

**Heather Hanover**  
*Chair*

**James Eshelman**  
*Vice-Chair*

**Commissioners**

**Scott Dzurka**, *Mayor*  
**Eric Hufnagel**, *City Commissioner*  
**Eric Harger**  
**Mark Holden**  
**Todd Krajniak**  
**Brian Mills**  
**Vacant**



**Chad A. Gamble**  
*City Manager*

**Mindy J. Seavey**  
*City Clerk*

**Kristina Kinde**  
*City Treasurer*

**Michael Homier**  
*City Attorney*

**Christopher Khorey, AICP**  
*Planning Consultant*

## **PLANNING COMMISSION**

**August 13, 2025**

The St. Johns Planning Commission will hold a regular meeting on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 5:30 pm in the County Commission Chambers located at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 E. State Street, St. Johns, MI. (Please use Cass St. Entrance.)

### **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order (5:30 p.m.)
2. Approval of Agenda (5:31-5:32 p.m.)
3. Approval of Minutes (July 9, 2025, Meeting) (5:33-5:35 p.m.)
4. Public comment for non-agenda items (5:35-5:40 p.m.)
5. Public Hearings:
  - a. Zoning Amendment: Outdoor Seating as Special Land Use (5:41-6:00 p.m.)
6. New Business:
  - a. Discussion of Outdoor Seating Amendment (6:00-6:15 p.m.)
7. Old Business:
  - a. None
8. Committee Site Plan Approvals.
9. City Commission Update – Mayor Dzurka (6:15 – 6:20 p.m.)
10. Commissioner Comments. (6:20 – 6:25 p.m.)
  - a. Adjournment (6:25 pm) Next Meeting: September 10, 2025

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## **PLANNING COMMISSION**

**JULY 9, 2025**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the St. Johns Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Hanover at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Heather Hanover, Mark Holden, Eric Hufnagel, Brian Mills, Scott Dzurka, Todd Krajniak, Eric Harger, James Eshelman

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy Seavey, City Clerk; Chris Khorey, McKenna; Jake VanBoxel, McKenna

### **2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the agenda as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 9, 2025 MEETING**

Motion by Commissioner Mills seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to approve the minutes as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were no public comments.

### **5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

#### A. Zoning Amendment: Vendor Trucks

Mr. Khorey said the proposed amendment fills a gap in vendor trucks. He discussed accessory use and vendor trucks.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the planning commission open the public hearing.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 5:33 p.m.

Nick Boyer was present and said thank you on the food truck for your hard work and coming to an agreement on this.

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Eshelman that the planning commission close the public hearing.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 5:34 p.m.

### **6. NEW BUSINESS:**

#### A. Update on Rental Inspections Program

Chris Khorey, McKenna, said former Zoning Administrator Ken Skunda is here tonight for a report on the rental inspection program.

City Manager Gamble said we appreciate the opportunity. He acknowledged and thanked Ken Skunda. He said he will forever be a part of the St. Johns family and will be missed. He said he has done a tremendous job of upgrading and working collaboratively with owners and tenants and thanked him for his hard work and dedication. He is a consummate public servant and former firefighter. He authored a report in regard to the zone 2 completion in 2024 and zone 3 in 2025.

Ken Skunda, McKenna, said it is depressing leaving and he truly loves it here. He said the Fire Chief will do a tremendous job for you. This report spans a year and a half.

- 425 inspections and 127 follow-up inspections.
  - 298 made it through the first time.
  - 586 violations out of the 425 inspections.
    - Carbon monoxide detectors were the number one violation: 58.
    - Smoke detectors were second at 41.
    - Dryer vents took third with 27.
    - Missing handrails came fourth with 26.
- In the future, look at furnaces and GFCI outlets.

There was a discussion of:

- Violations.
- Compliance and working with landlords.
- Carbon monoxide detectors.
- Rights of tenants.
- List of all violations.
- Old furnaces.

