



GLADSTONE PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

City Hall Chambers – 1100 Delta Avenue
February 03, 2026
5:15 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Commission Chairperson, Howard Haulotte, called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT	ABSENT
Howard Haulotte	
John DeFiore	
Sam Hewitt	
Mike Kennedy	
Jason Leonard (Arrived at 5:19 PM)	
Nick Nastoff	
Jennifer Harding	

Staff Present: Patricia West

APPROVAL AND/OR CORRECTIONS OF:

1. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes - January 6, 2026

Motion made by DeFiore, seconded by Harding to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2026.

Voting Yea: Haulotte, DeFiore, Hewitt, Kennedy, Leonard, Nastoff, Harding

MOTION CARRIED.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Motion made by DeFiore, seconded by Hewitt to move the public comment section of the agenda above Public Hearings for this meeting and all meetings moving forward.

Voting Yea: Haulotte, DeFiore, Hewitt, Kennedy, Leonard, Nastoff, Harding

MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Denise Messina, representing the Memorial United Methodist Church at 1920 Lake Shore Dr, provided the statement enclosed below.

Good evening Chair and members of the Planning Commission.

My name is Denise Messina, and I am speaking on behalf of Memorial United Methodist Church.

I am here for a second time regarding the City's outdated zoning ordinance for sign permits, as it does not adequately address modern LED sign technology or real-world site limitations.

At the August 2025 meeting, I spoke in support of the new zoning administrator, Patricia West, and her task of taking on this project. At the same time, I relayed the troubles we were up against with not being able to obtain a sign permit, due to the outdated zoning. Our current sign is non-conforming and over 30 years old..

In August, as well as today, we are in a very difficult situation. Memorial UMC's inability to obtain a replacement sign permit has brought the outdated zoning to the for front. Although we did not create this situation, we are being asked and encouraged to wait nine months to a year or maybe longer, with no guarantee. I ask "Is this normal?"

In a conciliatory gesture last August, I was encouraged to apply for the City of Gladstones Façade Grant in an effort to help offset the increasing costs and delay of installation. I inquired and it was confirmed that the sign would be grant eligible along with other improvements. I acted in good faith, devoting more than 80 hours to the application process and ultimately, we were denied—not because of design, but because the proposed LED sign does not comply with the current sign zoning regulations as written. Notably, not all the façade grant monies were awarded.

Please keep in mind, video signs are not addressed in the current sign zoning and yet there are video signs in and around our Gladstone community, even in residential zones. A few weeks ago, I jumped back on the merry go round of pursuing the sign permit and trying to address the many variances needed. A variance submission would again be additional time and a \$300.00 fee, that last August would have been less or waved.

We are now six months behind where we should have been last August. In hindsight, the time spent pursuing the façade grant would have been better spent pursuing a variance or an exception. In August, a board member asked how similar signs have approved, and the answer was through granted exceptions. For many reasons, we respectfully request that Memorial United Methodist Church be granted the said exceptions, so we may place the sign order and move forward.

We do understand that a committee has been formed to review the sign ordinance, and although we appreciate that effort, we respectfully request a more timely resolution.

Our request is modest. We are seeking exceptions to allow:

- A modern LED video sign; and
- A ground-to-bottom-of-sign height modification

Thank you for your time and consideration.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

2. August Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Motion made by Hewitt, seconded by Leonard to approve the amended Planning Commission Regular Meeting Schedule for 2026.

Voting Yea: Haulotte, DeFiore, Hewitt, Kennedy, Leonard, Nastoff, Harding

MOTION CARRIED.

3. Master Plan Annual Review

West provided an overview of recent status updates and progress related to the Implementation Chapter of the City of Gladstone Master Plan. Discussion focused on Goals 1 through 4. No motions or formal actions were taken; however, key discussion points are summarized below.

Goal 1: Waterfront Redevelopment

West reported that the City has received Hannahville 2% funding to support engineering costs associated with infrastructure planning at the North Shore.

Commissioner DeFiore asked whether engineering plans should be finalized prior to securing a developer, noting that a developer's vision could potentially alter the outcomes of preliminary design work. West explained that the City intends to pursue North Shore development in phased stages, and that the engineering work will be structured to align with those phases.

West also noted the City's continued interest in expanding the overall footprint of the North Shore Development in order to increase public access to the waterfront.

Goal 2: Downtown Gladstone

West provided updates regarding several downtown initiatives, including:

- Gladstone Farmers Market operations
- The 9th Street bond payment
- Implementation of a social district
- The return of the façade grant program

West also shared information related to future planning efforts for a roundabout at the intersection of M-35 and US-2/41.

Goal 3: Economic Base

West introduced the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's ZoomProspector platform as an opportunity for the city to better market available development sites, particularly within the Industrial Park.

The Planning Commission discussed the City's preparedness for potential data center development inquiries. West indicated that further discussion is warranted and noted that the topic is expected to be included on the February Economic Development Corporation (EDC) meeting agenda.

Goal 4: Residential Development

West acknowledged that many of the objectives and strategies outlined under this goal represent initiatives she hopes to advance further as she continues to establish priorities in her role.

Discussion and updates on the Master Plan for the additional goals will be planned for in the next Planning Commission Meeting.

INFORMATION SHARING

4. Delta County Non-Motorized Trails (DCNT) Bike Trail

West noted that the City Commission recently approved a new bike path proposal presented by the Delta County Non-Motorized Trail (DCNT) in partnership with Parks & Recreation. She also discussed potential connectivity options to explore in coordination with the Grand View Estates No. 4 Subdivision.

5. Downtown Action Plan

West presented the recently adopted Downtown Action Plan and reviewed its relationship to the City's existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan, as well as its alignment with the City of Gladstone Master Plan.

6. Leading Rural Michigan Program

West reported that she was recently accepted into the inaugural Leading Rural Michigan Program, a statewide 12-month leadership and civic education initiative for emerging rural leaders offered through the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's Office of Rural Prosperity in partnership with Michigan State University Extension.

7. Sign Ordinance Amendment Updates

The Subcommittee recently met and agreed to distribute a community survey to ensure that its recommendations are aligned with public feedback. West noted that the survey is anticipated to be available throughout the month of February, with plans to close it at the end of the month. Draft amendments to the sign ordinance will be developed following review of the survey results.

8. Small Business Support HUB Workshop | Creating Projections to Apply for a Bank Loan

West shared the educational opportunity sponsored by the Small Business Support HUB, Gladstone DDA, and SBDC.

9. Zoning Administrator Certification Program

West reported that she is currently enrolled in the Zoning Administrator Certificate Program, which is scheduled to conclude at the end of February.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Hewitt acknowledged the updates discussed during the Master Plan Review.

Commissioner Leonard thanked Denise Messina for her public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM.