

**NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**North East Town Hall Meeting Room**  
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901  
Tuesday, June 2, 2026  
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:01 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, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant, were present for the meeting. Melissa B. Cook-Mac Kenzie, Zoning Administrator, was absent from the meeting due to a prior commitment.

**-MINUTES-**

May 5, 2026 – Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the May 5, 2026 Planning Commission meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all. Ms. Hilary Crothers-Moore abstained from voting as she was not present for this meeting.

**-PUBLIC HEARING-**

ORDINANCE 2026-06-01: Zoning Ordinance Amendments-Recommendation to Mayor and Commissioners on amendments to the North East Zoning Ordinance: Section 3. Definitions, Article 5. District Regulations. Section 5-6. Village Commercial District, Section 5-7. Village Marine District, Section 5-8. General Commercial District, Article 6. Supplemental Regulations. Section 6-8. Parking Regulations and 6-29. Assisted Living Facilities/Private Group Homes; Article 9. Administrative Mechanisms. Section 9-5. Powers and Duties of the Planning Commission and Section 9-25. Notice of Hearing. Full Ordinance is on the Town's website [www.northeastmd.org](http://www.northeastmd.org).

Chairman Dobbins opened the Public Hearing at 7:03 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins read the Ordinance amendments into the record.

Mrs. Vennell reported that there were no guests signed up to speak at the public hearing.

Mrs. Vennell stated the North East Zoning Ordinance amendments that are being presented this evening are pursuant to previous comments made during Planning Commission meetings, errors that the Planning Office has found and items that came up during the 2040 North East Comprehensive Plan review. Mrs. Vennell stated that during the 2040 Comprehensive Plan review some properties were selected to have their zoning designations changed on the Future Land Use Map to Village Commercial. During the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Planning Commission meetings it was also determined to add additional uses to the Village Commercial Zoning District list of permitted uses.

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

Mrs. Vennell also stated that the addition of a provision for Adaptive Re-Use, which is from the Annotated Code of Maryland Land Use Plan, is proposed for being added to the zoning ordinance. An example of Adaptive Re-Use would be a use such as Mini Golf, the Zoning Ordinance does not currently state as a permitted use, as not each and every use is outlined in the Ordinance. Rather than an amendment being proposed for each individual use, in this situation, the Planning Office would be able to offer the applicant/developer an opportunity to come before the Planning Commission and Mayor and Commissioners with an Adaptive Re-use application. The Planning Commission would hear the request and form a recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners who would determine whether the use would be advantageous at the proposed location, within the Village Commercial, Village Marine or General Commercial District. An official opinion of the Mayor and Commissioners would be rendered, with or without conditions.

Mrs. Vennell reported that David Dahlstrom from Maryland Department of Planning reviewed the proposed Ordinance and gave some recommendations, which were noted in red, on the revised version distributed to the Planning Commission this evening.

Mrs. Vennell commented that the Planning Office reviewed the most recent State of Maryland Regulations regarding group homes, therefore, the original Group Homes section of the ordinance has been vastly revised.

Mrs. Vennell inquired if the Planning Commission had any comments or questions regarding the proposed amendments. There were none.

Mrs. Vennell reported that two Cecil Whig notices were printed, as required by the Town's regulations. In addition, the zoning amendments were also posted on the Town's website and in the lobby of the Town Hall. The Mayor and Commissioners received the introduction to the ordinance amendments on May 27, 2026 and they will receive the Planning Commission's recommendation before their public hearing on June 10, 2026 and will then vote on the proposed Ordinance.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any questions. Mr. Wilson inquired if all of the redline comments were to be included in the zoning amendment. Mrs. Vennell responded yes. Mr. Wilson reviewed the documents a little further with no additional comments.

Chairman Dobbins closed the Public Hearing at 7:10 pm.

**-OLD BUSINESS-**

North East Retail Shopping Center North East Retail: Property Owner and Applicant: Stavros Kalaitzougou, Sye LLC, PO Box 1427, Elkton, Maryland. Also Found on Tax Map 25H; Parcel

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

412; Zoning District “HC” Highway Commercial and “HCOD” Highway Corridor Overlay District. For retail pad sites.

