

MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 3, 2026

The Stark County Regional Planning Commission met in regular session Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 7:00 p.m., in the Stark County Regional Planning Commission Conference Room.

RPC Members or Alternates

Dave Thorley, President
Dave McAlister, County Appointee
Kris Vincent, County Appointee
Bob Sanderson, County Appointee
Bob Leach, County Appointee
Michael Miller, Village of Brewster

Jeff Cleveland, Nimishillen Township
Travis Boyd, Village of Magnolia
Cassie Pearson, City of Canton
Alan Harold, County Commissioner
Bill Watson, Perry Township

Staff

Bob Nau, Secretary
Curtis Bungard
Jonelle Melnichenko
Malia Burgasser
Lisa Snyder
Diane Sheridan
Sarah Peters
Heather Cunningham
Corine Valentine
Sean Phillips
Valerie Watson
Jennifer Bayer
Nicole Blunk

Other

1) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dave Thorley opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 3, 2026 MEETING

Vincent moved, Miller seconded, and the motion carried to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2026 meeting.

3) FINANCIAL REPORT

There being no questions or additions, the financial report for February 2026 will be filed for audit.

4) STAFF REPORT / PUBLIC HEARING

FY26 HUD Action Plan – Public Hearing

Presented by: Lisa Snyder, Community Development Administrator
Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Manager

McAlister moved, Vincent seconded to go into a Public Hearing for the FY26 HUD Action Plan.

Lisa Snyder presented the Proposed FY 2026 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Budget. Stark County's allocation for FY 2026 has not yet been released. The figures provided are estimates based on the County's FY 2025 allocation. Final recommendations will be increased or decreased from the estimated amounts to match the allocation announcement. The Board of Stark County Commissioners will adopt the final amounts. All activities for CDBG funding must meet one of the three National Objectives: benefit low-to-moderate-income individuals, prevent or eliminate slum & blight, address an urgent need. All activities must be consistent with the Stark County Consolidated Plan. The eligible applications were reviewed by staff and the review committee. A workshop was held in August 2025 with applications due October 6, 2025. A total of 10 eligible applications were received and scored. A breakdown by activity type was provided.

The proposed budget for Administration and Planning is \$204,000.00 which pay for staff salaries oversight to be compliant with the program. This budget does seem to lean a little bit more on the heavy side of housing rehabilitation but there is a great need for that in the community. Staff proposed a little bit more than \$352,000 for the typical housing rehab projects that are done with single-family owner-occupied residences. They are currently looking to expand the septic sewer program and have worked with Commissioner Harold on those conversations. There's a great need in Stark County to assist homeowners where sewer has been run through neighborhoods and to assist them with the hookup process.

There is a small amount of revolving loan dollars that will be used on rehab projects. Staff is proposing to fund six public service projects that are listed there in the gold color. Alliance for Children and Families, CommQuest, Early Childhood Resource Center, Stark Mental Health and Addiction Recovery, Fair Housing and the Health Department for their Harm Reduction Plus Program. The Harm Reduction Program is for the Health Department to take their mobile unit into the community and offer basic medical services and health screenings to low-income citizens and low-income communities in the county. The proposed budget, at almost \$1.4 million, is based on the current allocation.

Staff is hoping that within the next 30 days, they'll know exactly what the 2026 budget will look like and can make adjustments accordingly. They anticipate program income in the amount of approximately \$7,500 to be put back into housing rehab. If any of the listed activities have cost savings, discover barriers to completion, or are not recommended for funding, those funds will reallocate to housing rehab.

Alan Harold thanked Lisa Snyder, Diane Sheridan, the Sanitary Department, and the Health Department. He stated that they are almost tripling the amount of dollars that will be put into the program to be used for public health nuisance across the county, particularly for low to moderate income families, to get them compliant with health orders from the General Health District. He appreciated being part of the conversation, and said it was a terrific collaborative effort between the joint staffs.

The HOME Program runs on the same cycle as CDBG, which will begin July 1. The current estimates are based on our current allocation. The recommendations will be increased or decreased, and the final amounts and projects will be adopted by the Board of Stark County Commissioners. All dollars must be used to support affordable housing in the county with the HOME Program.

The funding comes into Stark County to the Board of County Commissioners; Stark County is what we call a designated consortium. The Community Development (CD) Department works with the cities of Alliance and Massillon to determine a shared budget. Those cities do have an input in how the dollars are used in their communities. The activities must be consistent with the Stark County Consolidated Plan.

All activities, since they're housing-related, must be underwritten, reviewed for financial feasibility, and made sure that the organization has capacity to carry through with that project. This application cycle, two eligible applications were received, and both of those applications were from Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio. That application opened October 3rd.

