

Memorandum



Date: January 20, 2026
To: Buchanan City Commission
From: Kristen Gundersen, Planning and Community Development Director
Subject: **City of Buchanan Planning Commission Annual Report – Calendar Year 2025**

Background

On January 13, 2026, the Planning Commission reviewed, modified and approved the 2025 Annual Report as attached. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to complete a report annually which includes three areas for reporting.

This report will be posted on the city's website on the Planning Commission's webpage.

Requested Action

No action by the City Commission is required. The report is being shared for informational purposes.



City of Buchanan Michigan Planning Commission Annual Report Calendar Year 2025

**Approved January 13, 2026 by
City of Buchanan Planning Commission**

Background.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to complete a report annually to the City Commission discussing three specific areas. Following are the three reporting areas and the Planning Commission's report for 2025.

- A. The operations of the Planning Commission during the past year.
- B. The status of any ongoing planning activities.
- C. Recommendations regarding City Commission actions related to planning and development.

On January 13, 2026, the City of Buchanan Planning Commission reviewed the draft Annual Report. After finding it to be appropriate, they directed staff to forward the finalized document to the City Commission.

Planning Commission Membership, Attendance and Training.

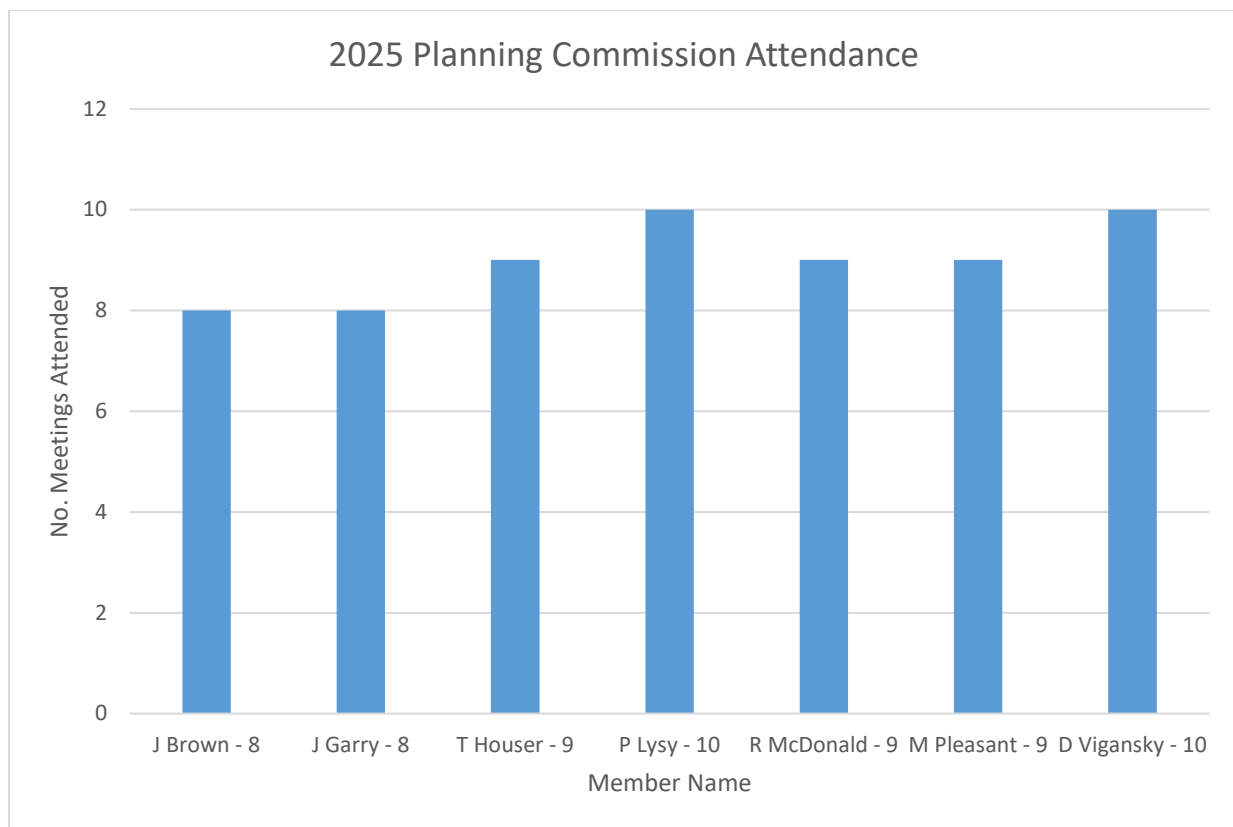
The Planning Commission met 10 times in 2025. The August and December meetings were cancelled. The meetings ranged between 1 to 1.75 hours for a total of 12.75 hours. All meetings are held in person at City Hall on the second Tuesday of each month.