Tom Miner, Fredrick Ward Associates, 116 W. Main Street, Elkton Maryland represented the property owner and applicant, Stavros Kalaitzougou who was unable to attend the meeting.

SHA/MOT Route 272 Improvements

Mr. Miner reported that the State Highway Administration approved the Traffic Impact Study. Mr. Miner reported that Traffic Impact Study approved contains a thru lane and a thru lane with a new right turn into the shopping center and then this thru lane continues to a right-hand turn into Timberbrook Drive (referred to as Rogers Road by Mr. Miner). Mr. Miner commented that his staff attended a workshop that he was unable to attend in March to discuss the intersection and entrance to the proposed shopping center. Mr. Miner was informed by his staff that during that meeting that the Planning Commission would like some widening. Mr. Miner stated that when designing their site plan, they defer to the State Highway Administration and approved Traffic Impact Study approved by the SHA.

Chairman Dobbins stated that he thought the Planning Commission was clear at the March 24, 2026 Planning Commission workshop, when this intersection was discussed, that a designated turning lane into the shopping center to access the site was being requested. Mrs. Vennell added that during the workshop meeting, on March 24, 2026, the Planning Commission was adamant that there be a right-hand turning lane installed before the shopping center entrance. Mr. Miner inquired if anyone from the Town reached out to SHA to discuss a request from the Planning Commission for a right-hand turning lane because the engineers would not typically do that after receiving an approved Traffic Impact Study. Mr. Miner stated he was under the impression that the Town would be facilitating a meeting with SHA regarding that request. Mrs. Vennell stated that the Town has not reached out to the State Highway Administration. The Planning Commission wanted to put the requirement of a right-hand turning lane on the record and to inform the developer/owner that the right-hand turning lane is a requirement. Mr. Miner reported that he has never had a situation where a Planning Commission has requested to modify a Traffic Impact Study after the State Highway traffic engineers have approved the plan. Mr. Miner stated that typically Planning Commissions only request certain landscape or architectural items. The Town regulations require that the developer has a Traffic Impact Study done, have it approved by SHA and present it to the Planning Commission. Mr. Miner stated that they have met that requirement. Mrs. Vennell replied that the Planning Commission has had many concerns about this intersection since they first reviewed the Concept Site Plan in December 2025. At that time, the Planning Commission requested the Developer to come back for a workshop to discuss the intersection, which was conducted on March 24, 2026. Mr. Miner

North East Planning Commission

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

inquired if the Planning Commission has the authority to require the right-hand turning lane. Mrs. Vennell replied that will be determined by the State Highway Administration if this requirement is a reasonable one or not. Mrs. Vennell added that the Planning Commission wanted to explain their reasoning for the right-hand turning lane request. Chairman Dobbins stated that every time he drives through the area, where the site of the shopping center is proposed, it is a constant reminder of the existing stacking up of traffic and all of the additional traffic the shopping center will bring to an already congested area. This intersection is a high profile, high traffic problem area.

Mr. Miner added that the traffic signals are out of sync and they are scheduled to be re-synced which should alleviate some of the current congestion. Mr. Miner stated that the engineers/ developer cannot request changes from the SHA, especially after a Traffic Impact Study has received approval that the existing layout is acceptable. Mr. Miner added that would imply that the developer is stating that the Traffic engineers are not qualified to review the Traffic Impact Study. Chairman Dobbins stated he does not believe that correcting the timing or syncing of the traffic signals will resolve the traffic flow and potential stacking issues of entering into this site.

