

Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
Madison Heights, Michigan
January 08, 2026

A Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting was held on Thursday, January 08, 2026, at 7:30 PM at Council Chambers - City Hall, 300 W. 13 Mile Rd.

PRESENT: Chair Kimble and members: Corbett, Covert, Holder, Loranger, Oglesby, Sagar, and Thompson

ABSENT: Councilwoman Aaron and Marentette

ZBA 01-26. Excuse member(s).

Motion made by Ms. Holder, Seconded by Mr. Oglesby, to excuse Councilwoman Aaron and member Marentette from tonight's meeting.

Voting Yea: Corbett, Holder, Kimble, Loranger, Oglesby, Sagar, Covert, Thompson

Absent: Councilwoman Aaron, Ms. Marentette

Motion carried.

ZBA 02-26. Minutes.

Motion made by Ms. Corbett, Seconded by Ms. Covert, to approve the December 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented.

Voting Yea: Corbett, Holder, Kimble, Loranger, Oglesby, Sagar, Covert, Thompson

Absent: Councilwoman Aaron, Marentette

Motion carried.

ZBA 03-26 PZBA #25-11: 31075 John R Road

City Planner Lonnerstater reviewed the staff report provided in the meeting packet, incorporated herein:

REQUEST

The applicant, Matthew Abro, is appealing an administrative decision made by the City Planner, acting in the capacity of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, to deny a Certificate of Occupancy application for a tobacco/smoke shop at 31075 John R Road.

STAFF COMMENT AND ZBA ACTION

The City Planner, Matt Lonnerstater, summarized the staff report: The applicant has appealed the Planning and Zoning Administrator's decision to deny a Certificate of Occupancy (CofO) for his business. The facts presented in this staff report and the included attachments provide the reasoning for the Planning and Zoning Administrator's decision. This is not a variance request, and the criteria for reviewing an appeal differ from that of a variance request. In this case, the Zoning Board of Appeals is tasked with determining whether the Planning and Zoning Administrator (City Planner) made an error in their decision to deny the CofO. The onus is on the applicant/petitioner to prove that an error was made.

Based on general zoning practice, a reversal or modification of the Planning and Zoning Administrator's decision may be made if the ZBA finds one of the following to be true:

- (1) The decision was arbitrary or capricious; or
- (2) The decision was based on erroneous findings of fact; or
- (3) The decision was a clear abuse of discretion; or
- (4) The decision was based on an erroneous interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance.

The ZBA should not treat the appeal as a new decision. Rather, review of the decision should be limited to the information that was available to the Planning and Zoning Administrator when the decision to deny the Certificate of Occupancy application was made.

Following the consideration of all testimony, documentary evidence, and matters of record, and following the public hearing, the ZBA shall make a determination on the appeal unless an extension of time is agreed to by the applicant and the ZBA. Any ZBA motion, including a decision to either uphold or overturn the decision of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, shall include clear and concise findings of fact relating to the appeal.

Chair Kimble opened the public hearing at 7:37 p.m. to hear comments on application #25-11.

Appellant, Matthew Abro, explained the appeal: He sought to open a "Smokin Bear Tobacco" retail shop in a suite zoned B-1, Neighborhood Business. The appellant argued that significant investment was made in the build-out, including interior modifications, plumbing, and a new facade, and that city inspectors were aware of the intended use throughout the process. He further noted that a tobacco shop had previously operated in the same plaza.

City Planner Lonnerstater clarified that while building permits were issued for construction, issuance of a permit does not guarantee compliance with zoning codes. Upon review of the Certificate of Occupancy (CofO) application, it was determined that a "tobacco and smoke shop" was not a permitted use in the B-1 district under the current Zoning Ordinance adopted in 2024. The Zoning Ordinance defines such shops as stores primarily selling tobacco products, which are excluded from the B-1 use table.

Assistant City Attorney Burns advised the Board to determine if the City Planner was the appropriate authority and if the regulation was properly enforced.

There being no comments on application #25-11, Chair Kimble closed the public hearing at 8:13 p.m.

Motion made by Ms. Holder, Seconded by Mr. Oglesby, **MOVE** that the Zoning Board of Appeals hereby affirms and upholds the administrative decision of the City Planner, acting in the capacity of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, to deny a Certificate of Occupancy for a tobacco/smoke shop at 31075 John R Road, zoned B-1, Neighborhood Business. This decision is based upon the finding that the Planning and Zoning Administrator acted on the submitted Certificate of Occupancy application in accordance with the Madison Heights Zoning Ordinance.

Voting Yea: Corbett, Holder, Kimble, Loranger, Oglesby, Sagar, Covert, Thompson

Absent: Councilwoman Aaron, Marentette

Motion carried.

