MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
September 8, 2026

The Stark County Regional Planning Commission met in regular session Tuesday, September 8, 2026, 7:00 p.m., in the Stark County Regional Planning Commission Community Meeting Room.

RPC Members or Alternates
Dave Thorley, President
Dave McAlister, County Appointee
Bob Leach, County Appointee
Bob Nau, Secretary

Staff
Jennifer Bayer
Lisa Snyder
Diane Sheridan
Sean Phillips
Valerie Watson
Sarah Peters
Jonelle Melnichenko
Abdullah Alanazi
Heather Cunningham
Corine Valentine
Curtis Bungard

Other
Matt Duncan
Pat Rakoci
Keith Fitz

1) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dave Thorley opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 4, 2026 MEETING

Leach moved, McAlister seconded, and the motion carried to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2026 meeting.

3) FINANCIAL REPORT

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

4) STAFF REPORT/PUBLIC HEARING

McAlister moved, Leach seconded to adjourn from regular session into a Public Hearing for the consideration of the FY 2025 Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report.

Lisa Snyder reviewed the FY 25 CAPER also known as the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report. This report is due annually to HUD and programs include the Community Development Block Grant Program, Home Investment Partnerships Program, a special subset of the CDBG Program (CDBG-CV), which came from the CARES Act, and also Home Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP).

For the CDBG Program, approximately $1.7 million in resources were available, including the annual allocation, prior-year funds, and program income. Expenditures totaled just over $830,000. The HOME Program had approximately $3.2 million available, with expenditures of slightly more than $640,000. The programs primarily serve low- to moderate-income residents, with approximately 99% of those served falling into the extremely low- or low-income categories. Of those reporting race, 83% were white, 9% were black or African American, and 8% were multiracial.

Under CDBG public service activities, seven sub-recipients served more than 2,500 Stark County residents, including seniors, unhoused individuals, victims of domestic violence, and other low-income residents.

Three public facility and infrastructure projects were included in the 2025 budget:

- Perry Drive reconstruction: $100,000 in CDBG funding was committed toward a $4.5 million project. Funds are being used for storm sewer replacement, sidewalks, street lighting, and improvements in low-income census tracts.
- Stark Parks – Quail Hollow Carriage House: $350,000 was budgeted for renovations to the historic property. The project is still in the planning stage while plans are reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office. Planned improvements include ADA restrooms, grading, and entrance improvements.
- Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities – Southgate School: $50,000 was budgeted for a new piece of adaptive playground equipment. The project was delayed following a fire at the school last summer but is now moving forward again with quotes being obtained.

The County's Housing Rehabilitation Program completed 28 home rehabilitation projects during the program year. Examples included new furnaces and ductwork, air conditioning systems, basement windows, electrical upgrades, siding, roofs, gutters, replacement windows, and accessibility improvements such as handrails.

The County also provided $300,000 to Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio for the acquisition of four parcels on Swiss Avenue SW in Perry Township. Habitat plans to construct homes on the properties and is currently ahead of schedule, with construction expected to meet the required completion deadlines well ahead of schedule.

For the remaining CDBG-CV funds, which were originally provided to address COVID-19 impacts, approximately $1.7 million was allocated to the County. During 2025, the funds were used to replace failing septic systems or connect eligible households to sanitary sewer. Eleven households were served, including three extremely low-income, four low-income, and four moderate-income households. Just over $70,000 remains, which must be used by September 2027.

The HOME-ARP Program provided the County with slightly more than $3.2 million to address the needs of individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and other vulnerable populations. The county plans to use the funding primarily for affordable rental housing and supportive services. To date, expenditures have been for administration, and the county issued a second request for proposals. Additional information on the status of the HOME-ARP funding will be provided later in the meeting.

The draft CAPER is currently available for public review. The 15-day public comment period runs from August 26th through 4 p.m. on September 11th. Following the comment period, the CAPER will be presented to the Board of Commissioners on September 16th and submitted to HUD by September 28th.

Thorley inquired if the septic systems are being done in conjunction with the Board of Health. Snyder explained they are not, but that the Board of Health is responsible for approving the design plan and that there will be future projects with sewer connections.

Valerie Watson provided an update on its Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) activities, which will be included in the 2025 CAPER. The Fair Housing Act, which was passed 58 years ago, prohibits discrimination in housing sales, rentals, insurance, and financing. It also requires HUD grantees to take steps to combat discrimination, reduce segregation, and promote accessible and inclusive communities. In March 2025, HUD discontinued several previous comprehensive planning and reporting requirements, including the five-year equity plans and certain federal data reporting requirements. Grantees are now primarily required to report on the actions they have taken to affirmatively further fair housing.