Mr. Miner commented that there is a second entrance off of Route 40 disbursing the traffic entering the shopping center. Chairman Dobbins stated that he does not have any concern about the entrance off of Route 40. Mr. Miner added that the only traffic that would utilize a right-hand turning lane off of Route 272 would be the drivers already on Route 272 North crossing Route 40 and those drivers in the left turning lane on Route 40 turning onto North Route 272. Chairman Dobbins commented that drivers on Route 40 trying to make a right turn onto North Route 272 are going to be backed up. Chairman Dobbins stated he understands that adding the right-hand turning lane would be a challenge, however, he could not imagine approving the site plan without a right-hand turning lane into the site. This would provide stacking off of North Route 272 and Chairman Dobbins added that he would like to see a revision on the site plan showing a dedicated stacking/turning lane. Mr. Miner inquired if the Planning Commission is looking for acceleration and deceleration lanes. Chairman Dobbins replied that the Planning Commission is looking for a revision that will be over and above what is currently existing. Ms. Duffy stated that she would like to see a short turn lane to the shopping center as she does understand the issue with moving the utility poles in that area. Mr. Miner stated there are several problems installing a right-hand turning lane, it would require the entire site to be reconfigured, they would lose land, it would change the location of landscaping beds, parking, among other things and the layout for the Sheetz would no longer work. Mr. Miner clarified that the Planning Commission would like 4 lanes going North on Route 272 which would include a left turn lane into North East Plaza Shopping Center, two through lanes and a right-hand turn lane into the new shopping center to reduce stacking. Mr. Miner commented again that the only traffic that would utilize a right-hand

turning lane off of Route 272 would be the drivers already on Route 272 North crossing Route 40 and those drivers in the left turning lane on Route 40 turning onto North Route 272. Mr. Miner disagrees that the right-hand turning lane will make that much of a difference in the stacking of traffic. Chairman Dobbins stated that he does not agree. Mr. Miner added that this request is not typical for a Planning Commission to reject a Traffic Study that has been approved by State Highway Traffic Engineers.

Mr. Evans stated that hearing more detail about the traffic study from SHA and Frederick Ward as to why the current layout is sufficient would be helpful. The Planning Commission concurred. Mr. Miner replied that he doesn't know what additional information he can provide, as SHA will question Mr. Miner why he is asking of more information, as he already has an approved Traffic Impact Study. Mr. Evans stated that "the Planning Commission is not trying to draw a line in the sand", however, more information may clarify the whole issue. Mr. Miner commented that when unusual requests have been made in the past, they usually come from the Town's attorney. Mr. Mink commented that if the developer did a Traffic Impact Study revision showing the turning lane and what traffic would potentially be coming from the through lane, it may not have a dramatic impact, but it will have an impact. Mr. Mink requested that Mr. Miner provide that version of the plan and see if SHA is agreeable to that revision. Mr. Mink added that SHA may not be agreeable to the addition of a turning lane for some reason but the Planning Commission needs to know that information.

Mr. Miner stated the following to clarify the information being requested: what impact the level of service and movement in the intersection of north bound Route 272, stacking and how it would impact the North bound Route 272 traffic. Mr. Mink replied yes, vehicles coming off of the through lane would stack briefly, approximately the length of the property, before turning into the shopping center. Mr. Miner commented if there is a minute cycle on the traffic light and every minute there is a vehicle turning right, by having a deceleration lane that is 300 feet long, with only cars in that lane turning right, there would only be one car, in a whole lane, making a right turn and that will be the argument. Mr. Miner confirmed that he should report how much impact the turning lane would have on the traffic as opposed to not having the dedicated right hand turning lane and based on the Traffic Impact Study how much stacking would there be potentially. Mrs. Vennell clarified that Mr. Miner needs to show how the right-hand turning lane would affect the stacking of vehicles. Mr. Miner clarified that this would only be the vehicles coming out of the through lane, stacking que, onto a right-hand turning lane to turn right into the shopping center. Mr. Miner stated that he will need to speak to their traffic engineers about the plan revision.

Mr. Miner confirmed that the Town Planning Office will send the developer a detailed letter confirming the request for a dedicated turn lane. Mrs. Vennell replied yes and that she will send SHA a copy of that letter. Mr. Miner will send Mrs. Vennell contact information for SHA's Traffic Engineer that they have been working with on the project.