- Percentage of overall rental units that have been inspected.
  - Close to 1,000 units have been inspected.
- Look at inspecting every unit in multi-units.
  - Current practice: only 5-6 out of 20 units in a building may be inspected.
  - Some units may go 12 years without inspection.
- 2021 International Fire Code – update.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS:**

### **A. Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Vendor Trucks**

Chris Khorey, McKenna, asked if there were any questions or revisions to this ordinance.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the planning commission recommend this ordinance amendment to the city commission.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

### **B. Zoning Amendment Discussion: Repealing Special Use Requirement for Outdoor Dining**

Chairperson Hanover said they talked about this a little bit in the downtown. There was a concern that in other towns they have requirements on color of furniture, etc. She said in the past, Dave Kudwa was the internal approver.

Chris Khorey, McKenna, said right now it says you require a special use permit for this. Our recommendation is that it is overkill, and a potential amendment could remove that. He said there is an opportunity for the DDA to have their own policies. He said he would do a process less onerous than the SUP (Special Use Permit).

There was a discussion of:

- DDA's associated with esthetics and looks.
- An administrative process.
- Social districts.
- 5 rules in sidewalk café ordinance.
- If administrative approval, an appeal can be taken to the ZBA.
- Clarify definitions: café, dining accessories, accessory buildings: pergola or gazebo; how close to property line, annual permit or permanent.
- Fences.
- Private property as opposed to public sidewalk.
  - Clarify rules on private property.

### **C. Ordinance Amendment Discussion: Revisit 2024 Draft Golf Carts Ordinance**

City Manager Gamble discussed meeting with ambulance, police, code, McKenna and administrative staff to scrub the draft ordinance from May of 2024. The proposed changes are indicated in red.

There was a discussion of:

- Sticker system.
- Background of past discussions.
- If there is the ability of people who have health issues to use golf carts.
  - ADA accessible rules possible apply.
- Insurance rider.

- Just covers damage; not a motor vehicle.
- What type of insurance is required.
- Present this issue to the city attorney to review the liability the city has by not including that language.
- Changes to the draft ordinance.
- Inspections.
- Speed.
- Roadways golf carts would not be allowed on.
- Crash helmets.
- Violations and penalties.

Ed Thelen was present and asked if the police chief and director of ambulance are now on board with this?

City Manager Gamble said they are opposed to this.

Alex Shinabarger said last year Chris mentioned an orange flag, is that getting put in here.

Chairperson Hanover said no.

Connie Skorna was present. She said she lives on the other side of 27 and asked if they can speed up to 20 or 25 to get through the light?

Chairperson Hanover said the speed limit is State law.

Commissioner Eshelman asked to change the date from November 1<sup>st</sup> to November 15. He discussed the date of the Veterans Day Parade.

Mr. Khorey said we this issue we are not required to have a public hearing or formal motion.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Mills that the planning commission send the revised ordinance to the city council after review with staff on the legal issue of insurance and restrictions of streets around schools, if needed, during school hours.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: Hufnagel, Holden

Motion carried.

#### D. Master Plan Discussion

##### I. Draft Action Plan

Chris Khorey, McKenna, discussed master plan items: action plan and changes made by city commission at a June special meeting.

There was a discussion of:

- A Brownfield.
- Bingham Township agreement.
- Marketing.
- Parks.

Mr. Khorey talked about the zoning to-do list, which is the responsibility of the planning commission.

##### II. Old 127 Redesign Concepts

Chris Khorey, McKenna, discussed:

- Old 127 presents an opportunity for creative redesign due to its wide right-of-way and manageable traffic.
- 12,000 cars per day can be handled on a three-lane road.
- Concepts include adding trees, bike paths, slip roads, and angled parking.
- Any changes require MDOT cooperation and must be included in the master plan to begin advocacy.

There was a discussion of:

- Next steps.
  - Complete draft of master plan and parks & recreation plan; circulate to DDA/DBA and other stakeholders for feedback; begin 63-day comment period; target formal presentation in September.

## **8. COMMITTEE SITE PLAN APPROVALS – Proliant Dairy – 1660 Technical Drive:**

Chris Khorey, McKenna, said Proliant was approved for a small expansion to their building. He said they waived landscaping requirements since vermin are a concern.

## **9. CITY COMMISSION UPDATE – MAYOR DZURKA:**

Mayor Dzurka said addressed golf carts and the master plan at last meeting.