ZBA 04-26. Public Comment: For items not listed on agenda.

Seeing no one wished to comment, Chair Kimble opened public comment at 8:14 p.m. and closed the public comment at 8:15 p.m.

ZBA 05-26. PZBA #25-10: 32500 John R Road

City Planner Lonnerstater reviewed the staff report provided in the meeting packet, incorporated herein:

REQUEST

The applicant, Marija Dedvukaj on behalf of property owner VDG John R, LLC, requests variances from Section 12.04 (Prohibited Signs) and Section 12.07 (Regulations for Permitted Signs) to permit the installation of a pylon sign that exceeds that maximum permitted height for ground signs. The property is located at 32500 John R Road (tax parcel #44-25-01-151-063) and is zoned B-3, Regional Business. The property is located on the east side of John R Road, south of Mandoline, and is improved with a drivethrough fast-food restaurant which is in the process of being converted into a Coney Island restaurant. At their December 4th, 2025 the Zoning Board of Appeals postponed action on the variance requests to allow time for the applicant to explore alternative sign heights and designs.

VARIANCE FINDINGS AND CRITERIA

Section 15.06.2 of the Zoning Ordinance grants the Zoning Board of Appeals the power to authorize variances from sign regulations, provided that such variances will not be inconsistent with the purpose and intent of such requirements. In granting a variance, the Zoning Boards of Appeals shall make findings that the petitioner has adequately proven the existence of a practical difficulty, explicitly with regard to the following criteria:

- A. That strict compliance with area, setbacks, frontage, height, bulk, or density would unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose, and would thereby render the conformity unnecessarily burdensome for other than financial reasons; and
- B. That a variance will provide and preserve a substantial property right similar to that possessed by other properties within the same zoning district and in the neighboring area, provided that possible increased financial return shall not of itself be deemed sufficient to warrant a variance; and
- C. That the plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances of the property , such as the shape of the parcel, unique topographic or environmental conditions, or any other physical situation on the land, building or structure deemed by the Zoning Board of Appeals to be extraordinary; and
- D. That the requested variance is the minimum amount necessary to permit reasonable use of the land, building or structure; and

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

PC 26-12. Minutes.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of February 17, 2026, as printed.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox, Seconded by Commissioner Graettinger.

Voting Yea: Chair Champagne, Commissioner Fleming, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, Commissioner Haines, Commissioner Marsh, Commissioner Olson, Commissioner Sylvester

Motion carries unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Rezoning Request PRZN 26-01 – 31075 John R Road [B1 to B2]

City Planner Lonnerstater reviewed the staff report for a request from **Smokin Bear Tobacco** to rezone the property at 31075 John R Road from B-1 (Neighborhood Business) to B-2 (Community Business).

STAFF ANALYSIS: The applicant seeks to operate a tobacco and smoke shop, a use permitted in B-2 but not B-1. A previous Certificate of Occupancy application was denied for zoning non-compliance and that decision was upheld by the Zoning Board of Appeals in January. Planner Lonnerstater noted that even if rezoned, a variance would be required because the site is 60 feet from the Civic Center/City Hall property, failing the 200-foot separation standard from Community Centers and Parks. Staff highlighted that B-2 allows more intensive uses like auto repair and drive-thrus, and the Future Land Use designation is Office, which aligns with neither district. For clarification, a tobacco shop is defined as a store *primarily* selling tobacco products; ancillary sales (like those in a gas station) are permitted in B-1.

Planner Lonnerstater reviewed the use specific standards for tobacco/smoke shops, the map amendment rezoning review standards, and zoning and land use considerations as detailed in the packet. He especially noted #6 in the rezoning review standards states that if a rezoning is requested to allow for a specific use, rezoning the land is considered to be more appropriate than amending the list of permitted or special land uses in the current zoning district to allow the use.

APPLICANT PRESENTATION: Attorney Rich Sulaka and owner Matthew Abro spoke on behalf of the Smokin Bear Tobacco. They noted a vape store operated at the site previously and that significant investment had been made in the build-out. Mr. Abro clarified the store sells nicotine-based vapes, glass pipes, and whippets (inhalants), but does not sell THC. It was also noted that Smokin' Bear Tobacco currently has another location on Dequindre and 12 Mile.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION: Mayor Haines expressed concern that a B-2 rezoning would allow for banquet halls, bars, and firearm retail adjacent to a park where children are present. Additional

concerns revolved around the distance of the site is 60 feet from the Civic Center/City Hall property, failing the 200-foot separation standard from Community Centers and Parks.

