reduction in building transparency will require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.*
- 3. The proposed pylon sign will require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.*
- 4. The rear of the building will have a similar brick façade.*

**Roll Call Vote.**

**Yeas:** Pierce, Smolenska, Skelly, Galligan, Borchers, Owens

**Nays:** Smelker, Dora

**Motion passed.**

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**New Business:**

**Centertown Vision Plan RFP**

Urquhart introduced the case. In July, the city went out to bid for request for proposals (RFP) for the Centertown Vision Plan update. The Centertown Vision Plan was last adopted in 2014. Over the past 11 years, the city has experienced changes in development pressure, business and investment opportunities, and stakeholder values. Based on these factors, the city is seeking assistance from consulting firms to aid in the Centertown Vision Plan update. A review committee comprised of staff, DDA, and PC Chairs met to review the proposals. A high emphasis was placed on stakeholder engagement and implementation practices.

The city received two proposals: Better City and McKenna. After review, the committee is making a recommendation to select McKenna as the consultant. Staff is not requesting a formal motion, but rather a consensus from the Planning Commission. The DDA will also do the same at their meeting on Thursday. If all parties agree, the request to select McKenna as the consultant will be on the next City Council meeting agenda.



Pierce stated he was excited to work with community-minded people. He commented he would like to ensure the plans are practical and able to move forward with them. He also asked if the plans would be comprehensive.

Smelker also reiterated that plans would continue to be moved forward with the Master Planning.

Skelly also agreed he was excited to see the process and move forward.

Vice Chair Galligan agreed that McKenna appeared to be a good choice.

Borchers hoped to see different plan visions that could potentially come forward.

Owens and Smolenska had nothing further to add to what had already been said.

Chair Dora also joined in stating he was excited about getting McKenna's input as he appreciated their approach.

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**Old Business:**

**Case 25-26: Site Plan review for parking lot expansion at 524 Washington Ave. (parcel #70-03-21-355-016 and 355-008).**

Urquhart introduced the case. At the August 12th meeting, the Planning Commission raised concerns about the location and size of the parking expansion at St. John's Episcopal Church at 524 Washington Ave. A vote was approved to postpone the decision for the site plan review. The applicant has requested to provide details regarding the amount of seating capacity and, thus, the parking demand. The applicant has provided this information. If the applicant has satisfied the needs of the Planning Commission, a vote may occur.

Kyle Vinke of Lakewood Construction was available for questions and also mentioned the parking lot expansion would help set the facility up for the ADA improvements, as part of the building improvements to be submitted at a later time.

Pierce stated he was not in favor of having a parking lot on Washington Street, but was generally in favor of making things more ADA-compliant.

John Tygner, a representative of St. John's Episcopal Church, stated that due to growth and many elderly attendees, more parking spaces and closer parking accessibility were needed to accommodate them.

Oliver Shampine, a representative of St. John's Episcopal Church, stated that many of their members use the parking available at City Hall during their service times. He mentioned that allowing the additional parking on Washington would free up the public parking at City Hall.

Pierce mentioned that he felt the use of public parking at City Hall was a great resource.

Smelker was sympathetic to the need but felt the ordinance was clear.

Skelly respected the need, but also respected the ordinance. He stated he would be a propionate of this case.

Borchers understood the need, but also agreed the ordinance was clear.

Owens was also sympathetic to the need and the situation, but felt hemmed in by the ordinance. She stated that the zoning board of appeals may be better suited to address this.

Smolenska agreed with other commissioners regarding the ordinance. She stated that approving this case would transform a conforming lot into a nonconforming lot. She also stated that there was ample parking between City Hall and on-street parking.

John Tygner responded, stating there was just not enough parking on the west side of the church.

Vice-Chair Galligan also agreed with fellow commissioners regarding the ordinance.

Chair Dora stated he felt the ordinance would be more applicable to a new construction parking lot than an expansion. He also felt the need was there for this and would support what they were asking.

Motion by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, seconded by **Smelker**, to DENY Case 25-26, Site Plan review for parking lot expansion at 524 Washington Ave. (parcel #70-03-21-355-016 and 355-008) based on the following reason:

1. *The site plan does not comply with Sec. 40-601.A.*

**Roll Call Vote.**

**Yeas: Pierce, Smolenska, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens**

**Nays: Skelly, Dora**

**Motion passed.**

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### **Zoning Board of Appeals Liaison Report:**

August meeting was canceled.

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### **City Planner Report:**

Urquhart relayed that he was still working on the annual reports.  
The Annual Michigan Planning Conference was coming up in October.  
Working to create a list of ideas for the next Master Planning, which will be in the next year.  
South Village is still working with EGLE for permitting.  
The Hotel is still working to finalize the details for the parking requirements and will submit incentive requests in the next month.

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### **Call to the Audience: Second Opportunity:**

Denny Dryer, 220 ½ Washington, spoke about how TI zoning affects his property at 1500 Kooiman and makes financing difficult.

Oliver Shampine addressed the council about their decision to deny PC Case 25-26, the parking lot extension at 524 Washington Ave.

Jim Hagen, 400 Lake, expressed his safety concerns and disagreed with the Planning Commission's decision regarding Case 25-26.

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### **Adjournment:**

Chair Dora adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.



Melissa Bos, Executive Assistant to City Manager