

City Planning Commission
March 18, 2026, 5:30 PM
Minutes

Roll Call

Chairman Laycock – Absent (Prearranged)
Commissioner Shelley – Absent (No Prior Notice)
All other commissioners present and on-time.

No members of the public were present.

Public Comment

No Public Comment

Consent Agenda

Approval of Agenda

- Commissioner Winter moved to amend the agenda to add a discussion of proposed amended language of sections I-III of the Bylaws to New Business. Commissioner Coykendall seconded. All in favor.
- Commissioner Morrisey moved to amend the proposed minutes for February 18 to remove the adjective “vague” from the description of a public comment. Seconded by Coykendall. All in favor.
- Commissioner Winter moved to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Morrisey. All in favor.

Public Hearing: Capital Improvement Plan

- No members of the public were present to comment on the proposed CIP.
- There was a discussion between the Commission and Staff members Fry and Smith about individual line items on the CIP, a possible new ranking system, as well as the purpose of the CIP.
- The Staff was requesting the PC to rank the proposed capital improvement projects according to a certain set of criteria provided and give a prioritization of the various projects to help guide council in making budgetary decisions.
- Commissioners Coykendall and Kniffin raised questions about the expertise and preparedness of the PC to offer such evaluations without hearing from representatives of the various departments.
- There was an extensive discussion about the ranking system itself and how it might be modified to best suit the City’s needs and the PC’s capacities.
- The Commission recommended that each department, but especially the BPU departments, provide an internal prioritization of their desired projects as well as a brief description of each project and the circumstances surrounding the need for the expenditure.
- Commissioner Winter moved to table the public hearing until April. Seconded by Commissioner Kelemen. All in favor.

Old Business

- Attendance Policy – Modified Language
 - The Commission was generally in favor of the edits proposed by Chairman Laycock. It was agreed that once the entirety of the bylaws had been reviewed, there would be a final opportunity to review for minor edits/tweaks before proposing the changes to Council.

New Business

- Commissioner Winter brought proposed edits to sections I-III of the Bylaws. He introduced the proposed changes and then there was a brief discussion before agreeing to delay further discussion until a later point.

Staff Report

- Zoning Administrator Smith mentioned that Markethouse has officially closed its doors after many years in business.

Public Comment

- No Public Comment.

Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Kniffin initiated a brief discussion about the electronic billboards on 99.

Adjournment

- Commissioner Winter moved to adjourn. Seconded by Kelemen. All in favor.

PLANNING COMMISSION BYLAWS

I. Name and Purpose

- A. The name **of this body** shall be the City of Hillsdale Planning Commission, hereafter known as the “Commission”.
- B. These Bylaws are adopted by the Commission to facilitate the performance of its duties as outlined in P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, ([MCL 125.3801 et seq.](#)), hereinafter “the Planning Act.”
- C. These Bylaws are also adopted to facilitate the duties of the Commission for administration of a zoning ordinance as outlined in P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended, being the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, ([MCL 125.3101 et seq.](#)), hereinafter “the Zoning Act.”

II. Membership

A. Qualifications and Appointments

- a. The Commission shall consist of seven members appointed in accordance with [MCL 125.3815 et. seq.](#)
- b. **All seven members** of the planning commission shall be qualified electors of the City of Hillsdale.
- c. Members shall be appointed for three-year terms. When first appointed, a number of members shall be appointed to one-year, two-year, or three-year terms such that, as nearly as possible, the terms of one third of all commission members will expire each year. If a vacancy occurs, the vacancy shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as provided for an original appointment such that, as nearly as possible, the terms of one third of all commission members continue to expire each year. **The commission may recommend to council the appointment of one- or two-year terms to realign the endings of the commissioners’ terms with the term cycle described above in (c.), if the end dates of the terms become misaligned over time.**
- d. Ex officio members may include the City Manager, Mayor, or a person appointed by the mayor, provided that no ex officio member serves as Planning Commission Chair. The terms of office of elected officials serving as ex officio members shall expire with their respective elected terms of office, and the term of the City Manager on the Planning Commission shall expire with the term of the mayor that appointed him or her.
- e. The mayor **shall strive** to make appointments representative of the important segments of the community, such as the economic, governmental, educational, and social development of the City of Hillsdale, in accordance with interests such as:
 - i. Agriculture/Natural resources;
 - ii. Recreation/public health;
 - iii. Education;
 - iv. Government; non-profit/charitable
 - v. Industry/Commerce
- f. The membership shall also be representative of the entire geography of the City of Hillsdale to the extent practicable, and as a secondary consideration to the representation of the major interests.
- g. Not more than one third of the total membership of the Commission shall consist of, collectively, the City Manager, the Mayor, or a person designated by either.

B. Liaisons

- a. The Commission may name “liaisons” to the Commission. The purpose of liaisons is to provide certain City of Hillsdale officials and quasi-officials the ability to participate in discussions with the Commission and the public. Liaisons cannot vote, introduce motions, initiate any parliamentary action, or be counted towards a quorum. Liaisons, if not already appointed as Commission members, **may be**:
 - i. Assessing department staff, and their agents and consultants.

- ii. City Manager
- iii. City engineering, water, sewer, DPS, or similar department heads.
- iv. City Attorney

C. Attendance:

If any member of the Commission is absent without notice from three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings without written explanation, then that member may be considered delinquent. Delinquency may be grounds for the Council to remove a member from the Commission for nonperformance of duty, or misconduct. The Commission secretary, or acting secretary in the absence of the elected secretary, shall keep attendance records and shall notify the Council whenever any member of the Commission is absent from three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings, so the Council can consider further action allowed under law or excuse the absences.