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

North East Shopping Center Name

Mr. Miner stated that property owner would like to name the shopping center "The Pavilions" to match the Elkton location. Chairman Dobbins commented that the property owner had previously granted the Planning Commission the honor of naming the shopping center which they did. Mrs. Vennell reported that a list of possible ideas was created by the Planning Commission who later settled on the name "Gateway Shoppes at North East". Mrs. Vennell reported that she sent an email to the owner reporting the name that the Planning Commission had chosen for the shopping center. Mr. Miner inquired if the Planning Commission liked the name "The Pavilions". Ms. Duffy stated that she was not in favor of the name as the proposed use is a shopping center and there are no pavilions on the Concept Site Plan. Mrs. Vennell replied that she had expressed that to the owner, that using the word "Pavilion" in the title when it is a shopping center, and there are no pavilions, is not desirable. Mrs. Vennell handed out the definition of the word "Pavilion" to the Planning Commission: "a summerhouse or other decorative building used as a shelter in a park or garden". The term "shopping center" was not part of the definition. Ms. Duffy, again, stated there are no pavilions proposed and inquired how this site can be called "The Pavilions" when there are no pavilions. Mr. Wilson stated that a pavilion is a structure or open area for people to sit down, like in a park, not a shopping center, and it is not attached to another building or store. Mr. Miner commented that he could add a pavilion within the shopping center. Mr. Evans inquired if this shopping center would be the only shopping center with the word Pavilion in it in Cecil County. Mr. Miner replied no there is one in Elkton.

Mrs. Vennell stated that Gateway Drive is directly across the road from the shopping center site and the Town has a Lighthouse Monument right before Gateway Drive symbolizing the Gateway to the Town of North East. Therefore, being that the shopping center site is also at the Gateway or entrance to the Town, it only makes sense to have Gateway in the name. Mr. Miner stated there are a lot of "Gateways" around but did not give any statistics. Mr. Miner said the owner just wanted to name this shopping center with the word "pavilion", to replicate the same name as their other Elkton shopping center. Ms. Duffy inquired where the Elkton shopping center was located as she was not aware of any shopping center in Elkton named "The Pavilions". Mr. Miner replied that the name of the shopping center is very small on the sign. Mrs. Vennell stated that she sent an email to the owner reporting the name that the Planning Commission had chosen for the shopping center. The owner was opposed to the name because their other shopping is called "The Pavilions". Mrs. Vennell commented if pavilion is in the name, the Planning Commission could require a pavilion be added to the site plan.

Ms. Duffy inquired about the restaurant proposed for the site and if the property owner was planning on opening it. Mr. Miner replied yes, the owner is going to build and open the restaurant but has not announced what type of restaurant. However, it will be a 6,000 square

foot restaurant with an outdoor component. Mrs. Vennell inquired if there was going to be outdoor seating. Mr. Miner replied yes.

Mr. Miner stated that on the proposed shopping center sign, there would only be room on it for "The Pavilion". Mr. Wilson stated that the sign should include the Towns name North East or Gateway Shoppes. Mr. Miner said the owner was not opposed to having North East in the name but it is a lot of words and the font would be small. Mr. Miner stated that the name of the shopping center would take up some of the square footage permitted for the sign. Mr. Miner commented that North East can be added to the title if the Planning Commission feels strongly about it. Mr. Wilson stated that the site is at the entrance to the Town. There are visitors coming into Town via Interstate 95 and therefore the sign should say North East. Mr. Miner again stated his concern of the name of the shopping center consuming the majority of the permitted square footage for the pylon sign.

Mrs. Vennell added that the word pavilion does not indicate that it is a shopping center, therefore how can the word "shoppes" be worked into the title. Ms. Duffy added that the restaurant is not a pavilion and therefore the name still does not make sense.

