

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present for the meeting included Commissioner Hilary Crothers-Moore, ex-officio; Members Judy Duffy, Calvin Wilson and Michael Evans. Chris Mink, Town Engineer, Melissa B. Cook-Mackenzie, Zoning Administrator, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant were present for the meeting. Attending the meeting virtually was John Borkowski, KCI Engineering.

-MINUTES-

January 6, 2026 – Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the January 6, 2026 Planning Commission meeting minutes, as presented. Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

1. Case A-2017-03-SE Snatchers Creekside Grill 510 South Main Street.. Recommendation to the North East Board of Appeals regarding extended hours.

Lynn Bollinger, 510 South Main Street, North East, Maryland was present to discuss the previously approved Special Exception condition regarding extended hours. Mrs. Vennell gave a brief history of the property, reporting that Special Exception Case A-2017-03-SE had been heard by the Board of Appeals for a café restaurant. The previous establishment located on this property had been the source of many noise complaints. This was due to the prior establishment's owner who allowed loud music late in the evening. The Board of Appeals, out of concern and trying to be proactive, placed a condition on the Special Exception approval in 2017 for the new restaurant owner. Per the condition the new owner, Lynn Bollinger, was to come back before the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals each year for a review to determine if the extended hours would be permitted to continue. The Planning Office has verified with the North East Police Department each year since 2017 to receive a list of noise complaints. Since 2017, the north East Police Department has not received noise complaints.

Chairman Dobbins reported that Mrs. Bollinger had submitted a letter to the Planning Commission requesting that the condition requiring return to the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals annually be removed, with the condition that if a complaint be made, Mrs. Bollinger, would come back before the Boards.

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Mr. Wilson inquired what Mrs. Bollinger did with her business to change the type of business, from one that had many complaints to one that does not have any complaints. Mrs. Bollinger replied that her business does not have the same type of environment as the previous business.

Snatchers Creekside Grill closes at 10 pm instead of 2 am, they have only one or two singers with acoustic guitars instead of a loud band and they attract a different clientele. Chairman Dobbins commented that Snatchers Creekside Grill is more of a restaurant than a bar. Mrs. Bollinger concurred.

Ms. Duffy made a recommendation to the Board of Appeals to remove the condition requiring the owner of Snatchers Creekside Grill to come back before the Boards each year for a review of the extended hours unless there are noise complaints that arise and then they would need to be addressed. Mr. Wilson seconded the recommendation and the recommendation was approved by all.

-NEW BUSINESS-

1. Texas Roadhouse: Property Owner and Applicant: Stavros Kalaitzoglou, LSM LLC, 102 Riverside Drive, Elkton, Maryland. Zoning District "HC" Highway Commercial and "HCOD" Highway Corridor Overlay District. For a restaurant located at Sycamore Drive and Pulaski Highway, Tax Map 25H; Parcel 16. Concept Site Plan and Traffic Impact Study.

Mr. Stavros Kalaitzoglou, 244 South Bridge Street, Elkton, Maryland and Jeff Matthai, MRA, 3445 Box Hill Corporate Center Drive, Suite A, Abingdon Maryland presented their concept site plan. Mr. Matthai stated that they are proposing to build a Texas Roadhouse restaurant. The proposed site is a 2.672-acre lot on the corner of Sycamore Drive and US Route 40 and the property lies within the Highway Commercial Zoning District and the Highway Corridor Overlay District.

Mr. Matthai reported that the Concept Plan outlines the bulk regulations, buffer yards, building setbacks and the size of the proposed building, 7900 square feet.

Ms. Duffy inquired if there would be significant grading since the site is somewhat elevated and inquired where would the construction entrance be. Mr. Matthai responded the site will be a little lower than it is currently. Some grading will be done to level the site. Mr. Matthai replied the construction entrance would be off of Sycamore Drive.

