

**CITY OF GRAND HAVEN
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 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, Amy Kozanecki, Chair Mike Dora.

Absent: Magda Smolenska

Also Present: City Planner Brian Urquhart.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by **Pierce**, seconded by **Borchers**, to approve the September 9, 2025, meeting minutes. All ayes. **Motion passes.**

Approval of Agenda

Motion by **Skelly**, seconded by **Smelker**, to approve the agenda. All ayes. **Motion passes.**

Call to the Audience: First Opportunity: None.

Case 25-35: A special land use request for a short-term rental at 4 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-024).

Urquhart introduced the case. Applicant Sarah Lowell applied for a Special Land Use Permit for Short-Term Rental located at 4 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-024). The Dune Residential District allows short-term rentals as a special land use.

4 Edward Ave. is a single-family dwelling located in the Dune Residential District. The dwelling is a 4-bedroom, 2-bathroom, which sits on .32 acres or 13,939 sq. ft. Maximum occupancy is 9, but the intent of the short-term rental is 6 persons maximum to reduce neighborhood impact. Currently there are 3 parking spaces available, but the applicant is offering 2 to also reduce impact.

The neighborhood characteristic is primarily single-family homes. There are seven short-term rentals in the vicinity, 6 of which are lawfully nonconforming, and one receiving special land use approval. Section 40-513 provides a list of ten (10) regulations and conditions for a Short-Term Rental. 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.

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As of the date of this memo, the city has received 6 emails regarding the case. All letters are against the special land use. Neighbors are concerned with the lack of parking and the overabundance of short-term rentals in the area.

Applicant, Sarah Lowell, was present and was asked for additional information, seeking to clarify what the objective and concern were surrounding the width of the property.

Chair Dora opened the public hearing at 7:09 p.m.

Catherine Ruster, 9 Peterson Ridge, stated she was opposed to the short-term rental.

Honore Lee, 1409 Lake Ave, stated she was in support of the short-term rental.

Motion by **Owens**, seconded by **Skelly**, to close the public hearing. All ayes. Public Hearing closed at 7:15 p.m.

The commissioners were unified in their opinion that, pursuant to Section 40-513.2(b), this property does not meet the minimum lot width requirements to be considered for a short-term rental.

Motion by **Kozanecki**, seconded by **Owens**, to deny Case 25-35, a request for a Special Use Permit for a short-term rental located at 4 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-024) based on the information submitted for review with the following reason:

1. Per Sec. 40-513.2.b., because the lot does not meet the minimum lot width of 66 ft. in the DR district, the lot is not suitable for a short-term rental.

Roll Call Vote.

Yea: Pierce, Kozanecki, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens, Dora

Nay: None

Motion passed.

Case 25-36: A special land use request for a retaining wall greater than 48 inches in height at 10 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-037).

Urquhart introduced the case. Property owner Stefan Smolenski submitted a special land use request for a retaining wall located in the front yard and side yard at 10 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-037). Replacement of existing front yard retaining wall with an MSE segmental concrete block wall, varying in height up to 5ft 4 in, built with geogrid reinforcement, compacted base, drainage, and backfill. The wall will be placed by hand (as opposed to crane/backhoe), which should minimize interruptions to the sensitive area. The new retaining wall will not exceed the size of the failing retaining wall.

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Last month, the Building Official discovered a retaining wall being installed by Timeless Outdoors at 10 Edward Ave. and gave warning the retaining wall shall require a retaining wall and building permit. Due to the fact the wall is greater than 48 inches in height, a special land use approval by the Planning Commission is also required. The contractor largely completed the work at that point. The property owner subsequently filed for a building, retaining wall, sensitive area overlay and special land use permits. According to the property owner, the replacement of the retaining wall was to enhance and stabilize the dune.

No correspondence has been received.

Applicant was available for questions.

Dora opened a public hearing at 7:24 p.m.

No comments.

Motion by **Kozanecki**, seconded by **Smelker**, to close the public hearing. All ayes. Public Hearing closed at 7:25 p.m.

While the commissioners did not have any further questions, many had stated that their desire was for the permit to be issued before the work began, rather than during the construction process.

Contractor, Juan Velazquez Jr., 197 W. 17th St, Holland, MI, stated there was a miscommunication between the homeowner and the contracting company. The work was stopped immediately when they learned of the oversight.

Motion by **Pierce**, seconded by **Vice-Chair Galligan**, to approve Case 25-36, a special land use permit and sensitive area overlay permit for a retaining wall that exceeds 48 inches in height at 10 Edward Ave. (parcel #70-03-29-156-037).

Roll Call Vote.

Yea: Pierce, Kozanecki, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens, Dora

Nays: None

Motion passed.

New Business: Planning Commission By-Laws.

Last month, staff mentioned they would send the By-Laws to the City Attorney for review. According to the record, the By-Laws were last updated in October 2018. Best practice

recommends the By-Laws be reviewed periodically, to ensure consistency with the Planning Commission's actions. City Attorney Ron Bultje reviewed the 2018 version of the PC By-Laws. Included in the packet is the red line and the clean version. The red-line version shows slight changes to Sections 7 and 8, Conflict of Interest and Ex Parte communication, which there has been some concern among members. Per Section 9, the Planning Commission will need to vote to adopt the amended By-Laws.

Urquhart also mentioned that Chair Dora had been recently elected to the City of Grand Haven City Council. According to the By-Laws, the Vice-Chair would assume the Chair position, thereby leaving an open seat.

The Vice-Chair seat will be voted on at the December Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioners had no comments.

Motion by **Kozanecki**, seconded by **Pierce**, to approve Planning Commission By-Laws.

Roll Call Vote.

Yea: Pierce, Kozanecki, Skelly, Galligan, Smelker, Borchers, Owens, Dora

Nay: None

Motion passed.

Old Business: None

Zoning Board of Appeals Liaison Report:

Three cases were reviewed and approved. Two variances at 1102 Robbins Rd., one for the ground sign of 10 ft. in height, and a 28% ground floor transparency for the primary wall.

St. John's Episcopal Church at 526 Washington Ave. received approval for their appeal of PC Case 25-26, in which the Planning Commission denied the site plan for additional parking spaces located in the northeast corner of the site.

City Planner Report:

Urquhart gave a brief update on current projects.

He also attended the 2025 Annual Michigan Association of Planning Conference, finding it beneficial. He extended an invitation to the commissioners for next year's conference.

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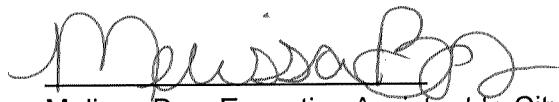
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He also congratulated Chair Dora on being elected to City Council.

Call to the Audience: Second Opportunity:

Sarah Lowell, 4 Edwards, asked for clarification concerning the requirements for allowing short-term rentals on the property.

Adjournment: Chair Dora adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.



Melissa Bos, Executive Assistant to City Manager