

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

2026-0009

Public Hearing and Request for Recommendation for Preliminary Site Condominium Approval - File No. PSP2023-0010 - for Grandview condominiums, a proposed development of 17 detached single family residences on approximately 6.0 acres of land, located at 1548 W. Auburn Rd., Parcel No. 15-28-300-059, on the north side of Auburn between Crooks and Livernois, zoned R-4 One Family Residential with the MR Mixed Residential Overlay; Vito Munaco, Grandview of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

(Staff Report dated 1/7/26, Reviewed plans and ASTI report dated 11/26/25, AEW Letter dated 11/21/25, Development Application, Environmental Impact Statement, WRC Letter dated 3/17/23, MDOT Preliminary Approval dated 8/17/23, Public Hearing Notice, Public Comment Received and PC Minutes of 5/19/15 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Present for the applicant were Sydney Kanan, Anderson, Eckstine & Westrick, and Scott Lozan, Developer.

Chairperson Hooper introduced this item noting the request included a wetland use permit, natural features setback modification, and tree removal permit. He called for the staff report.

Mr. McLeod presented the staff report, noting the following:

- This project encompasses four different requests including two recommendations to City Council for the preliminary condominium plan and wetland use permit.*
- The project was previously reviewed in 2015 in a slightly different configuration of 15 units and one stub road heading in a westerly direction. The current plan has two different stubs going in an east and west direction.*
- The applicant is using the Mixed Residential Overlay district. Single family residential lots are to the west, small non-residential office use to the east, industrial to the north, and a place of worship and residential to the south across Auburn. Overall zoning in the area is R-4 with the Mixed Residential Overlay around the site.*
- Sage Lane serves as the emergency turnaround and abuts the wetland onsite. Staff worked with the applicant to eliminate the sidewalk on one side of Sage to help reduce impact on the wetland.*
- Stormwater detention is to the southwest corner of the site. A park structure is on the other front corner including a gazebo or pergola as well as seating.*
- The wetland to the north end of the site is regulated, and ASTI has provided their recommendation that the plans could be approved as presented. The wetland permit is for approximately 18,000 square feet for the City-regulated wetland.*

- Elevations were provided. Questions regarding materials were passed on to the applicant and they can hopefully speak to those questions tonight.
- The Natural Features Setback modification is a 336 foot linear impact.
- The tree removal permit is for 83 trees to be saved on site and 137 trees to be removed. They are required to plant 139 replacement trees and are proposing to plant 21 onsite and pay 118 into the City's Tree Fund.

Mr. Lozan noted that it is a Pulte-design and they have first right of refusal. Right now it looks like they are leaning toward partnering with Mike McLaughlin from Venture Building, who are building the condos on Pine Trace Golf Course. He stated that the homes will be ranch-style with full basements. He agreed that the front elevations would be fully bricked and that he would accommodate additional masonry on the side.

Chairperson Hooper opened the Public Hearing.

Bob Hathaway, 1582 W. Auburn Rd., expressed concern regarding a driveway encroachment on the subject property and requested that spruce trees not be used for screening due to sap. He also questioned wetland drainage.

Seeing no further comment, Chairperson Hooper closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Lozan agreed to meet with the Hathaways to resolve the driveway issue and accommodate reconfiguration costs on their property. He noted that the price point would start at \$699,000 per unit, but that the market is a moving target so it may exceed that. Chairperson Hooper asked Mr. Lozan to clarify if he meant that they were okay with leaving the driveway that trespasses on their property the way it is. Mr. Lozan replied that they would be removing the portion that encroaches, but would help accommodate the Hathaways with the cost of relocation. Chairperson Hooper asked if Mr. Lozan agreed to relocate the driveway at the company's expense. Mr. Lozan replied that if the project were approved by the Planning Commission, before going to City Council he would have their associates from ASI paving draft a budget for relocation and come to an agreement with the Hathaways. Chairperson Hooper requested confirmation that an agreement would be met on the relocation of the driveway prior to approval of the project, and Mr. Lozan replied that is correct.