The CD Department provided technical assistance through the due date, which was November 14th, and then they took through November 2025 to review those applications and come up with final recommendations. The program has a 10% administration cap, which staff is proposing 10% for day-to-day administration to make sure they are compliant with the program and to pay for staff salaries. The program also has a required 15% minimum set aside for CHDO projects. CHDOs are Community Housing Development Organizations. No applications for CHDOs were received this year, but per home regulations, staff are still required to set 15% aside. The cities of Alliance and Massillon would like to use their dollars for housing rehab, for housing rehab for households that are determined to be income-eligible that are owner-occupied.

The CD department is anticipating potential funding for county housing rehab at a little more than \$800,000. Income is recycled back into the budget, so staff is proposing to use that program income in order to assist Habitat with those two new construction builds. Habitat for Humanity is asking \$50,000 for each build and also proposing to contribute \$85,000 per each construction build.

Any remaining prior-year program income will be used for either land acquisition, new construction, or housing rehab; everything is geared towards affordable housing development. Staff anticipates about \$25,000 in program income during the program year, which will be used for new construction and/or housing rehab or land acquisition. If any activity fails to begin or reach completion, those funds will be reallocated to housing rehab.

As of today, the action plan is available on RPC's website for a 30-day comment period. It will run through April 2, 2026, and it can also be requested via hard copy.

A second public hearing will be held next Tuesday, March 10th at 10 o'clock, and it will be held at the Commissioner's office at 110 Central Plaza South, Suite 240, in which this presentation will be given again, and the public has the opportunity to attend and comment. Once those allocations are released, staff will take recommendations back to the Commissioners again, and they will finally adopt the final version of the plan, and then it will be submitted to HUD.

Valerie Watson presented the Fair Housing Action Plan for fiscal year 2026. The Fair Housing Department's mission is to eliminate housing discrimination, racial and sexual harassment, and to ensure housing opportunities for all people in Stark County.

Recipients of Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds are obligated to affirmatively further fair housing. The goal of affirmatively furthering fair housing is to combat housing discrimination; to take action to address significant disparities in housing; to transform racially concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity; to undo patterns of segregation, to promote fair housing choice, to provide opportunities for all people to reside in any housing development regardless of their race, color, sex, religion, national origin, familial status, or handicap; and also to lift barriers that restrict access to housing. Basically, affirmatively furthering fair housing is expanding opportunity and creating communities where we all can thrive.

All recipients of the federal funds must self-certify to affirmatively further fair housing. The agency no longer has to conduct an Analysis of Impediment but must self-certify. Stark County Commissioners and its Fair Housing Department certifies to affirmatively further fair housing.

The Fair Housing Action Plan is a reflection of the five-year Consolidated Plan, which incorporates the needs throughout all of Stark County. It also provides a concise summary of the actions and activities that we will address in the upcoming fiscal year. It's a strategy designed to promote equal access to housing opportunities by addressing discriminatory practices and ensuring compliance with the fair housing laws. The actions and activities that the department will take this upcoming fiscal year include:

- provide educational and outreach initiatives by:
 - creating PSAs covering all seven protected classes under the Fair Housing Act,
 - conducting presentations and trainings to landlords, property managers, and zoning and government officials, educating them and broadening their understanding and responsibilities under the law,
 - providing training to the real estate professionals that can go towards their CE credits that is required every three years to renew their licenses,
 - developing and distributing the quarterly newsletter to landlords, property managers, real estate agents, zoning officials, and county personnel.
 - distributing the fair housing landlord tenant brochures to stakeholders and everyone within the county.
- obtain testers to conduct random rental and real estate sales tests throughout the county. These tests will be conducted to ensure that families with children, minorities, persons with disabilities, and others in a protected class are receiving equal treatment.
- monitor and test some housing providers who had questionable legal rental practices in the past to make sure they are abiding by the fair housing laws.
- monitor the internet and newspaper advertising related to the rental and sale of housing and address any discriminatory issues that we discover.
- provide news releases and ads in local newspapers, on social media, and the RPC website to provide awareness on housing discrimination. All the advertisements will convey how someone can report illegal acts of housing discrimination.
- file discrimination complaints on housing providers who violate the fair housing law.
- create affordable housing opportunities outside impacted areas by:
 - working with the community development and planning staff to remove any barriers to affordable housing.
 - participating in a roundtable with developers, building officials, zoning officials, and other stakeholders to foster an open dialogue about affordable housing.