Attorney Sulaka requested the commission postpone the matter to allow the applicant to explore a rezoning with conditions to restrict certain B-2 uses.

PC 26-13. Postponement of PRZN #26-01.

Motion to postpone case PRZN #26-01 per the applicant's request until the next meeting that can fulfill state noticing requirements, for the purpose of potentially seeing the request converted into a rezoning with conditions.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox, Seconded by Commissioner Oglesby.

Voting Yea: Chair Champagne, Commissioner Fleming, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, Commissioner Marsh, Commissioner Oglesby, Commissioner Sylvester

Voting Nay: Commissioner Haines, Commissioner Olson
Motion carries.

NEW BUSINESS

Street Right-of-Way Vacation Request PEE # 26-01 - GWK/WRC - Unimproved Rights-of-Way

Planner Lonnerstater reviewed a request to vacate six "paper only" street rights-of-way (Red Run Boulevard, Jared Avenue, Osman Avenue, Delton Avenue, Woodside Avenue, and Parkdale Avenue) platted in the 1920s within the **Red Oaks Golf Course**. The underlying property is owned by the George W Kuhn Drainage District/Oakland County Water Resources Commission.

PC 26-14. Street Right-of-Way Vacation Request PEE # 26-01 - GWK/WRC - Unimproved Rights-of-Way

Motion by Commissioner Haines, seconded by Commissioner Olson to move that the Planning Commission hereby recommends that City Council approve street vacation request # PEE 26 - 01 to vacate the following unimproved rights-of-way located within the platted Northeastern Highway Subdivision No. 1 and North Acres Subdivision, and as reflected within the attachments to the staff report:

Red Run Boulevard (ROW width 120 ft.)
Girard Avenue (86 ft.)
Osmun Avenue (50 ft.)
Delton Avenue (50 ft.)
Woodside Avenue (50 ft.)
Parkdale Avenue (60 ft.)

Planning Commission Meeting
Madison Heights, Michigan
June 15, 2026 **(DRAFT)**

A Planning Commission Meeting was held on Monday, June 15, 2026 at 5:30 PM at Council Chambers - City Hall, 300 W. 13 Mile Rd.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Champagne called the meeting to order at 5:56 pm.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chair Josh Champagne
Mayor Corey Haines
Commissioner Sean Fleming
Commissioner Ryan Fox
Commissioner Eric Graettinger
Commissioner Melissa Marsh
Commissioner Matthew Olson

ABSENT

Commissioner Clifford Oglesby

ALSO PRESENT

City Planner Matt Lonnerstater
Business Services Coordinator Mary Daley
Attorney Tim Burns

PC 26-21. Excuse Absent Members

Motion to excuse Commissioner Oglesby.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox, Seconded by Commissioner Marsh.

Voting Yea: Mayor Haines, Commissioner Fleming, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, Commissioner Marsh, Commissioner Olson, Chair Champagne

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

PC 26-22. May 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Haines, Seconded by Commissioner Fox to approve the Planning Commission minutes of May 18, 2026 as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Haines, Commissioner Fleming, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, Commissioner Marsh, Commissioner Olson, Chair Champagne

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Rezoning with Conditions Request PRZN #26-01 – 31075 John R Road (B-1 to B-2)

Chair Champagne open the hearing up to the public for comment at 6:00 pm.

A letter from Kara Ross, youth coordinator for the Madison Heights Community Coalition was read into the record. Two letters from Kimberly Heisler, executive director for the Madison Heights Community Coalition were included in the packet.

Chair Champagne closed the public comment portion of the hearing at 6:04 pm.

Planner Lonnerstater introduced the Rezoning with Conditions Request from Smokin' Bear Tobacco on behalf of the property owner South Lyon Company LLC. Their request is to rezone the parcel located at 31075 John R Road from B-1, Neighborhood Business District to B-2, Community Business District.

The applicant, with the property owner's authorization, has modified the original application and has voluntarily offered a list of conditions that would apply to the rezoning. The full list of conditions are attached as a supplement to the meeting packet.

