

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, September 8, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Present for the meeting included Commissioner Hilary Crothers-Moore, ex-officio; Members Judy Duffy, Calvin Wilson and Michael Evans. 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 not present due to a prior commitment.

-MINUTES-

August 4, 2026 – Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the August 4, 2026 Planning Commission meeting minutes, as presented. Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

August 31, 2026 -Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

The August 31, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes were tabled until the October 2026 Planning Commission meeting as the Planning Commission had not had a chance to review them.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Chairman Dobbins opened the Public Hearing at 7:05 P.M.

ORDINANCE 2026-08-02: Zoning Ordinance Amendments- Recommendation to Mayor and Commissioners on amendments to the North East Zoning Ordinance: Section 7. Advertising and Signs.

Mrs. Vennell Director of Planning stated that Ordinance 2026-08-02 includes the following amendments to the North East Zoning Ordinance:

- Article 3. Definitions: adding definitions pertaining to signs.
- Article 7. Sign Regulations
- Amending Off Premise Sign Regulations
- Adding Wayfinding signs to the Village Marine District
- Amending Reader Board signs to include both electronic and non-electronic regulations.
- Adding Sign height regulations in the Village Commercial, Village Marine and Residential Office Districts.
- Increasing the square footage allowance for ground signs in the Highway Commercial District.

Mrs. Vennell stated that the purpose of this evening's public hearing is to receive public comment on Ordinance 2026-08-02. The Ordinance was introduced to the Mayor and Commissioners during their August 28, 2026 meeting. This evening the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners on this ordinance, after the Public Hearing.

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Ms. Duffy stated that during her review of Section 7-23 Electronic Message Signs and Electronic Reader Board Signs, paragraph 1(c) states:

Electronic Message Signs or Electronic Reader Board Signs shall not change messages more frequently than once every sixty (60) minutes with the exception of time and temperature indicators.

Mrs. Duffy expressed concern that sixty (60) minutes is too long between the messages changing and that is not consistent with other electronic message or electronic reader board signs in the Highway Commercial and Heavy Industrial Zoning Districts. Mr. Wilson concurred and also commented that (60) minutes is too much time between messages. Chairman Dobbins disagreed and is concerned about flashing signs when traveling down Main Street, and the bright flashing lights that neighboring residents would see. Ms. Duffy clarified that she was only speaking of the Highway Commercial and Heavy Industrial Zoning Districts.

Mrs. Vennell commented that since this regulation is not part of the amendments noted in Ordinance 2026-08-02, that she will research the regulation further and will report back to the Planning Commission during the October Planning Commission meeting. Should the Planning Commission like the regulation amended, an Ordinance amendment can be discussed. The Director of Planning reported no one from the public signed up to speak at this evening's Public Hearing.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any further comments from the Planning Commission or staff concerning the draft ordinance, and there were none.

Chairman Dobbins closed the Public Hearing at 7:08 P.M.

-OLD BUSINESS-

North East 2040 Draft Comprehensive Plan status

Mrs. Vennell attended a meeting with Kelly Benson, Mayor, Melissa Cook-Mackenzie, Town Administrator, Grant Handley, Assistant Town Administrator and Mark Dobbins, Chairman of the Planning Commission, Cecil County Department of Land use and Development Services to go over the Cecil County comments related to the Draft Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Vennell reported that the meeting was very productive and a great amount of clarity was obtained by both the Town and County during the meeting. The Cecil County comment letter brought attention to the fact that some language used in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan was carried over to the 2040 Draft Comprehensive Plan and needed to be reworded. Mrs. Vennell stated that those revisions were made prior to the County meeting and the County was very pleased with those updates. Mrs. Vennell also reported that the consultant is still working on some updated statistics for several of the tables in the Comprehensive Plan along with the an annexation which became effective recently. Once the data is updated a statement will be included which states that this data is current as of (the date that it is entered into the Comprehensive Plan).

Mrs. Vennell commented that she is still hopeful that the 2040 Comprehensive Plan will be going a Public Hearing in October but that will depend on when the consultant has the updates completed and if there is enough time to advertise for the Public Hearing.

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-NEW BUSINESS-

ORDINANCE 2026-08-02: Recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners

Mr. Wilson made motion to recommend approval of Ordinance 2026-08-02 to the Mayor and Commissioners and Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-REPORTS-

Mrs. Vennell reported that there will a meeting October 6, 2026 for two site plan amendments, which will be done administratively, for the Flying J. The LNG (Clean Energy, Liquid Natural Gas) Site, located in the rear of the Flying J, tractor trailer parking lot, has been demolished and there is amendment to install EV Charging Stations for tractor trailers. Chairman Dobbins inquired if the Clean Energy site was ever fully built and Mrs. Vennell responded yes. Mrs. Vennell reported the second site plan amendment is for the Denny's parking lot and that amendment is also to install EV Charging Stations, for passenger vehicles.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None.

-NEXT MEETING-

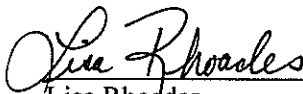
The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for October 6, 2026.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 7:20 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

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