While a couple of Planning Commission members were not intent on "North East" being in the name of the shopping center and others preferred that it was, the consensus of the Planning Commission was, that the name, "The Pavilions," alone was not favorable for the following reasons:

1. There are no pavilions on the property.
2. The proposed use of the site is a shopping center and that does not fit with the definition of the word pavilion.
3. The site is at the entrance to the Town of North East and therefore should have "North East" or "Gateway" in the name.
4. North East is a tourist area and there are a lot of out-of-Town visitors, therefore that needs to be taken into consideration when choosing a name.

Mr. Miner stated that they will be presenting a signage plan at the Preliminary Site Plan meeting. Mrs. Vennell stated the regulations can be found in the North East Zoning Ordinance Article 7, Section 7-12 Sign Standards for Mixed Use Business. Mr. Miner stated that he can show the signage plan with the name "The Pavilions" so the Planning Commission can see what it looks like. Mr. Miner inquired if the Planning Commission would like to put North East on the sign and then he commented how putting "North East" on the sign would take up too much square footage. Mr. Miner added that the right of way in the area where the sign will be installed is wide due to the proposed new turning lane and therefore, the sign would be set back from the road. The new turning lane would require everything on the site to be pushed back including the landscaping and the sign, unless there could be a waiver for that.

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

Ms. Duffy confirmed that the Timberbrook development sign will not be touched during or after development of the restaurant. Ms. Fernandez confirmed that the Timberbrook sign will remain as it is.

Mr. Wilson inquired if a sign could be installed on Timberbrook Drive and Sycamore Drive stating “No Truck through Traffic” or something similar to deter delivery trucks from driving through the development. Mrs. Vennell suggested a “Local Traffic Only” sign and reported this should be shown on the master sign plan.

#### Lighting Plan

Mrs. Vennell confirmed with Mr. Mink that there will be no concerns regarding the lighting with the adjoining development. Mr. Mink replied that there were no concerns.

#### Dumpster Enclosure, Fence, Retaining Wall

Mr. Mink inquired if the dumpster enclosure would be black fence and if the fence along the retaining walls would also be black. Ms. DiPietro replied yes. Mr. Mink also wanted it noted that the Chief of Police requested a heavy-duty chain-link security fence. Ms. Fernandez confirmed that this is the product proposed for installation.

#### Architectural Plan

Mrs. Vennell inquired about the color of roof and building. Ms. Fernandez replied the roof is silver, the trim is green. Mr. Wilson inquired if the silver roof was standard as they had previously spoken about the building being complimentary to the adjacent Pats Pizza. Ms. Fernandez replied that she thinks it is however, they could go back to the architect should something else be desired. Ms. DiPietro stated she thinks the colors are their brand.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any variations in the building’s exterior. Mrs. Vennell reminded the Planning Commission of the different exterior choices the Planning Commission reviewed at the February 3, 2026 meeting and their decision that the exterior choices needed to tie into the surrounding buildings. Mrs. Vennell also reminded them that they had preferred the black roof at a previous meeting.

Mr. Wilson inquired about the handicap parking spaces and where they are located and how long construction would take. Ms. DiPietro stated the handicap spaces are located close to the entrance and construction is estimated to be about 10 months.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan, Architectural Plans, Lighting Plans, Landscape and Amenities Plans for the Texas Roadhouse subject to the following:

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026

North East Planning Commission  
June 2, 2026  
Page 12

the NOAA grant the Town applied for. Chairman Dobbins also added that after a 2 year wait, the University of Delaware was approved for a NOAA grant they had applied for. Mrs. Vennell replied no, the Town has not heard any news about the NOAA grant application.

2025 Façade Grant Recipients

Ms. Duffy would like update on the 2025 Façade Grant recipients and the status of their projects.

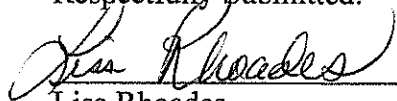
**-NEXT MEETING-**

The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for July 7, 2026.


**-ADJOURNMENT-**

With no further business, Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 P.M. Mr. Evans seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Rhoades,  
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Dobbins,  
Chairman

APPROVED  
July 7, 2026