Mr. Wilson inquired if there would be any impact on the residents of Timberbrook, specifically, regarding the Sycamore Drive entrance, and also inquired whether Sycamore Drive would be closed to the public at any time. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie responded no there should be no impact to residents as the homes are located further up Sycamore Drive.

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Sycamore Drive is 35 feet wide in this area and therefore there would be significant space for vehicles to pass if needed. Mr. Matthai stated that Sycamore Drive should not need to be closed. A small area along the road may need to be partitioned off during construction for a short time to do some stormwater work. Ms. Duffy commented that it is nice that the residents of Timberbrook can access the site without having to enter Route 40.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Town and County's Road Code Regulations are the same, and the setback from the Texas Roadhouse driveway to US Route 40 meets the regulations. Mr. Mink reported a vehicle traveling East bound on Route 40 would need to access the site by a left turn onto Rogers Road and then enter the parking lot via the entrance from Pat's Pizza parking lot. The other option would be to make a U-turn at Mechanic's Valley Road and the Route 40 intersection. Chairman Dobbins inquired if there was a second entrance to the site. Mr. Matthai replied there are two entrances, one off of Sycamore Drive and one via Pat's Pizza parking lot.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Office began working with the property owner and representatives from Texas Roadhouse in 2024, and more actively in 2025 regarding the parking islands and the number of parking spaces their restaurant required.

Parking

Mr. Matthai stated that 79 parking spaces are required per the North East Zoning Ordinance regulations. However, Texas Roadhouse is aware of their other restaurant sites and a deficiency in the number of parking spaces. Texas Roadhouse requires 105 parking spaces for guests, 55 parking spaces for employee, 15 parking spaces for bar patrons, 12 parking spaces for pick-up which totals 187 parking spaces. The site can accommodate 171 parking spaces, however, some of the spaces are proposed within the forty-foot front yard setback, which necessitates a need to request a variance from the Board of Appeals. Mrs. Vennell reported that she, Mayor Kelly Benson and the Town Administrator have been working with the Engineer, the property owner and the owner of the property since 2025 for possible solutions to meet the parking demands. Mrs. Vennell reported that the adjoining neighbor, Pat's Pizza, may agree to a reciprocal parking agreement for any occasional overflow parking. Mr. Kalaitzoglou stated the ultimate goal is to ensure Texas Roadhouse has the parking that they will need. Chairman Dobbins commented that the Town is not usually given the task of trying to allow for more parking than the required parking spaces per the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Matthai, reported that they are scheduled to appear before the Board of Appeals on February 12, 2026 for a Variance Hearing.

Buffer Yards and Landscape

Mr. Matthai pointed out that a 10 foot landscaped Buffer yard is being proposed and will be shown on the Landscape Plan.

Forest Conservation

Mr. Matthai reported that a simplified Forest Delineation has been submitted to Cecil County Forest Conservation. The County has approved the Forest Delineation however, they are still working on the Forest Conservation Plan. The Department of Natural Resources has agreed to a fee in lieu of some of the required landscape.

Forest Conservation -Fee in Lieu

Concerning the fee in lieu for forest conservation, Mrs. Vennell reported the Town would like Mr. Matthai to request from his contact person that the fee in lieu money be given to the Town of North East, if it is at all possible with their Agency. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the Town has collected this type of fee in lieu in the past, however, the Department of Natural Resources shall retain the review fees for reviewing the project. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that Mrs. Vennell will send a letter stating that the Town has no objection to the fee in lieu. The Town does have other sites within the Towns corporate limit where these funds can be utilized.

Stormwater Management

Mr. Matthai reported that a Concept Stormwater Plan had been submitted to the County and the County gave them a letter of items to address. Mr. Matthai reported they have resubmitted last week. Mr. Matthai reported that an underground stormwater storage container is being proposed for water quantity, and he has spoken to State Highway Administration (SHA) about the stormwater outfall but have not yet submitted stormwater plans to them, yet. Mr. Mink further explained that this project will need to connect to the State Highway stormwater facilities. Mrs. Vennell requested that Mr. Matthai include both herself and Mr. Mink on the correspondence from SHA.