D. Training:

Each member shall commit at least four hours per year towards training or professional development during the member's current term of office. Failure to meet the training requirements may result in the member not being reappointed to the Commission. Training may be provided by one or more of the following organizations: Michigan Association of Planning, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Townships Association, and Michigan Municipal League, continuing education programs of Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Northern Michigan University, Central Michigan University, or Wayne State University. Reading and study relevant to Planning Commission duties will also count towards the requisite four hours.

III. Duties of all members

- A. Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest may be defined as a situation in which a person can derive direct or indirect personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity. Each member of the Commission shall avoid and refrain from engaging in conflicts of interest. As used herein, a conflict of interest shall include by way of example and not limitation the following:
 - a. Unless determined by a majority vote of the remaining members of the Commission that a conflict of interest does not exist, the actions of a member of the Commission in deliberating on, reviewing, participating in, presenting, or commenting on any of the following shall constitute a conflict of interest:
 - i. A case concerning or involving him or her.
 - ii. A case concerning land that he or she owns in whole or in part.
 - iii. A case concerning land that is adjacent to land that he or she owns in whole or in part.
 - iv. A case concerning land in or to which he or she has a direct or indirect financial interest or any other relationship from which he or she may stand to have financial gain, loss, or other benefit or detriment.
 - v. A case involving a corporation, company, partnership, or any other business or entity in which he or she is a sole or part owner or has any other relationship from which he or she may stand to have financial gain, loss, or other benefit or detriment.
 - vi. A case involving any issue the resolution of which will or might result in financial gain, loss, or other benefit or detriment to him or her.
 - vii. A case concerning or involving his or her spouse, or members of his or her spouse's family including, but not limited to children, step-children,

parents, siblings, grandparents, and non-relative members of his or her household.

- b. When a case involves the possible existence of a conflict of interest, the affected member or any remaining member of the Commission having knowledge of it shall immediately raise the question. Thereupon, the question shall be put to the remaining Commission members as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not. Whether a conflict of interest exists or not shall be determined by a majority of the remaining planning commission members.
 - c. Upon the discovery or determination of a conflict of interest, all of the following steps shall be taken:
 - i. The existence of the conflict of interest shall be declared on the record by the member declaration of it or the Commission's determination of it, together with the underlying facts pertinent thereto.
 - ii. The affected member shall immediately cease any of his or her participation in the Commission's deliberations, review, and determination of the involved matter.
 - iii. During the Commission's hearing and consideration of the matter, the affected member shall either leave the meeting or remove himself or herself from his or her seat at the Commissioners' table until the involved matter is concluded.
 - iv. If the member does not leave voluntarily, the Chair shall order his/her removal.
- B. Incompatibility of Office
- a. If a member of the Commission is appointed to and accepts another office **legally** incompatible with his or her membership on the Commission, then the appointment to and acceptance of the other office shall result in and be deemed to be the member's automatic resignation from the Commission as of its effective date.
 - b. If a member of another office is appointed to the Commission and accepts the appointment, and the appointment to the Commission is incompatible with his or her membership in the other office, then the member's acceptance of the appointment to the Commission shall be deemed to be his or her resignation from the other office as of its effective date.
- C. Ex Parte Contact
- a. Ex Parte contact is defined as one member contact with a petitioner and/or petitioner representative without the knowledge of other members.
 - b. Members shall avoid Ex Parte contact about cases where an administrative decision is before the commission whenever possible.
 - c. Despite one's best efforts it is sometimes not possible to avoid Ex Parte contact. When that happens, the member shall disclose the information shared by or with the petitioner and/or petitioner representative to the Commission at a public meeting or hearing and potentially recuse himself/herself.
- D. Site Inspections
- a. Site inspections shall be done by the zoning administrator or other staff.
 - b. A written report of the site inspection shall be orally presented to the Commission at a public meeting or hearing on the site.
 - c. There shall not be a quorum of the Commission during a site visit Commissioners may be accompanied by the Zoning Administrator upon request.
- E. Not Voting On the Same Issue Twice
- a. Any member of the Commission shall avoid situations where they are sitting in judgment and voting on a decision which they had a part in making.

- b. As used here, sitting in judgment and voting on a decision which they had a part in making, at a minimum shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
 - i. When the appeal is of an administrative or other decision by Commission and the member of the Commission sits both on the Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.
 - ii. When the appeal is of an administrative or other decision by any committee of the Commission, Council, or other committee and the member of the Commission sits both on that committee and Zoning Board of Appeals or both on the Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.
 - iii. When the case is an administrative decision which was decided by the Commission and sent to the Council for further action, and the member of the Commission sits both on the Commission and Council.

F. Accepting Gifts

- a. Gifts shall not be accepted by a member of the Commission or liaisons from anyone connected with an agenda item before the Commission.
- b. As used here, gifts shall mean cash, any tangible item, or service, regardless of value; and food valued over \$10. This section does not apply to the Commission accepting gifts for the exercise of its functions pursuant to [MCL 125.3823 §23\(3\)](#) of the Planning Act.

G. Spokesperson for the Commission

- a. Free and open debate should take place on issues before the Commission. Such debate shall only occur at meetings of the Commission.
- b. Once a vote is taken and an issue is decided by vote, the duty of each member of the Commission is to represent the position reflected by the outcome of the vote.
- c. Minority reports and requests for reconsideration may take place only at an open meeting of the Commission. From time-to-time or on a specific issue, the Commission may appoint a spokesperson for the Commission for all matters which occur outside of the meetings of the Commission.