

North East Planning Commission
March 3, 2026

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, March 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-

February 3, 2026 – Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the February 3, 2026 Planning Commission meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

North East Retail: Shopping Center Name

Mrs. Vennell stated that the Planning Commission had previously received a list of proposed names for the proposed shopping center which will be located directly across from the North East Plaza Shopping Center.

Ms. Duffy suggested that North East should be in the title. Chairman Dobbins stated that we already have North East Station and North East Plaza. Mrs. Vennell inquired if Gateway Shoppes at North East with the spelling of the word “shoppes”. The Planning Commission concurred.

-NEW BUSINESS-

Maryland Department of Planning Annual tour 2026-Priority Letter

Ms. Duffy commented on item #4 on the priority letter which requests installation of pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle lanes from the existing sidewalk on the North side of East Cecil Avenue between the intersection at Mauldin Avenue and the intersection at North Main Street. Ms. Duffy inquired if there would be sufficient room along Route 7 for this project and would property owners along this section lose some of their front yards. Mrs. Vennell replied that there is a need for this section of sidewalk and that may be a possibility that some property owners would lose some of their front yards to a sidewalk. Mrs. Vennell added that other

APPROVED
May 5, 2026

North East Planning Commission
March 3, 2026

areas in North East, where there is a public sidewalk, the sidewalks are located on residents' property. Ms. Duffy also expressed concerns about losing the turning lane on Route 7 as well.

Ms. Duffy commented on item #5 which requests installation of a pedestrian sidewalk between the intersection of US Route 40 and Sycamore Drive and Route 272 to the intersection of US Route 40 and Sycamore Drive. Ms. Duffy inquired if this would be a good opportunity to have the developers of the proposed Texas Roadhouse install that section of sidewalk to be located on the corner of Sycamore Drive and US Route 40. Ms. Vennell replied that it may be safer to wait to have the State install the entire length of sidewalk at the same time.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any further comments and there were none.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Chairman Dobbins inquired if the proposed Chesapeake Club project had been approved since there appeared to be some activity on the site. Mrs. Vennell replied that the Planning Office had not heard of any recent approvals however, she will check with the County.

-REPORTS-

Open House-Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Mrs. Vennell distributed a draft of the flyer for April 14, 2026 Open House for the Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission approved the draft flyer. Chairman Dobbins commented that the Planning Commission had previously agreed to the change in date for the meeting/Open House.

Mrs. Vennell stated that there will be zoning change request forms available at the Open House and reported that Mr. Bob McKnight had previously contacted the Town about a zoning change for his property on the corner of Mauldin Avenue and Thomas Avenue.

Ms. Duffy inquired if the Planning Office had received any comments or inquiries from the residents who were sent letters regarding the proposed zoning district change. Mrs. Vennell reported that the property owner of 23 North Main Street called and stated that they would still like their property to be changed to Village Commercial. Mr. Wilson inquired what the timeframe would the Town have to make the zoning designation changes to the Zoning Ordinance. Mrs. Vennell replied 6 months to a year and the Town has a consultant who will be able to assist the Planning Office with the new zoning map.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Office also received a call from the property owner of 4 West Race Street. This property will be changing from "R-3" Multi-family residential to "VC" Village Commercial. The property owner had no objection to the Land Use Map change.

APPROVED
May 5, 2026

North East Planning Commission
March 3, 2026

Accessory Dwelling Structures

Mrs. Vennell stated the land use requirement for adding accessory dwelling units on structures along Main Street is too high for the commercial properties. The current land area requirement is 5,000 square feet per dwelling unit and Main Street has many non-conforming properties currently. Therefore, the required land area per dwelling unit for the General Commercial District needs to be lowered to at least 2,000 square feet per dwelling unit. Mrs. Vennell gave an example of 131 South Main Street, in which the property owner needed to apply for a land area variance to allow for 3 apartments above the commercial business space.

Elk River Brewing at the Ford House

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any updates on the Elk River Brewing at the Ford House. Mrs. Vennell replied no, there have not been any updates.

Cabin Fever Event

Chairman Dobbins announced that flyers are available for the March 21st Cabin Fever event and stated there will be vendors, food and activities for children from 10AM – 2PM.

Community Garden

Ms. Duffy inquired about the Town Community Garden. Mrs. Vennell referred her to Grant Handley, Assistant Town Administrator.

-NEXT MEETING-

The next Planning Commission meeting will be an Open House to view the Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan which is scheduled for April 14, 2026 at the North East Library.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 P.M. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades,
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins,
Chairman

APPROVED
May 5, 2026