

Darwin McClary

From: George Dandalides
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2026 1:39 PM
To: Darwin McClary
Cc: Sonja Stout; Teresa Rutt; amundsonm@lakeorionpolice.org; michael deluca
Subject: Fwd: Seeking an exception permit to the Noxious Weeds Ordinance

Darwin,

The following is input from resident Michael DeLuca per my suggestion after the discussion at our June 8 council meeting. I believe Mr. DeLuca has provided valuable input from surrounding communities on the topic to help us in our recommendation for Lake Orion. Please consider his input as you look at how we might proceed in Lake Orion.

I would also request his communication be put on the consent agenda for our July 13 council meeting.

Thanks,

George

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From: michael deluca [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2026 1:06 PM
To: George Dandalides <dandalidesg@lakeorion.org>
Subject: Re: Seeking an exception permit to the Noxious Weeds Ordinance

George,

If I recall correctly it was you at the June 8th council meeting who suggested I research what other communities around us have done to allow people to participate in No Mow May and support pollinators on their property. I have now done so and found four different possible models:

- Royal Oak provides \$5 yard signs to anyone who wants to participate, and code enforcement uses those signs to distinguish between people who are choosing to participate vs people who just forgot to mow: <https://www.romi.gov/1689/No-Mow-May>
- East Lansing had been participating in No Mow May over the past few years, imposing a pause on code enforcement for the month of May, but this year they instead created a new ordinance permanently changing the way weeds are defined, to provide exception for native plants deliberately being cultivated to support pollinators: <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/m/newsflash/home/detail/2502>
- Ann Arbor approved a No Mow May ordinance in 2022, but amid concerns about long grass providing tick habitat, they have since replaced it with a "Pollinator-Aware Yard Care" initiative, where (similar to in Royal Oak) homeowners sign up and get a yard sign to show their participation, and the program encourages participants to plant native plants, reduce the amount of yard space dedicated to lawn, avoid pesticides and more. They're also moving to permanently phase out gas-powered leaf-blowers!

<https://www.a2gov.org/sustainability-innovations-home/sustainability-natural-resources/natural-features/pollinator-aware-yard-care/>

- Jackson's Now Mow May rules specify that only backyards be allowed to grow while front yards and street-facing areas must continue to be maintained. <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/no-mow-may>

I personally think modeling Lake Orion Village's noxious weed ordinance enforcement after any of these solutions would be an improvement. As was discussed at the June 8th council meeting, letting invasive grasses grow out of control provides limited habitat to native pollinators anyway. My own strategy has been to gradually replace more and more of my lawn with native plants--the month of May is really the only time I let my grass grow and, notably, the only time the police seem to get complaints about it.

Of course, all these alternative solutions require more administrative effort from the council than the simple solution of delaying enforcement by a month. I think if I were going to recommend a solution for Lake Orion Village, it would be to redefine the list of noxious weeds (remove native species and add more invasive species as we discussed) and exempt deliberately cultivated native species from height restrictions the way East Lansing did, and also provide some kind of official signage to indicate participation like Royal Oak and Ann Arbor.

I hope this is useful input.

--Michael

On Wed, Jun 3, 2026 at 1:08 PM michael deluca [REDACTED] wrote:
George,

Thank you for your reply! I do plan on being at the council meeting on June 8th and would indeed like to prepare for that by reviewing the meeting packet when it becomes available. I'll look for it on the website tomorrow, but if you have time to share the link, I'd appreciate it.

--Michael

On Tue, Jun 2, 2026 at 10:55 AM George Dandalides <dandalidesg@lakeorion.org> wrote:
Michael,

Thanks for contacting me on this. I was unaware of any issues as you describe.

I am told amendments to the ordinance will be presented by Village Manager McClary at the upcoming council meeting (6/8/26). This information will be available in the meeting packet, which is typically available on the village website the Thursday before. I will keep an eye out for it and send you the link so you may review in advance.

I would encourage you to attend the council meeting and share your thoughts during public comments on this agenda topic.

If you'd like to discuss with me prior, please let me know.

George Dandalides

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From: Lake Orion, MI <noreply@civicplus.com>

Sent: Friday, May 29, 2026 2:29:23 PM

To: George Dandalides <dandalidesg@lakeorion.org>

Subject: Seeking an exception permit to the Noxious Weeds Ordinance

Name: Michael J. DeLuca

Email: [REDACTED]

Message:

Dear Councilman Dandalides,

As a member of the Lake Orion Village Council and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, I hope you might be the right person to contact with this. I apologize if not.