Water and Sewer

The site will require public water, though the Town of North East and public sewer, through Cecil County. Mr. Mink inquired how Mr. Matthai planned to tie into the watermain and how big of a line they are planning on using. Mr. Matthai state he would like to discuss that further with Mr. Mink however, he does not have water plans yet but they plan to tie in off of the watermain located in the Timberbrook development. Mrs. Vennell stated that she could set up a meeting with Mr. Matthai, Mr. Mink and Mr. Carter, the Water Plant Superintendent to discuss the project further and requested Mr. Matthai forward the water plans as soon as he has them ready.

Mr. Evans commented that the sewer pipe was noted to be 6" and that should be verified with Cecil County as that is most likely incorrect. Mr. Matthai replied that he will verify the sewer pipe size.

Traffic Impact Study

Mr. Matthai reported that a traffic study was submitted for this site and was approved by State Highway Administration and John Borkowski, KCI Engineering, the Town's Traffic Consultant. Chairman Dobbins stated that he did see that there would not be a signal entrance. Mr. Mink replied that is correct.

Mrs. Vennell introduced Mr. John Borkowski, KCI Engineering, who is attending this meeting via Zoom. Mr. Borkowski will be happy to answer any questions about the Traffic Impact Study. The Planning Commission had no additional questions or comments.

Chris Mink, ENEngineering comment letter dated January 20, 2026

Mr. Matthai stated under General Comments, regarding the landscape islands, that he would like to clarify that the landscape island measurement is incorrectly shown with a radius of 5 feet, however, the islands are actually 10 feet wide. Mr. Matthai added that trees are proposed to be planted in the landscape islands and stated that 10 feet wide islands should be sufficient for the tree roots.

Mr. Matthai stated that they are in agreement with, and will comply with all of the comments on Mr. Minks comment letter dated January 20, 2026.

Restaurant and Alcoholic Beverage License

Mrs. Vennell reported that an Alcohol Beverage License will not require a Special Exception from the Planning Commission, however, the Cecil County Liquor Board approval is required. The Liquor Board will require Zoning Certification from the Town of North East, if a liquor license is available for the North East area.

Security Cameras

Mrs. Vennell inquired if the Texas Roadhouse was installing security cameras and commented that if security cameras are being installed, the Town Administrator would like the business owner to work with the North East Police Department. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie added that some other establishments within Town limits are working with the police department so that they can see the outside of the facility. However, the police department does not watch the cameras 24 hours a day. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that she will contact Chris Bradley, works with the Town's security cameras, and will coordinate a meeting.

Highway Corridor Overlay District

Mrs. Vennell commented that prior to the developer will be submitting architectural drawings this would be a good time for the Planning Commission to share what they would like to see in the design. Mrs. Vennell distributed images of other Texas Roadhouse Restaurant sites exhibiting a variety of exterior finishes such as brick, stone, wood and a variety of landscape designs.

Mrs. Vennell used the North East Station Shopping Center as an example of tying in architectural elements to the surrounding buildings, stating that the existing buildings in the shopping center incorporated the brick into there design to match the existing buildings. Mr. Matthai distributed an architectural image of the building and possible material samples for the exterior that Texas Roadhouse has used for other buildings. Mrs. Vennell added that the pictures distributed also show various sign options. The proposed Texas Roadhouse will be built on a corner lot, therefore there are two fronts and two sides which is something to keep in mind. Mr. Matthai stated he would like to have comments from the Planning Commission prior to the design. Chairman Dobbins stated that he does not prefer the neon rope lighting as shown on some of the building front images received from the Planning Office. The Planning Commission members concurred.