Ms. Kanan addressed the concerns about the spruce trees, stating that they would review the plan with Mr. McLeod to alter the tree species. She also addressed the wetland issue, stating that there is a large wetland in the middle of the site that would be removed and all onsite water will remain. She added that they would install a series of catch basins along the shared property line, and she is confident there will be no runoff to the Hathaway's property. The water would be captured by the catch basins, routed to the detention pond onsite, then released in accordance with the engineering standards. Mr. McLeod mentioned that the Hathaways had spoken to him in the office about the driveway, and he passed that information on to the applicant prior to the meeting. He noted that the encroachment was significant, up to 10 feet, and he would like the applicant to come to an agreement with the Hathaways prior to the City Council meeting.

Chairperson Hooper opened Planning Commission deliberation.

Ms. Brnabic stated she had a few concerns with the project. In 2005 a plan was submitted and the property was cleared of 125 trees and never moved forward. In 2015, another plan was submitted which was cut from 15 to 14 units possibly due to a storm water change in the ordinance. Now a denser project is being proposed under the Mixed Residential option which requires a minimum of ten acres, and the subject property is six. Ms. Brnabic also expressed concern for the impact to the natural features setback in the wetlands to accommodate grading of units nine and ten, the extension of Coriander Rd., and the sub connections for Sage Lane. She noted that medium quality natural features and wetlands were involved, and disagreed that the extra couple units served a greater good for Sage Lane. She also questioned if more trees could be added to the 118 required for the City's tree fund. Ms. Brnabic pointed out errors in the environmental impact statement, mentioning that it stated 18 units were proposed when there were actually 17, and that the property is zoned MR using the R4 overlay which should be reversed to state it is zone R4 using the MR overlay. Due to her concerns, she expressed that she would like to see units 9 and 10 removed.

Ms. Kanan replied that removing units nine and ten would not negate the connection of Sage Lane, as it is a requirement from the Fire Department for public safety and thoroughfare, and the wetland impact would remain regardless. She further clarified that the road's position was determined by the need to align with Saddlebrook Road's existing "T" to the west in a straight-through fashion. Mr. McLeod suggested that if the Commission desired, the matter could be postponed to ask traffic and fire officials if a softer turn or a modified alignment could preserve more natural features while still meeting safety standards.

Ms. Brnabic mentioned again that the wetlands were of a higher quality. She questioned if the majority of the impact would be due to the grading of units nine and ten, and the extension of the private road. Mr. McLeod offered that Kyle from ASTI was present to speak on the quality of the wetlands and their relation to the overall development. He further clarified that the roadway is the primary cause of the wetland impact. He noted that if the roadway were realigned or partially eliminated, the impacts on the wetland and natural feature setback would be modified. He suggested that if fire and traffic departments agreed that the easterly connection was unnecessary, or if the road was realigned toward the west, more wetlands could be preserved.

Mr. Lozan stated that a cross-section for Sage Lane is required, noting that the entire subject area comprises of 0.42 acres from end to end. He argued that even without the full connection, the road would likely need to extend three-fifths of the way across the site to meet requirements. He noted that the potential savings from realigning or shortening the road would only amount to approximately 40% of that 0.42-acre area, or less than two-tenths of an acre. He emphasized that the economies of scale and development costs per linear foot have changed significantly since 2005, making the current density a necessity for project feasibility. He indicated that the developer has already

accommodated various setback requirements for garages and other site features. To address concerns regarding the wetlands, Mr. Lozan suggested the possibility of creating two-tenths of an acre of new wetlands elsewhere on city-owned property or in a park to offset the onsite impact. He noted that the Fire Marshal might still require the full road extension for fire truck backups and turnarounds. He estimated that as a necessity, at least 50% to 60% of the four-tenths of an acre would be lost, and further requirements for a second turnaround direction could increase the impact to nearly the entire area.

Ms. Brnabic characterized the applicant's primary concern as one of profit. Mr. Lozan confirmed that the issue is one of profit and feasibility, citing current 9% industry margins, interest rates, approval turnaround times, and internal rates of return. He stated that while he seeks to leave a better community, a business much reach a profit to remain viable.