There was a discussion that the city received a signed resignation letter from Melvin.

## **10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Holden said with outside dining, regulations apply equally to all food-serving businesses, regardless of alcohol service.

Commissioner Hufnagel said he appreciated everyone putting their time in on this commission. He said it serves an important purpose, and he values everyone doing this and recognized all the effort.

Jake VanBoxel, McKenna, said thanks for having me. He said it was good to see everybody contribute to the conversation.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Harger that the Planning Commission adjourn the meeting.

YEA: Hanover, Harger, Holden, Hufnagel, Eshelman, Mills, Dzurka, Krajniak

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

**CITY OF ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN, PLANNING COMMISSION**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
OF CHANGES TO SECTION 155.446 OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City of St. Johns Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. regarding a proposed change to Section 155.446 of the zoning ordinance, at the City of St. Johns' Council Chambers, 100 E. State St., St. Johns, MI 48879. The change will allow outdoor seating by right within the GC and CBD Districts as opposed to a Special Land Use.

All related documentation may be reviewed, and written comments will be accepted at the St. Johns City Hall, 100 E. State St., St. Johns, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. during all scheduled days of operation.

Any party having an interest in the matter may attend the Public Hearing and make their comments known to the Planning Commission. Individuals with disabilities needing special accommodations to fully participate in the meeting may contact the Office of the City Clerk to request the necessary assistance. This request must be made at least two business days prior to the meeting.

Mindy Seavey, City Clerk  
CITY OF ST. JOHNS

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## Ad Preview

CITY OF ST. JOHNS,  
MICHIGAN, PLANNING  
COMMISSION  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC  
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OF CHANGES TO SECTION  
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All related documentation may be reviewed, and written comments will be accepted at the St. Johns City Hall, 100 E. State St., St. Johns, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. during all scheduled days of operation.

Any party having an interest in the matter may attend the Public Hearing and make their comments known to the Planning Commission. Individuals with disabilities needing special accommodations to fully participate in the meeting may contact the Office of the City Clerk to request the necessary assistance. This request must be made at least two business days prior to the meeting.

Mindy Seavey, City Clerk  
CITY OF ST. JOHNS  
LSJ- 11502554 07/21/2025



MCKENNA

# Memorandum

**TO:** St. Johns Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Jacob VanBoxel, MSA, Principal Planner  
Ethan Walthorn, Assistant Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **Outdoor Dining as a Special Land Use**  
**DATE:** August 6, 2025

## Background:

At the July 9<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting, members of the Commission held discussions pertaining to removing the Special Land Use requirement along with some suggestions related to new regulations for the ordinance. These included:

- DDA's associated with esthetics and looks.
- An administrative process.
- Social districts.
- 5 rules in sidewalk café ordinance.
- If administrative approval, an appeal can be taken to the ZBA.
- Clarify definitions: café, dining accessories, accessory buildings: pergola or gazebo; how close to property line, annual permit or permanent.
- Fences.
- Private property as opposed to public sidewalk.
  - Clarify rules on private property.

To expedite the process for business owners, the Planning Commission made the decision to approach this zoning ordinance amendment through a two-step process.

**First**, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing at the August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss changes in the ordinance and make a recommendation to the City Commission to remove the Special Land Use requirement.

**Following that action**, the Planning Commission will continue their discussion regarding new regulations on Sidewalk Cafes/Outdoor Dining/Outdoor Seating Areas. Upon completion of determining these new regulations, the Planning Commission will hold another public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Commission.

## Public Hearing & Recommendation to the City Commission:

Notice for the August 13, 2025 public hearing was published in the July 21, 2025, edition of the Lansing State Journal.

Upon closure of the public hearing, the Planning Commission will discuss feedback presented at the public hearing, consider whether any additional changes are necessary, and vote on a recommendation to the City



Commission encouraging adoption of the changes to remove the language permitting Sidewalk Cafes by Special Land Use.