Mrs. Vennell also stated that North East would like some nautical elements added to the exterior or landscape areas such as black nautical rope perhaps anchors, driftwood, maritime compass or lighthouse. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie inquired if Texas Roadhouse has their own architects on site. Mr. Matthai replied yes. Mrs. Vennell commented that Planning Office would be willing to work with them.

Sidewalk

Mr. Evans inquired if a sidewalk was going to be installed around the site. Mr. Matthai stated that a sidewalk is not proposed.

Fencing

Mr. Mink stated that there are retaining walls shown on the site plan which will need to have fencing installed on top of them and this will need to be added to the Preliminary Plan.

Sign Plans

Mrs. Vennell stated that there will need to be a Master Sign Plan and a meeting can be scheduled if Mr. Mathai and Texas Roadhouse representatives would like to discuss the sign plan.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the Concept Site Plan for the Texas Roadhouse Restaurant subject to the following conditions:

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1. Addressing Chris Mink, ENEngineering, comment letter dated January 20, 2026 prior to the submittal of the Preliminary Site Plan.
2. Board of Appeals variance approval of Case: A-2026-01-V, for parking setbacks.

Mr. Evans seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-REPORTS

Dredging

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that funding is now available for the dredging, however there is not a start date yet. There are still some details to finalize between Army Corps of Engineers and Amtrak. Mr. Wilson inquired how is Amtrak involved in this project. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie replied that the pipe transporting spoils crosses Amtrak property. Chairman Dobbins commented that the dredging most likely will not begin until at least the fall. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated the project will be put out to bid first.

Finished Water Pumping Station

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the Town has received funding to replace the Town finished water pumping station.

North East Preserve

Mrs. Vennell reported that she informed ENERWA of the demolition project at the North East Preserve was close to being completed. Chairman Dobbins commented that he has heard the jack hammers at work from his home.

Walmart Convenience Store and Gas Pumps

Mrs. Vennell reported that Bohler Engineering notified the Planning Office of a proposed project at 75 North East Road (North East Plaza Shopping Center). The Major Site Plan is pending approval for a convenience store and 4000 square foot canopy over approximately 8 fuel pumps which will be located next to Burger King.

NOAA Proposal for North East Preserve

Chairman Dobbins inquired if the Town has received anything updates on the NOAA proposal for the North East Preserve. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie replied no; however, the Town does check on it frequently.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Revised Planning Commission 2026 Meeting Schedule.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the annual schedule has been revised due to Planning Staff

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schedules. Mrs. Vennell also commented that the April Planning Commission meeting had previously been rescheduled to April 14, 2026 for the upcoming open house for the Comprehensive Plan. The other revised dates were kept on Tuesdays. The Planning Commission commented that they would prefer the Planning Commission meeting be held October 27, 2026 instead of November 3rd. Mrs. Vennell replied that she would make that change and forward a new Planning Commission schedule to the Planning Commission.

North East Comprehensive Plan Open House: April 14, 2026

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Consultant for the North East Comprehensive Plan is finalizing all of the data for the Comprehensive Plan updates. The Planning Offices goal is to have the finalized chapters no later than the end of February so that we are able to verify all of the changes have been made as requested and prepare everything for the open house which will be conducted at the North East Branch Library on April 14, 2026 between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm.

Chesapeake Club

Ms. Duffy inquired about the Chesapeake Club development, proposed south of Town, and if there has been any more progress with this project. Mrs. Vennell replied that the Town has not been notified of any new progress, and also reported that the Planning Office keeps checking the Cecil County Planning Agendas to verify if there are any projects in close proximity. .

-NEXT MEETING-

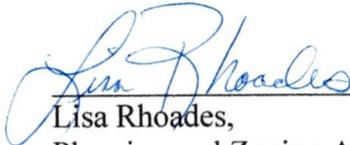
The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2026.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 P.M. Mr. Evans seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:



Lisa Rhoades,
Planning and Zoning Assistant



Mark Dobbins,
Chairman

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