Chairperson Hooper noted that the proposed "T" turnaround was requested by the Fire Department to facilitate backing up fire trucks. Mr. McLeod confirmed this was a key part of the design conversation. Mr. Hooper suggested that if the "T" turnaround were eliminated, a larger cul-de-sac would likely be required, which would result in a similar environmental impact. Mr. McLeod stated that if the Commission wished to modify the current street alignment, the project should be sent back for administrative review to get feedback from traffic, fire, and other reviewers. He explained that the eastern portion of the road likely could not be completely removed because a modified "T" or "stub" is necessary to allow for a full multi-point turn. He noted that while there might be a minor saving in wetland impact if the stub did not have to meet full road construction standards, the resulting changes would likely be miniscule.

Ms. Neubauer questioned staff regarding the standard number of units for a six-acre parcel compared to the 17 units proposed. Mr. McLeod responded that a typical range would be 14 to 15 units, noting that previous approvals for the site were based on lot averaging rather than the current calculation method. Ms. Neubauer observed that surrounding neighborhoods typically contain 12 to 14 houses for a similar land area. She expressed significant discomfort with the proposed density, stating that the community and voters have voiced clear opposition to high-density developments. She raised concerns about the optics of granting a large accommodation for this development while other residents are regularly denied minor zoning variances.

To address concerns if the project were to move forward, Ms. Neubauer suggested several conditions:

- *Materiality:* A requirement for full brick on the front and up the sides of the buildings, with new plans submitted prior to City Council review to reflect these materials.
- *Driveway resolution:* A formal requirement for the applicant to meet with the Hathaway family to resolve the driveway encroachment.
- *Agency approvals:* Ensuring MDOT approval is finalized, as pending permits have previously caused issues at the City Council level.

- Landscaping: Planting trees along the property line that meet staff requirements but exclude spruce species.

Ms. Neubauer then addressed Jason Boughton, questioning if catch basins would be sufficient to prevent neighborhood flooding, which she noted was a common complaint for City Council. Mr. Boughton provided the following technical clarification from Engineering regarding storm water management and potential flooding mitigation:

- The western property line is designed with catch basins placed at every other proposed unit to capture drainage.
- These basins are set at least half a foot lower than the existing grade to the west. Collected water is routed through a pre-treatment device to the detention pond before discharging into the water resource commission's system on the south side of Auburn Road.
- While the half-foot grade difference is typically acceptable, a berm could be added along that property line to further ensure water enters the system and alleviate pressure during heavy rain.

Ms. Neubauer stated she would only be comfortable if a berm were included. She cited recent City Council discussions regarding the significant storms in 2021 as the reason for being proactive and preventative. She summarized that the primary obstacles for the project moving forward to City Council are the unresolved density levels and the need for a berm to anticipate major flood events.

Ms. Kanan indicated that the previously discussed conditions were acceptable and that a berm on the west property line was a feasible addition to be incorporated into the engineering plan review. However, she noted a berm on the east side would be counterproductive, as that side of the property is designed to receive and manage significant off-site drainage. Mr. Lozan interjected to emphasize the compounding costs of the project, including road construction, driveway relocation, and the addition of the berm. He argued that maintaining 17 lots is essential to absorb these astronomical development costs, particularly with the required Fire Department turnarounds and wetland impacts.

Ms. Neubauer stated that the berm was a necessary requirement for drainage and not a negotiable trade-off for higher density. She maintained that 17 units is too dense for the six-acre property and expressed concern that the project would be rejected by City Council at that level. She recommended the applicant aim for 14 units to ensure the project's success. Mr. Lozan noted that current interest rates and construction costs differ significantly from 2005, which is why the land has remained vacant. Ms. Neubauer countered that while material costs may be up, interest rates and some development costs have trended down since 2020. Mr. Lozan disagreed, stating that development costs are currently exceeding inflation. Ms. Neubauer concluded by reiterating that her position against the 17-unit density reflects her responsibility to represent the 80,000 residents of the community.