I've been the property owner and resident at 206 East Flint Street in Lake Orion Village since 2012. On May 22, 2026, I recieved a notice from Lake Orion Village code enforcement officer Hammond requesting that I "mow + trim lawn" for "Nuisances/Grass/Weeds", erroneously referring to Ordinance Chapter 154. I did as requested, apparently to the code enforcement officer's satisfaction, given that I have not heard from him since. This is the second notice I've recieved to this effect in two years. For a number of years prior, I have been participating in the international "No Mow May" movement, which encourages landowners to refrain from cutting plants until the end of May in order to provide habitat for essential native pollinators and wildlife. I've dedicated my yard to supporting native wildlife of all kinds and have devoted a lot of time and effort to encouraging native plants and habitat on my property and elsewhere in Lake Orion. I've recieved certification from the Clinton River Watershed Council and the National Wildlife Federation for my efforts and have posted signage on my property to that effect. Accordingly, after I recieved compliance notices both in 2025 and 2026, the code enforcement officer recommended I contact the village regarding the possiblity of seeking an exemption to the noxious weeds ordinance. I am now pursuing that possibility.

The noxious weeds ordinance in question is outlined in the Village of Lake Orion Code of Ordinances, not in Chapter 154 as advertised in the compliance notices, but rather in sections 95.35 to 95.98. The possibility of an exemption is detailed specifically in section 95.36 (C):

"(C) Land that is located within a conservation area or easement, open space or natural area that has been approved by the village to be left in its natural state without the removal, cutting or mowing otherwise required by divisions (A) and/or (B), shall be exempt from those requirements. For purposes of this exemption, village approval may be by a permit or plan approval under Chapter 157 of this code or the village zoning ordinance."

I've reviewed Chapter 157, but can find no mention there of any permitting process for a conservation area or easement; instead it describes permitting requirements for development of a new subdivision, which is rather beyond the scope of my capacity or intent. Chapter 157 does, however, include one potentially relevant subsection, 157.12, of which sections (C) and (D) state as follows:

"(C) The Planning Commission shall submit to the Village Council its findings on the existence of any extraordinary hardships, practical difficulties or unique circumstances that will result from the strict enforcement of these regulations. If the Planning Commission finds the requested variance will not compromise the public interest or the intent of §§ 157.01 through 157.12, the Planning Commission may recommend to the Village Council approval of a variance to these regulations. The Planning Commission may recommend conditions to the variance consistent with the objectives of these regulations.

(D) The Village Council may grant a variance if the Council finds that:

(1) The variance will not be detrimental to the public, health, safety and general welfare nor injurious to other property.

(2) The conditions underlying the variance request are unique to the property and are not generally applicable to other property.

(3) Due to particular characteristics, shape or topographical conditions of the property, a particular hardship to the owner, as distinguished from inconvenience or monetary loss, will result if these regulations are enforced.

(4) The variance will not violate the requirements of the Zoning Code, Chapter 158 of this code, being Ordinances 26.01 through 26.64 and all amendments thereto; Master Plan; and Subdivision Control Act, being M.C.L.A. §§ 560.101 et seq. or any other applicable law or regulation."

Would it be possible to adapt these provisions for the division or partitioning of land to create a permitting process for a conservation exception for individual property owners?

I've reviewed the village of Lake Orion's current noxious weeds ordinance, sections 95.35 to 95.98. I see that this ordinance has been re-posted annually without changes for a number of years, and accordingly I would like to recommend some updates. First, please consider changing the date of enforcement from May 1st to June 1st to allow residents to participate in "no mow May" without incurring fines. As I'm sure you're aware, Michigan's native wildlife have been in steep decline, endangering agricultural production, tourism revenue, and public health, and encouraging rather than prohibiting participation in No Mow May would be a great way to reverse some of that decline. I also believe that the list of plants designated "noxious weeds" should be updated, given that it doesn't mention several notorious invasive species of plants which spread aggressively in our climate, threaten native plant populations and wildlife, and in some cases can cause significant damage to property and infrastructure if left unchecked. These include but are not limited to:

- Australasian Reed (*Phragmites australis*) - Orion Township has already had an ordinance (151) in place against *Phragmites* since 2015, so it seems particularly odd this species is not listed as noxious.
- Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)
- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
- Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)

Please consider expanding this list. I would personally recommend seeking input from plant experts, of which Lake Orion Village is in ready supply, including Oakland University riparian biologist Dr. Scott Tiegs and Oakland Township Natural Areas Stewardship Manager Dr. Ben VanderWeide.

Thank you very much for your attention. My contact information is below for your reply.

Sincerely,
Michael J. DeLuca