The department will educate and train zoning officials on potential fair housing violations as it relates to zoning to broaden their understanding and to raise awareness on the effects of affordable housing. The Fair Housing Act covers all housing transactions. Oftentimes, people think it only covers the rental and the sale of housing. It also covers zoning, land use, and the development of housing. Any housing-related transaction is covered under the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act prohibits local government from making zoning or land use decisions or implementing policies that exclude or discriminate against persons in a protected class.

In conclusion, the Stark County Fair Housing Department will continue to provide fair housing training to the community through educational outreach programs and literature. The Fair Housing Manager will continue to provide information on potential fair housing violations as it relates to zoning. The department will continue its goals to ensure equal housing opportunity. Necessary actions will be taken to certify that the fair housing law is properly and fairly enforced throughout the county. The Stark County Commissioners certify to affirmatively further fair housing.

McAlister motioned, Leach seconded, and the motion carried to come out of the public hearing.

McAlister motioned, Miller seconded, and the motion carried to adopt the Action Plan and recommend it to the commissioners for final approval.

5) TOWNSHIP ZONING AMENDMENTS

Nicole Blunk presented the staff recommendations for the following zoning amendment:

MA #1 Proposed rezoning from R-1 Low-Density Residential District to B-2 Commercial Business

District - Part of one tract, approximately 4.20 acres, located on the northwest corner of Edison/SR 619 & Ravenna/SR 44 in the NE ¼ Section 16, Marlboro Township (legal description on file with the Township)

Owner/Applicant: James Ringer/Ringer Properties, LLC

Current Use: Multi-Family Residential Proposed Use: Business PPN: 3104195

Vincent moved, Leach seconded and the motion carried to recommend denial of the proposed rezoning to B-2 Commercial Business District. The following facts were presented to the Commission for consideration:

1. The land use of the area consists of low-density residential and agriculture uses to the north, east and west. Immediately south is classified as public service. Further east on the south side of Edison/SR 619 there are business and industrial uses.
2. The existing zoning consists of the R-1 Low-Density Residential District to the north, east and west. Directly south of the subject area is zoned B-2 Commercial Business. The commercial area extends approximately 875 feet west and approximately 3,030 feet east from the Ravenna/SR 44 intersection, along Edison/SR 619.
3. The area proposed for rezoning is approximately 4.20 acres and is part of a tract that is split zoned between R-1 & B-2 districts. This tract appears to have been split zoned since the 1960s. The applicant is proposing to rezone the entire subject tract as B-2 Commercial Business District. According to the application, the purpose of this zone change request is to have the entire property to be zoned B-2 Commercial Business.
4. The Stark County 2040 Future Land Use Plan identifies the future land use of the area in question as rural/agriculture.
5. There are two structures which exist in the subject area that are currently being used for personal residential purposes.
6. This area is not served by sanitary sewer or public water facilities, which are generally required for the type of commercial development that would be permitted in a B-2 district.
7. Although the B-2 district exists on part of the subject tract and to the south, it is contained to the corner of Edison/SR 619 and Ravenna/SR 44.
8. When considering a zone change, the most intensive uses permitted in that district must be considered. The permitted uses allowed in the B-2 district, which includes uses such as a transportation terminal; vehicle service; sales and storage; printing facilities; and hotels could have a detrimental effect on the surrounding rural area.
9. If the Township is interested in allowing more commercial businesses to develop in this area, staff recommends the Township consider establishing a revised zoning scheme identifying commercial corridors

There was some discussion focused on the property that appears to be used for a business with trucks on site. While it may look commercial, conversations with the township indicated the township reviewed the situation and determined the use is still compliant with the current residential zoning. The broader concern expressed was avoiding piecemeal rezoning of individual parcels along State Route 44 and instead considering a comprehensive zoning approach for the entire corridor if commercial uses are to be allowed.

Corine Valentine presented the staff recommendations for the following zoning amendment:

NI #1 Proposed text amendment that would: Modify regulations pertaining to fencing and swimming pools

Sanderson moved, Vincent seconded and the motion carried to recommend approval of a modification of the proposed text amendment. The following facts were presented to the Commission for consideration:

1. An amendment has been proposed that would modify regulations pertaining to fencing and swimming pools.
2. The proposal states a wall or hedge shall be considered a fence for the purpose of the regulations; however, clarification is recommended, as fencing requirements for swimming pools could be interpreted as hedges being accepted in lieu of required fencing.
3. Currently, the regulations limit fencing within the required front yard to a maximum height of two and one-half (2-1/2) feet. The proposed amendment would instead establish a minimum height of two and one-half (2-1/2) feet, with a maximum of six (6) feet. Staff recommend the Township consider keeping the maximum height for fencing within the front yard to two and one-half (2-1/2) feet.
4. As proposed, the amendment would permit fences within industrial districts to be located a minimum of five (5) feet from any street right-of-way line, while requiring a minimum setback of ten (10) feet in all other districts. Staff recommends the Township adopt a uniform ten-foot setback requirement for fencing in all zoning districts.
5. For fences proposed across public easements, the proposed amendment requires approval from the Stark County Engineer; however, in many instances these easements are not established by the Engineer's Office, but rather by another agency. Staff recommend the Township revise the requirement to obtain approval from the applicable agency with jurisdiction over the easement.
6. As proposed, the amendment would authorize the use of a pool cover as a conditionally permitted alternative to a required fence. Staff recommend maintaining consistent language within the resolution by clearly specifying the type of pool cover that may be permitted in lieu of a fence.
7. The proposed amendment would introduce additional language to Article XI outlining conditions related to automatic pool covers. Staff recommend consolidating all provisions concerning automatic pool covers within Article VI to ensure consistency and uniformity throughout the resolution.
8. Staff would encourage the Township to ensure that their legal counsel has reviewed the amendment for sufficiency and compliance with applicable laws. There are a few grammatical changes and formatting comments that staff will be providing the township in a marked up copy.

There was discussion on pool covers stability with weight placed on top. The pool covers must be ASM certified to be compliant.

6) SUBDIVISION ACTION

Valentine presented the Subcommittee's recommendations on the following projects:

SITE IMPROVEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Ample Storage, Inc. (Rev)

(2 – 11,200 sf bldgs. & paving)

NE ¼ Section 19, Lake Township

Conditional Approval

The Fountains at Edgewood Community Center – Pickleball Courts

(3,600 sf pickleball courts, walkways, paving & parking)

NW ¼ Section 10, Plain Township

Approval

Kingsway Paving

(2 – 18,500 sf bldgs., 17,000 sf bldg., walkways, paving, parking & access drive)

SW ¼ Section 32, Sugarcreek Township

Conditional Approval

The Reserve on Woodlawn (Rev)

(10 multi-family complexes, approx. 57,000 sf bldg., 2,331 sf bldg., 2,121 sf bldg., approx. 1,200 sf addition, 320 sf pavilion, dumpster enclosures, retaining wall, patio, pickleball courts, bocce court, walkways, paving & parking)

NE ¼ Section 36, Jackson Township

Conditional Approval

McAlister moved, Vincent seconded, and the motion carried to accept the Subcommittee's recommendations of the above-noted site improvement plan reviews.

FINAL PLAT REVIEWS

Floradale Acres No. 4

(replat of parts of lots 1-4 in Floradale Acres)

SE ¼ Section 9, Jackson Township

Conditional Approval

George E. Pollock's Addition to North Lawrence No. 2

(replat of lots 14-15, part of lot 13 & vacated unnamed alley in George. E. Pollock's Addition to North Lawrence)

SE ¼ Section 29, Lawrence Township

Conditional Approval

Mount Marie Place No. 8

(replat of parts of lots 1-5 in Mount Marie Place)

SW ¼ Section 12, Perry Township

Conditional Approval

Village Manor No. 3

(replat of lot 1 & parts of lots 2 & 3 in Village Manor)

SE & SW ¼ Section 6, Lake Township

Conditional Approval

Wicker Creek No. 6

SW ¼ Section 1, Plain Township

Conditional Approval

Vincent moved, Leach seconded, and the motion carried to accept the Subcommittee's recommendation for the above-noted final plat review. The commission recommended approval for the variance request of Section 530.4.A: Double Frontage for the Village Manor No. 3.

7) AGREEMENTS

- M&L contract extension for HOME-ARP underwriting and subsidy layering

Miller moved, McAlister seconded, and the motion carried to approve the contract extension with M&L.

- ASK Development contract extension for HOME Investment Partnership Program underwriting and subsidy layering

Miller moved, McAlister seconded, and the motion carried to approve the contract extension with ASK Development.

8) TRAVEL

- a. American Planning Association National Conference, Detroit Michigan – Bob Nau, Jonelle Melnichenko

Leach moved, Miller seconded, and the motion carried to approve the travel request.

9) PERSONNEL

McAlister motioned and Vincent seconded and motion carried to have the co-pay for insurance increased from 11% to 12% effective February 26, 2026.

10) OTHER BUSINESS

The Annual Dinner will be held on March 11 at Tozzi's on 12th.

Thorley thanked the staff for the successful Governmental Law Seminar held on February 28th.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

David Thorley, President

Bob Nau, Secretary