Commissioner Dale Hetrick noted that the proposed ranch-style homes fit the direction of the City's master plan, and emphasized that maintaining a brick exterior would be beneficial for the look and feel for the development. He questioned if the homes would have a lower level basement or be slab. In response to Mr. Hetrick's inquiry, Mr. Lozan clarified that neither Pulte nor Venture Building constructs homes in Michigan without full basements. He explained that if the project were reduced to 14 lots, the higher per-lot development costs would likely force the developer to build larger, two-story colonial homes instead of ranches to justify the investment. Mr. Lozan then raised internal concerns regarding whether million-dollar homes, which might result from lower density and larger square footage, could be sold at the Auburn and Crooks location. Ms. Kanan observed that while the proposed density is higher than allowed, there could be less desirable alternatives proposed under the current zoning. Mr. Hetrick stated that despite density concerns, he was more inclined to support the 17-unit plan specifically because it provided ranch-style homes, which align with the master plan's goal of offering smaller, one-story residences.

Commissioner Sheila Denstaedt expressed appreciation for the applicant's willingness to coordinate with the Hathaway family to resolve the driveway encroachment, noting familiarity with the area and home. She inquired what would be the lowest number of units the applicant could reduce from the 17 proposed, asking if it were possible to remove two units. Mr. Lozan stated that reducing the project by even two lots would effectively eliminate the profit margin. He explained that with current 9% interest rates and high development costs, estimated at millions of dollars for site services, the risk of "trading dollars" to break even might lead to land banking the property rather than proceeding. Mr. Lozan reiterated that if the lot count is reduced, the developer must shift to a larger colonial product to absorb land and development costs. The proposed ranch units are specifically designed to meet the changing demographic needs of "empty nesters". He argued that two additional houses on the property would not be a "game changer" for the community, and would instead fill a housing gap for families wanting to live near grandparents or the local school. He confirmed the developer's commitment to building a berm at their own cost to address drainage concerns raised by the Commission. Ms. Denstaedt noted that discrepancies in the development application and environmental impact numbers must be reconciled. Ms. Kanan confirmed that corrected unit numbers had been discussed with staff and that the zoning overlay errors would be addressed.

Commissioner Scott Struzik expressed sympathy for the Hathaway family regarding their driveway encroachment, and suggested they investigate a possible title insurance claim if the property was represented as theirs when they purchased it. He supported the "stub road" concept to prevent the creation of isolated "island communities", and noted that connecting Sage Lane to existing stubs on adjacent parcels would create a more cohesive community for the future. He suggested that the long-term benefit of a complete thoroughfare

might justify the necessary wetland trade-offs, particularly if the Fire Department requires the extension. Mr. Struzik agreed with Mr. Hetrick that higher density might be acceptable if it provided a smaller, more affordable housing product. He expressed concern about "product creep" citing a previous development where ranch designs were later modified with second-floor additions, making them taller and less affordable. In response, Mr. Lozan suggested that a deed restriction could be placed on the title to mandate that only ranch-style homes be built. Mr. Struzik supported removing spruce trees from the landscape plan to prevent sap damage to neighboring driveways. He observed that moving from unmanaged gravity-fed drainage to a modern system of catch basins and detention ponds would likely provide relief to the area, though 100-year storm events still pose risks.

Chairperson Hooper observed that the proposed ranch-style homes appear to be less than 2,000 square feet based on the depiction drawings. Mr. Lozan confirmed the size and noted that the market for such products is robust, with similar attached condominiums in the area selling for approximately \$750,000. He emphasized that Rochester Hills is a "demand community" which sustains these higher price points. Chairperson Hooper inquired whether an attached condominium development would be a viable alternative for the property under the current zoning. Mr. McLeod explained that the MR overlay is the mechanism that allows for attached units, and noted that the current ordinance permits attaching units or utilizing lot averaging to adjust layouts around natural features. He added that while the project generally complies with the MR district standards, the primary issue is the 10-acre minimum requirement for the overlay. He suggested that acquiring additional property to reach 10 acres would make the application more palatable, though the commission has the discretion to grant a modification for the existing six acres. Chairperson Hooper compared the proposal to the Breckenridge development at Hamlin and Livernois, suggesting that attached units of a similar size might result in even higher density. Mr. McLeod clarified that the MR district establishes a maximum density cap per acre, regardless of whether the units are configured as detached or duplex structures. He confirmed that the proposed 17 units currently satisfy the ordinance's density requirements, leaving the acreage modification as the central point of debate.