The draft agreement also contains the following provision: *"Applicant recognizes that, even if this Rezoning with Conditions Application is approved, a dimensional variance would still be required from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Applicant is prepared to submit an appropriate Application for Dimensional Variance."*

Concerns about these proposed conditions from staff and the commission are summarized as follows:

1. The proposed conditions, as stated, appear to be limited to the individual tenant space occupied by the tobacco sales business. As a general rule, zoning regulations apply to an entire parcel, and district boundaries cannot be reduced to an individual retail tenant space. It is unclear what restrictions, if any, would apply to the other tenant spaces or the remainder of the parcel.
2. The proposed conditions repeatedly refer to "the applicant." The applicant in this case is the business, Smokin Bear Tobacco, and not the property owner. Zoning is tied to the land and not an individual; unless specified as part of the Rezoning with Conditions agreement, zoning regulations run with the land and future property owners would be subject to the same conditions of the rezoning. It is unclear whether the applicant intends for these conditions to become void upon a change of tenant, use, or business owner.
3. The proposed conditions prohibit specific uses from operating from the tenant space (e.g. automobile sales, gasoline sales, etc.) but also explicitly state that the applicant's business operations will, *"include tobacco sales and anything incident to said tobacco sales."* This condition appears to lock in a tobacco shop as the only use that could ever operate from the unit. For example, if the tobacco sales business closes and a new restaurant business moves in, would the restaurant be required to offer tobacco sales to be compliant with the conditions of the rezoning?

4. If the property were to ever be redeveloped, it is unclear as to what dimensional standards and list of permitted uses would apply (B1 or B2).
5. The proposed conditions are missing several important substantive clauses, as required per the Zoning Ordinance. Most importantly, the proposed conditions are silent when it comes to the triggers that would revert the property back to the original zoning designation (e.g. upon change of use or redevelopment).

PC 26-23. Rezoning with Conditions Request PRZN #26-01 – 31075 John R Road (B-1 to B-2)

Motion made by Fleming, seconded by Haines to recommend that City Council deny the rezoning of 31075 John R Road (parcel #44-25-02-478-021) from B-1, Neighborhood Business, to B-2, Community Business district – Case PRZN #26-01 – with conditions voluntarily proposed by the applicant, as attached, based upon the following findings:

1. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 15th, 2026 on the requested Rezoning with Conditions application and a proposed amendment to the City's Zoning Map.
2. The applicant voluntarily proposed a number of conditions to the requested B-2 rezoning, which are attached in the document entitled "Supplement to Rezoning Application."
3. The proposed Rezoning with Conditions does not satisfy the review criteria for a Rezoning with Conditions request as contained in Section 15.07.3.C(3) of the Madison Heights Zoning Ordinance. In particular, the Planning Commission finds that the conditions voluntarily offered by the applicant fail to satisfactorily address the following Zoning Ordinance standards:
 - a. The proposed rezoning conditions do not further the goals and objectives of the City Master Plan, particularly with regards to objectives related to Community Character and future land use.
 - b. The proposed rezoning conditions do not result in an enhancement of the project area as compared to the existing zoning, as the rezoning's core intent is to allow for a use not presently permitted on the subject parcel.
 - c. It is not in the public interest to grant the rezoning with conditions as the benefits of such proposal – the allowance of a tobacco/smoke shop – does not outweigh foreseeable detriments, including the proximity of said use from public facilities and parks.
 - d. The offered conditions are not likely to be enforceable as they are ambiguous with regards to their application to the remainder of the parcel, especially pertaining to permitted uses and dimensional standards.
 - e. The proposed conditions have the same general effect as a use variance in that the core intent of the conditions is to allow for a tobacco/smoke shop in one individual retail unit within a multi-unit retail building, with no further considerations for the remainder of the building or the remainder of the parcel.

4. The Planning Commission further cites the following issues with the voluntarily proposed conditions as reasons for denial:
 - a. The conditions as proposed only apply to one retail space and are tied to one retail business owner (applicant). It is unclear as to which zoning conditions apply to the remainder of the parcel. Proposed conditions should run with the land unless explicitly stated otherwise within the proposed agreement and should not be applicable to only one individual.
 - b. The proposed conditions appear overly restrictive in that they require tobacco sales to take place from the individual unit and prohibit uses currently permitted by-right within the B-1 district.
 - c. The conditions do not present clear and enforceable standards that can be applied to the remainder of the parcel or applied to future redevelopment or building expansion.

Voting Yea: Mayor Haines, Commissioner Fleming, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, Commissioner Marsh, Commissioner Olson, Chair Champagne

Motion carried.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Items not listed on agenda

Chair Champagne opened the meeting to the public for items not listed on the agenda at 6:44 pm. Seeing no one wishing to speak, public comment was closed at 6:44 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business at this time.

MEMBER UPDATES

No member updates at this time.

PLANNER UPDATES

Planner Lonnerstater introduced Aidan, an intern serving in the planning department this summer and shared news of the resignation of Commission member Grant Sylvester.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further comments, Chair Champagne adjourned the meeting at 6:46 pm.

NOTICE: Persons with disabilities needing accommodations for effective participation through electronic means in this meeting should contact the City Clerk at (248) 583-0826 or by email: clerks@madison-heights.org at least two working days in advance of the meeting. An attempt will be made to make reasonable accommodations.