During the fiscal year, the Fair Housing Department investigated 13 housing discrimination complaints, responded to 44 inquiries from local government agencies, and assisted nearly 500 unduplicated households. The department also provided referrals to 173 individuals and assistance to 27 individuals from other agencies and organizations. The department continued its education and outreach efforts by updating and distributing nearly 600 Landlord-Tenant “Know Your Rights” brochures, developing a Fair Housing newsletter that was viewed by 1,854 people, and publishing information through social media, local newspapers, the RPC website, and newsletter. Staff conducted nine presentations and educational trainings, including a fair housing panel attended by more than 100 local landlords. Two tester training sessions were also held to recruit individuals who can help identify potential housing discrimination.

Other efforts included monitoring 12 housing providers because of questionable rental practices, developing a new brochure explaining how fair housing laws apply to zoning and land-use decisions, and publishing an article addressing what tenants should know about rent increases.

Of the 13 discrimination complaints received, 10 involved disability, two involved race, and one involved familial status. All of the complaints involved rental housing and occurred in Alliance, Jackson Township, Louisville, North Canton, or Plain Township, with Plain Township having the highest number of complaints. Three complaints were resolved, while others remained pending or were closed due to lack of evidence, expiration of the one-year statute of limitations, lack of follow-through by the complainant, or a

finding of no probable cause. Watson noted that complaint numbers do not necessarily reflect the actual amount of discrimination occurring because many incidents go unreported or undetected.

A notable case involved an apartment complex in Jackson Township, where a tenant with a disability experienced ongoing harassment and intimidation from a neighboring tenant. The neighbor repeatedly blocked the tenant's access to transportation, which was particularly problematic because she used a mobility scooter. The investigation found that the property owner was aware of the situation but failed to take action. The case ultimately resulted in a conciliation agreement requiring the landlord to pay $1,250, include the Fair Housing/Equal Housing Opportunity logo in advertisements, and complete fair housing training.

Watson emphasized that fair housing protections remain important for preventing discrimination against people of color, families with children, and individuals with disabilities, including discriminatory steering, denial of reasonable accommodations, restrictions on children, and other barriers to housing. In conclusion, based on the activities completed during the reporting period, Stark County has taken actions to affirmatively further fair housing and therefore certifies compliance with HUD's AFFH requirements.

The public hearing was closed at 7:24 p.m.

Diane Sheridan presented an update on the implementation of Stark County's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. The county received slightly more than $3.2 million in HOME-ARP funding, which is intended to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability through affordable housing and supportive services. The county's allocation plan includes more than $2.3 million for the development of affordable rental housing, $304,841 for supportive services, $108,000 for developer capacity building and operating costs, and approximately $484,000 for administration. All HOME-ARP funds must be utilized by September 30, 2030.

The county held its first application workshop in 2024 and received one proposal that was consistent with the allocation plan. However, that project was canceled by the developer in September 2025. Following the cancellation, Commissioner Harold led a working group focused on keeping the HOME-ARP investment in Alliance and working with the City of Alliance to identify opportunities for the funding.

A second request for proposals was issued in 2026. The City of Alliance agreed to provide five vacant residential lots for $1 each, allowing for the development of 10 affordable housing units through the construction of five duplexes. The county evaluated three proposals, from Alliance for Children and Family, ICAN Housing, and Neighborhood Development Services (NDS), based on developer capacity, compliance with the RFP, 15 year management of the properties, financial underwriting, protection of taxpayer investment, and the ability to complete the project before the 2030 deadline.

Following a public work session with the Commissioners, the potential developer, and the architect on August 18, staff recommended Neighborhood Development Services for funding. NDS proposed Hope Landing Village, a project consisting of five duplexes and 10 affordable two- and three-bedroom units. The units will be targeted to literally homeless households referred through the Continuum of Care. Construction is expected to take approximately 12 months. The project will also provide supportive services to residents, including behavioral health case management, counseling, job readiness, employment assistance, and workforce services. The county plans to enter into three contracts with NDS: approximately $2.3 million for affordable rental housing development, $304,841 for supportive services, and $108,000 for nonprofit capacity building and operating costs.

As required by HUD, the county completed an underwriting and subsidy layering review to ensure that HOME-ARP funds are limited to the amount necessary to make the project viable and that taxpayer funds are being used appropriately. The review determined that the project falls within HUD requirements, addresses a clear need for affordable housing in Alliance and Stark County, and provides long-term housing stability.