Chairperson Hooper summarized that the majority view of the Planning Commission was to not proceed, and that moving to attached condos may result in the same density overall. He understood that \$700,000 is the going rate for the market, and estimated that the proposed berm on the west side would be approximately 1 to 1.5 feet in height. Ms. Kanan agreed with this estimate, noting that a lack of space prevents a more significant elevation change. Chairperson Hooper stated that the cost of the berm is immaterial because the developer will have sufficient soil spoils on-site from utility construction and site balancing. He acknowledged that the cost of construction has doubled over the last 20 years. He requested a commitment to full masonry on the first floor for all four elevations of the proposed ranch units. Mr. Lozan initially suggested brick on the front with knee walls on the other three sides, but ultimately agreed to full brick all the way around the first floor. He noted that while this is an added

cost, it is easier to absorb at the vertical construction phase than during initial land development. Ms. Kanan confirmed that MDOT has offered no objection during a preliminary review, and that the final permit will be obtained after receiving local approval to avoid overextending on bonds and insurance prematurely. Chairperson Hooper noted that this coordination would be part of the final site condominium approval process.

Ms. Neubauer moved to postpone the application rather than issue a denial, allowing the applicant time to find a way to lower the density. Ms. Kanan asked for clarification on whether the concern was driven by density or the 10-acre property size requirement for the overlay. Mr. McLeod confirmed that while the density currently satisfies ordinance calculations, the issue is a holistic one involving the requested reduction in overall acreage, the impact to wetlands, and the context of the property. Ms. Neubauer clarified that 17 units on six acres is too dense for her liking and likely for City Council and local residents. She acknowledged that ranch style homes are in high demand and would likely sell well in the City. However, she cited the importance of following rules consistently, noting that minor variances are often denied to individual residents and it would be inequitable to grant a large acreage accommodation to a developer.

Mr. Hooper restated the motion to postpone the proposed application to review density and the impact on wetlands. The motion, supported by Mr. Dettloff, covered all four agenda items related to the project.

Ms. Brnabic questioned whether modern lot averaging rules would require minimum lot widths for the R4 district. Staff clarified that while averages must comply with minimum ordinance requirements, lot averaging is primarily used to work around natural features rather than increase density. Ms. Neubauer reiterated that she believes the development should be reduced to approximately 14 units to remain congruent with the surrounding neighborhoods and the site's environmental constraints. Planning Director Sara Roediger noted that the adjacent Saddlebrook development has a density of approximately 2.95 units per acre. Mr. Hetrick stated he would be more inclined to support the project if the density was closer to 14 or 15 units, provided they remained ranch-style homes. Ms. Kanan stated the homes would be about 2,300 square feet excluding the garage. Chairperson Hooper noted that the provided depictions did not accurately reflect this size and looked to be less than 2,000 square feet, necessitating the submission of new elevations and depictions. Mr. Lozan suggested that higher density with smaller homes might actually have less traffic impact than fewer, larger homes with more residents and vehicles. Chairperson Hooper declined to enter into a debate on that topic during the discussion of the motion.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Hetrick and Struzik

Excused 1 - Weaver

Resolved, that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission postpones the Request for Recommendation for Preliminary Site Condominium Approval - File No. PSP2023-0010 - for Grandview condominiums to allow a review of the density and ancillary impact to wetlands.

