

**CITY OF SOUTHFIELD
SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION**

**JULY 20, 2026
4:00 – 6:00 PM**

**ROOM 115 – PARKS & RECREATION BUILDING
26000 EVERGREEN ROAD, SOUTHFIELD, MI**

MEETING MINUTES

Council President Pro Tem Houge asked for the roll to be called.

City Clerk Grossbard called the roll and determined there was a quorum.

Present: Brightwell, Haynes, Houge, Mandelbaum

Excused: Banks, Bland, Hicks

Also Present: Grossbard, Lewis, Michrina, Zorn

Roll Call – Planning Commission

Chairman Willis asked for a roll call.

Planner Bollin called the roll and determined there was a quorum.

Present: Bernoudy, Gruber, Martin, Dr. Stephens-Gunn, Willis

Excused: Griffis, Goodwin-Dye

Also Present: Croad, Paison, Bryce, Bollin, Freeman, Mulally

City Planner Croad gave brief remarks about the short history of the joint meeting between the council and planning commission. He stated that at the request of Dr. Stephens Gunn, the commission was looking for feedback regarding site plan reviews and asked for any feedback or direction moving forward.

Councilman Brightwell spoke about the former Site Plan Committee that used to convene but due to the extra costs and the city's reputation it gained being against developers, the council eliminated the committee and instead took the responsibility for site plan review. He related the more recent change of allowing the planning commission to approve most site plans as further streamlining and helping the city become more friendly to the business community.

Councilman Mandelbaum stated that he believed it was a great idea to push some of the site plan approval authority to the planning commission and maybe even transfer more responsibility for site plan approval to the commission in the future.

Councilwoman Haynes also stated her support and with the planning commission assuming site plan approval authority and said she was please so far with the results. Noting that it had taken away the political aspect from some projects.

Councilwoman Houge stated her support with the statements from her fellow council members. She stated her desire to see a 12 – 18-month status report regarding current site plan developments for council to get an idea of where projects were in construction.

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City Planner Croad explained that the department was currently working to provide an 18-month overview of all projects that had been approved by both the council and commission. He also explained that larger projects like the data center were permitted by right and could have been approved by the planning commission, removing the political fight out of the approval and instead relying on the commission. However, he noted that due to the project triggering a community impact statement, it instead required city council to approve the site plan.

Councilman Brightwell discussed the city's Redevelopment Ready status, and the streamlining of city processes to help the city become more developer friendly, Economic Director Freeman echoed the sentiment, providing background information regarding certain businesses and recent development projects that had moved to Southfield.

Councilwoman Haynes stated some apprehension about giving special land use approval to the planning commission due to the accountability of council members to the residents. Councilwoman Houge echoed the sentiment.

Planner Croad asked the council what the city's position is regarding data centers moving forward, noting the economic benefits as well as the public outcry.

Councilwoman Houge stated that she wanted to see a moratorium put in place towards data centers to allow city officials time to educate themselves. She noted her experience at the recent policy conference on Mackinac Island and the discussions she and other council members had with the president of DTE.

Councilwoman Haynes stated her support for data centers overall but also stated that she wanted to see a city-wide review regarding possible locations as well as possible incentives for data centers throughout the city. She also wanted to see some more public education to ease some of the residents' fears regarding possible future projects.

City Administrator Zorn stated that the timing was everything, especially with many states implementing moratoriums on data centers. He highlighted the large amount of infrastructure in Southfield and the larger metro area and explained that it would be hard to construct a data center the size of Saline, it was more likely to be smaller, 100k – 200k square foot data centers. He agreed that the city should look at possible locations for future data centers and stated that allowing data centers within the city would help expand the tax base and allow the city to lower millages on the residents.

He compared the data center movement to the cell tower expansion of the 1990's noting a similar hysteria among the public.

Councilman Mandelbaum explained that he did not believe a moratorium was necessary but a

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possible compromise regarding data center projects may be in order. He noted that while other areas in Oakland County were experiencing blowback regarding Flock Cameras, Southfield had not experienced anything, going on to say that what is happening in the news at large, may not be the same experience in Southfield. He also stated his belief that putting a moratorium in place often brought more attention to the issue.

Director Freeman spoke about an upcoming event sponsored by the 8 Mile Blvd Association that would focus on data centers. She stated that she could arrange to purchase an extra table to facilitate learning opportunities and information meetings with certain stakeholders for city officials.

Commissioner Martin stated that there were a lot of unknowns regarding data centers, specifically regarding pollution, electrical billing practices, noise levels.

Councilwoman Haynes compared the data center development boom to the marijuana rush from a few years ago. She stated that either way, data centers are going to be built, it was just a matter of if municipalities wanted to be a part of it or be left behind.

Chairman Willis state he wanted to see some education for commissioners and council members to help them make informed decisions.

Planner Croad explained that the Economic Development Department was currently working on a fact sheet and education opportunities regarding data centers and once completed would be passed out to all city officials.

Planner Croad asked to move on to another topic to utilize the remaining time. He asked the council if they would support removing public facilities, which were currently listed as a special land use, and moving them to a permitted use, subject to site plan review within single family districts. He stated that this would help remove political issues as well as streamline future developments on city owned properties.

Councilman Mandelbaum stated his support with the idea of a text amendment to move public park projects from special land use to a permitted use.

Councilwoman Hogue stated apprehension to the move. Explaining that the special land use process gave an opportunity for the public to weigh in.

Planner Croad moved on and began the discussion regarding the state's attempt to remove local zoning controls. He noted that there appeared to be some apprehension among lawmakers in Lansing due to the pushback from cities and villages across the state. Noting that many municipalities already allowed a variety of housing types like tiny homes and ADU's. Something

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that the proposed legislation would have made legal in all localities.

Councilwoman Haynes spoke about a recent trip she took to Tampa Florida and how a community of tiny homes did not strike her as appealing. She stated that they reminded her of tent cities and she would be against having similar homes in Southfield. She questioned the reality of people choosing to live in a tiny home or ADU. She noted the various new multi family developments currently being constructed such as Tunnels 2 Towers, Wellspring, and John Grace apartments.

Planner Bollin recounted his own housing search in Southfield, noting that available apartments did not offer amenities commensurate with the rent being charged. He stated that a tiny home or accessory dwelling unit, if available for rent or purchase, would have been an attractive alternative.

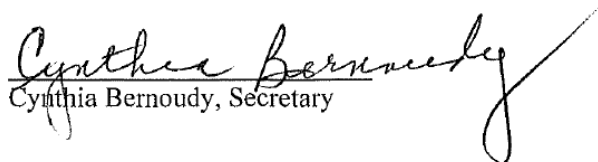
He observed that while new multi-family developments are underway in Southfield, each serves a restricted population: Tunnels to Towers are for veterans who are referred by the VA, Wellspring will be for individuals in recovery, and will be court-referred to the complex, and John Grace is specifically for senior citizens. Aside from Northland, he noted, no current project is open to the public or geared toward young families and professionals.

Bollin also described difficulty he and his wife faced purchasing a home, noting they currently rent in Canton. He argued that many residents would welcome a tiny home or ADU option and questioned how Southfield can say that they want young professionals and families as a demographic goal while lacking housing products suited to them.

Councilman Brightwell asked a question regarding the status of recent tiny home discussions. Croad noted that while tiny homes may be further down the road, the department was ready to bring forth ordinance language regarding accessory dwelling units to the legislative committee for feedback.

The meeting closed with a round-table discussion that focused mainly on each member's appreciation for the work that the opposite body does for the city.

Councilwoman Houge adjourned the meeting at 5:44.


Cynthia Bernoudy, Secretary