The Planning Commissions of seven members which includes one City Commissioner. The six appointed members serve a 3-year term and can be reappointed. Terms expire June 30th of each year, and members can remain on the Commission until re-appointed or a new appointment is made by the City Commission. An organizational meeting typically take place in July of each year for the Commissioners to elect the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary.

During 2025 Ralph McDonald is the Chairperson, Tony Houser is the Vice Chairperson, Jen Gerry is the Secretary and Dan Viganksy is the City Commission Representative. The remaining members are Jacob Brown, Peter Lysy and Matt Pleasant. There were no new members on the Planning Commission in 2025.

Tony Houser became a Master Citizen Planner through Michigan State University Extension after passing an online exam and completing a capstone presentation. To maintain the credential annual continuing education is required.

Planning Commissioners spend additional time reviewing the agenda packets prior to the meeting and visiting property that have pending applications. The overall member meeting attendance rate for the year was 90%. Staff was informed of absences prior to the meeting. Following is a table which provides information on member attendance.



All members of the Planning Commission are encouraged to participate in additional learning opportunities. During 2025 the city did not host any on-site training opportunities. Money is budgeted annually for members to complete additional training. There are several organizations that provide on-line training free of charge or at reduced rates. In addition, many previously recorded training opportunities can also be found on YouTube for viewing.

Staff Support and Packet Creation.

In 2025 the Planning Commission was staffed by Community Development Director Richard Murphy; City Clerk Kalla Langston; City Manager Tony McGhee; and Administrative Assistant Emma Lysy. Mr. Murphy left the city in September, and position was vacant for the remainder of the year.

All packets were created using Municode Meetings software. Once completed, packets were typically emailed to members before the scheduled meeting and are posted on the city’s website under “Agenda & Minutes”. By utilizing the software-package it has allowed for the packets to be available to the public prior to the meeting in an easily searchable format that also includes the City Commission packets and other appointed Boards and Commissions.

2025 Planning Commission Meeting Information and Agenda Items.

During 2025, the Planning Commission spent most of

Map Amendment (rezoning).

- None.

Planned Unit Development.

- None

Acceptance of Design Review Committee Recommendations.

- 116 Main Street – B & W Pour – February 2025

Text Amendment – Unified Development Code (Zoning Ordinance).

- Worked on and recommended approval of the Unified Development Code. Work started on this document in 2022. Discussions took place during January, February, March, April, May, June, August before public hearing in September 2025. *The City Commission adopted the Code of November 24, 2025, and it became effective on December 12, 2025.*

Text Amendment – Code of Ordinance -.

- Short-term rental discussions – April, May, June, July recommendation
- Vacant Building/Cold Storage – October, November recommendation
- Urban Forestry Plan – November recommendation

Future Activities for 2026.

In addition to applications submitted for review and action by the public and development community, the Planning Commission will be involved with the following activities in 2026:

1. Update to the 2021 Master Plan. The city has engaged with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission to complete in early 2027.
2. With the adoption of the Unified Development Code (UDC) in late 2025 it is anticipated revisions will need to be made as the document is used.
3. It is anticipated that FEMA will be issuing new Floodplain Maps associated with the St. Joseph River watershed that will require amendments to the UDC so the City remains compliant with the Flood Insurance Program.