2026-0010

Request for Wetland Use Permit recommendation - File No. PWEP2025-0005 - to impact approximately 18,267 square feet of wetlands for Grandview condominiums, a proposed development of 17 detached single family residences on approximately 6.0 acres of land, located at 1548 W. Auburn Rd., Parcel No. 15-28-300-059, on the north side of Auburn between Crooks and Livernois, zoned R-4 One Family Residential with the MR Mixed Residential Overlay; Vito Munaco, Grandview of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

See Legislative File 2026-0009 for Discussion.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Hetrick and Struzik

Excused 1 - Weaver

Resolved, that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission postpones the Request for Wetland Use Permit recommendation - File No. PWEP2025-0005 - for Grandview condominiums to allow a review of the density and ancillary impact to wetlands.

2026-0012

Request for Natural Features Setback Modification Approval - File No. PNFSM2025-0005 - to impact approximately 336 linear feet of natural features setback for Grandview condominiums, a proposed development of 17 detached single family residences on approximately 6.0 acres of land, located at 1548 W. Auburn Rd., Parcel No. 15-28-300-059, on the north side of Auburn between Crooks and Livernois, zoned R-4 One Family Residential with the MR Mixed Residential Overlay; Vito Munaco, Grandview of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

See Legislative File 2026-0009 for Discussion.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Hetrick and Struzik

Excused 1 - Weaver

Resolved, that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission postpones the Request for Natural Features Setback Modification Approval - File No. PNFSM2025-0005 - for Grandview condominiums to allow a review of the density and ancillary impact to wetlands.

2026-0013

Request for Tree Removal Permit Approval - File No. PTP2025-0013 - to remove 137 regulated trees and 2 specimen trees and to provide 137 required

replacement trees onsite for Grandview condominiums, a proposed development of 17 detached single family residences on approximately 6.0 acres of land, located at 1548 W. Auburn Rd., Parcel No. 15-28-300-059, on the north side of Auburn between Crooks and Livernois, zoned R-4 One Family Residential with the MR Mixed Residential Overlay; Vito Munaco, Grandview of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

See Legislative File 2026-0009 for Discussion.

A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Dettloff, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Hetrick and Struzik

Excused 1 - Weaver

Resolved, that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission postpones the Request for Tree Removal Permit Approval - File No. PTP2025-0013 for Grandview condominiums to allow a review of the density and ancillary impact to wetlands.

2026-0015

Request for Site Plan Approval - File No. PSP2025-0003 - for site improvements for the existing contractor's yard, including a parking lot, stormwater detention, and associated site improvements at 2581 Old Adams Rd., including Parcel Nos. 15-30-302-039 and 15-30-302-041, located on the east side of Old Adams Rd. and north of Forester Blvd. and S. Adams Rd., zoned I Industrial District; Patrick Burns, Timberland Landscape, Applicant
(Staff report dated 1-07-2025, Reviewed Plans, Development Application, Environmental Impact Statement, Applicant's Response to Review Comments, RCOC Quit Claim Deed, Recorded Quit Claim Deed to RCOC, RCOC QCD Email 11-26-25, Landscape Cost Estimate, and Public Hearing Notice had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Chairperson Hooper introduced the item for the Timberland Landscape property, located on the east side of Old Adams Road, north of Forester Drive and South Adams Road. The property is zoned I-1, Industrial.

Present for the applicant were Patrick Burns, owner of Timberland Landscape and the land parcel; Jim Sharpe of Sharpe Engineering; and Richard Tuttle, landscape architect.

Mr. McLeod explained that while the landscape yard currently exists in its totality, the applicant submitted a site plan to bring the property into compliance with city ordinance requirements following previous issues. The proposal is described as a "cleaning up and modernizing" of the site.

Mr. McLeod outlined that the proposed site improvements include:

- A new parking lot and a new stormwater facility at the northwest corner of the site.*
- Modernized storage areas for landscape materials.*
- A new dumpster location with an enclosure and a new fueling area for site vehicles.*
- New perimeter screening consisting of a fence.*
- Pedestrian improvements, including a pathway along Forester Drive for a*