The proposed duplexes will each contain two units, with a mix of two- and three-bedroom units and parking located behind the buildings. The designs presented were preliminary and may be modified as the project moves forward.

Overall, the staff recommendation is to fund Neighborhood Development Services' Hope Landing Village project, which would use the County's HOME-ARP allocation to create 10 new affordable rental units in Alliance for literally homeless individuals and families, along with supportive services to help residents maintain housing stability.

McAlister moved, Leach seconded, and the motion carried to recommend that the Board of Stark County Commissioners enter into a contract with Neighborhood Development Services (NDS) for $2,749,051.55 to implement the County's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

5) TOWNSHIP ZONING AMENDMENTS

Jonelle Melnichenko presented the staff recommendations for the following zoning text amendment:

NI #2 Proposed text amendment that would: Modify regulations pertaining to accessory structures.

Leach moved, McAlister seconded and the motion carried to recommend **approval** 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 accessory structures.

2. As proposed, the amendment would increase the maximum allowable square footage for accessory structures on tracts five (5) acres or larger to 2,400 square feet. Under the current regulations, accessory structures on tracts over 43,000 square feet are limited to a maximum of 1,800 square feet.

3. The proposed amendment would allow accessory structures on tracts five (5) acres or larger to be up to twenty-four (24) feet in height; however, the current regulations state all accessory structures in residential districts shall be limited to seventeen (17) feet in height. Staff recommend the Township clarify if this is applicable to residential properties five (5) acres and larger.

4. There are a few grammatical changes and formatting comments that staff will be providing the Township with a marked-up copy.

6) SUBDIVISION ACTION

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

SITE IMPROVEMENT PLAN REVIEW

AEP – Shepler Church & Dueber
(paving & parking)
NE ¼ Section 20, Canton Township — Conditional Approval

Belden Park Crossings
(paving)
NW ¼ Section 24, Jackson Township — Approval

Blue Wave Car Wash – Waynesburg/SR 43
(3,827 sf bldg., dumpster enclosure, walkways, paving & parking)
NE ¼ Section 21, Sandy Township — Conditional Approval

Epic Cascades Car Wash – Lincoln/SR 172 & Kolpwood (Rev)
(2,732 sf addition, dumpster enclosure, paving, parking & drive modification)
SW ¼ Section 10, Perry Township — Conditional Approval

Ermanno's Pizza – Louisville/SR 153
(2,912 sf bldg., dumpster enclosure, walkways, paving, parking & access drive)
SW ¼ Section 29, Nimishillen Township — Conditional Approval

Fry Family Park – Parking
(walkways, paving & parking)
NE ¼ Section 26, Pike Township — Approval

North Canton Soccer Club – Midway Soccer Complex
(2 - 900 sf pavilions, 3 - 21,600 sf soccer fields, 2 - 33,750 sf soccer fields, 2- 69,300 sf soccer fields, paving, parking & access drive)
SE & SW ¼ Section 21, Lake Township — Conditional Approval

Redwood – Cleveland/Lake
(19 multi-family bldgs., office/garage unit, walkways, paving, parking & access drive)
SE ¼ Section 30, Lake Township — Conditional Approval

Stark County Engineer - Decanting Station
(1,680 sf bldg.)
NE ¼ Section 14, Perry Township — Approval

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

RENEWAL OF PRELIMINARY PLAN REVIEW

Glen Meadows
NW ¼ Section 8, Lake Township — Approval

Wellington Hills West
NW ¼ Section 10, Plain Township — Approval

Leach moved, McAlister seconded, and the motion carried to accept the Subcommittee's recommendations of the above noted renewal of preliminary plan review.

FINAL PLATS

Belden Reserves
SE & SW ¼ Section 25, Jackson Township — Conditional Approval

M.H. Frank's Moreland Allotment No. 3
(replat of lots 36 and 249 in M.H. Frank's Moreland Allotment)
NE ¼ Section 23, Canton Township — Conditional Approval

Shawbell Gardens No. 3
(replat of lot 11 in Shawbell Gardens)
NE ¼ Section 15, Perry Township Approval

McAlister moved, Leach seconded, and the motion carried to accept the Subcommittee's recommendation for the above-noted final plat review. The Commission also approved the variance request of Section 530.4.A (Double Frontage) for M.H. Frank's Moreland Allotment No. 3.

7) OTHER BUSINESS

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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David Thorley, President Bob Nau, Secretary