**The draft text revisions for a change that would remove the Special Land Use requirements have been provided below:**

**Proposed Revisions to Remove Special Land Use Requirement:**

**§ 155.446 SIDEWALK CAFÉ.**

Sidewalk cafes are permitted ~~by special-use permit~~ in the GC and CBD Districts, provided:

- (A) The café will be designed so as not to block pedestrian traffic or access to the restaurant or adjacent businesses.
  - (B) Outdoor speakers are prohibited.
  - (C) The outdoor café shall be limited to ~~normal operation hours of the establishment. specific-hour-of-operation established in the approved special-use permit.~~
  - (D) The café operator shall be responsible for maintaining the area trash free.
  - (E) To avoid wind blown trash, the pre-setting of tables with napkins, glasses or utensils is prohibited.
- 

**New Regulations for the Sidewalk Cafes Ordinance:**

Based on discussion and feedback at the July 9<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting, staff from McKenna have provided some proposed language for new regulations.

Admittedly, these proposed revisions are likely more restrictive than the Planning Commission may prefer. However, we believe the proposed text provided will serve as a way to encourage discussion. Revisions will continue to be made until the Planning Commission can agree that the draft text is sufficient and ready to move forward to the City Commission.

**Below is the proposed text of new regulations for consideration and discussion:**

**§ 155.446 SIDEWALK CAFÉ & OUTDOOR SEATING AREAS.**

Sidewalk cafes ~~and outdoor seating areas~~ are permitted in the GC and CBD Districts, provided:

- (A) The café will be designed so as not to block pedestrian traffic or access to the restaurant or adjacent businesses.
  - a. A minimum of five (5) feet of sidewalk along the curb and leading to the entrance to the establishment must be maintained free of tables and other encumbrances, in accordance with the provisions of the national Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Michigan barrier-free requirements. If the sidewalk is not wide enough to allow for a five (5) foot wide clearance for circulation, the outdoor seating area shall not be permitted.



- (B) Outdoor speakers are prohibited.
- (C) Outdoor seating areas shall be allowed only during normal operation hours of the establishment. In no case shall an outdoor seating area operate between the hours of 11 PM and 7 AM.
- (D) The café operator shall be responsible for maintaining the area trash free.
- (E) To avoid wind blown trash, the pre-setting of tables with napkins, glasses or utensils is prohibited.
- (F) Outdoor seating areas shall be required to be enclosed in instances where there is waitstaff or alcohol service. For the purpose of this Section, an enclosure is a decorative wood or metal railing or other decorative removable physical delineation approved by the Planning Commission.
- (G) All roofs and other overhead structures must be shown on the site plan. A previously approved outdoor cafe may add a roof, subject to Planning Commission approval.
- (H) Tables, chairs, planters, trash receptacles, and other elements of street furniture shall be compatible with the architectural character of the adjacent buildings. If table umbrellas will be used, they should complement building colors. During nonbusiness hours, all tables, chairs, umbrellas and other furniture and fixtures must be stored inside the building or properly secured within the enclosure.
  - a. A site plan shall specify the plans for storage of tables, chairs, and equipment during the months when the outdoor seating is not in use.
- (I) Preparation of food and beverages shall be prohibited in any outdoor seating area. The sale and consumption of alcohol are governed by the Michigan Liquor Control Act and local ordinance. Additionally, such seating areas must include food service in addition to the sale and service of alcoholic beverages.
- (J) Outdoor seating shall be subject to applicable City, County and State requirements.
- (K) Outdoor cafes on public property must meet the following standards:
  - a. The applicant will provide evidence of primary comprehensive general liability insurance by a Michigan authorized insurance carrier in an amount not less than \$500,000.00 naming the City of St. Johns as co-insured if any City property is involved covering any and all claims arising by virtue of the use and/or activity as well as provide evidence of prepaid annual premium to the City of St. Johns timely every year. Failure to do so will automatically terminate special use approval of such use or activity if it involves the use of City property.
  - b. The outdoor cafe must be directly accessible from inside the restaurant.
  - c. In addition, the applicant must receive permission from the City Commission to use the space in question.
  - d. In order to use any part of the US-127 right-of-way, the applicant must receive permission from MDOT.
- (L) Approval of an outdoor cafe may be revoked by the City if the condition(s) of approval or other ordinance requirements have not been met or that use poses a nuisance to the surrounding properties.