

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES JANUARY 14, 2026



MEETING LOCATION: City Council Chambers, City Building

MEMBERS PRESENT: Roger Daniel AJ Mentel
Nancy Griffith David Kash
Gabriel Schoenlein Tara Ramsey

STAFF PRESENT: Claire Fetters Binegar, City Planner
Charles Galvin, Staff Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob Sweet, Josh Long, Mihail Sevastakis

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice Chair AJ Mentel called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The roll was called by Claire Fettters Binegar. A voting quorum was present. Mr. Mentel motioned to excuse Mr. Parsons's absence; Mr. Schoenlein seconded the motion. The motion passed through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Excuse

Roger Daniel – Yes to Excuse

Nancy Griffith – Yes to Excuse

David Kash – Yes to Excuse

Tara Ramsey – Yes to Excuse

Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Excuse

Mr. Kash led the pledge of allegiance.

PLANNING COMMISSION ELECTIONS

Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Commission

Mr. Mentel noted the first order of business, as it was the first meeting of the year, was to hold elections for the various roles within Planning Commission membership. Mr. Mentel stated the current chair for Planning Commission was Will Parsons and he was the vice chair. Mr. Kash moved that Will Parsons be appointed Chair of Planning Commission; Mr. Mentel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Appoint

Roger Daniel – Yes to Appoint

Nancy Griffith – Yes to Appoint

David Kash – Yes to Appoint

Tara Ramsey – Yes to Appoint

Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Appoint

Mr. Mentel then motioned to nominate himself to be appointed as Vice Chair of Planning Commission; Mr. Daniel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll

call with a 5-0 vote, with Mr. Mentel abstaining from the vote.

AJ Mentel – Abstained
Roger Daniel – Yes to Appoint
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Appoint
David Kash – Yes to Appoint
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Appoint
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Appoint

Mr. Mentel moved to the next election, the Board of Zoning Appeals appointee, noting he was the current appointee and would be interested in continuing on with the role. Mr. Kash moved that Mr. Mentel be the Planning Commission representative on the Board of Zoning Appeals; Mr. Schoenlein seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 5-0 vote, with Mr. Mentel abstaining from the vote.

AJ Mentel – Abstained
Roger Daniel – Yes to Appoint
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Appoint
David Kash – Yes to Appoint
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Appoint
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Appoint

Mr. Mentel moved to the last election, the Historic Commission appointee, noting Mr. Daniel was the current representative. Mr. Mentel then moved to nominate Mr. Daniel as the Planning Commission representative on Historic Commission; Mr. Schoenlein seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 5-0 vote, with Mr. Daniel abstaining from the vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Appoint
Roger Daniel – Abstained
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Appoint
David Kash – Yes to Appoint
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Appoint
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Appoint

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – OCTOBER 8, 2025, NOVEMBER 12, 2025 & December 10, 2025

Mr. Mentel stated the next order of business was the meeting minutes to review and asked if anyone had any corrections. With no suggestions or comments, Mr. Mentel motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Schoenlein seconded the motion. Ms. Binegar asked if the motion was for all three minutes; Mr. Mentel confirmed. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Approve
Roger Daniel – Yes to Approve

Nancy Griffith – Yes to Approve
David Kash – Yes to Approve
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Approve
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Approve

PUBLIC HEARING: MAP AMENDMENT (ZONE CHANGE)

1301 S. Marshall Road

Prior to beginning the public hearing, Mr. Mentel asked Mr. Kash to swear Ms. Binegar in. Ms. Binegar was sworn in.

Mr. Mentel introduced the next item on the agenda as a request by Jonathan Wocher of McBride Dale Clarion on behalf of CASTO to amend the zoning map for parcels Q6542052000018 and Q6542055000012 from R-4P: Planned Development District to B-2: Community Business District. The subject parcels, commonly known 1301 S. Marshall Road, equate to a total of 5.4316 acres. The proposed map amendment will require approval by Middletown City Council following Planning Commission's recommendation on the application per Chapter 1226.03 of the Middletown Development Code. Mr. Mentel asked Ms. Binegar for the staff report. Ms. Binegar presented the staff report using a PowerPoint presentation and displayed the review criteria for map amendments at the end of the presentation to conclude her staff report.

With no questions for staff, Mr. Mentel then opened the public hearing, inviting anyone who wished to speak in support of the application to come forward. Rob Sweet was sworn in. Mr. Sweet stated he was in attendance for Mr. Wocher and explained the proposed map amendment and its consistency with the future land use map.

Mr. Mentel invited anyone else wishing to speak in favor of the project to come forward. Seeing none, Mr. Mentel then asked anyone who wished to speak in opposition to the project to come forward. Seeing no additional testimony, Mr. Mentel closed the public hearing.

Moving to deliberation, the Commission was in agreement that the application was straight forward. Mr. Kash noted the subject parcels is virtually separated from the residential zoning districts with the four-lane Grand Avenue and the map amendment would be consistent with existing commercial development in proximity. Mr. Mentel stated there were no specific plans for future development, but the map amendment would set up the property for future consideration. Mr. Schoenlein motioned to approve the application, as submitted; Mr. Daniel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Approve
Roger Daniel – Yes to Approve
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Approve
David Kash – Yes to Approve
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Approve
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Approve

PUBLIC HEARING: CONDITIONAL USE – AUTOMOTIVE SALES AND LEASING

3228 Omaha Street

Mr. Mentel introduced the next item on the agenda as a request by applicant and property owner Dylan Mohammed for Conditional Use approval to allow for a car dealership at the approximate 0.82-acre parcel known as Q6542102000094 or 3228 Omaha Street. The parcel is zoned R-4: Attached Residential District where automotive sales and leasing are prohibited according to Table 1204-3 of the Middletown Development Code, but a use variance has been previously approved by Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. Mentel asked Ms. Binegar for the staff report. Ms. Binegar presented the staff report using a PowerPoint presentation and displayed the recommended staff conditions, review criteria, time limit, and appeals process at the end of the presentation to conclude her staff report.

Mr. Mentel asked if there were any questions for staff; Mr. Kash asked if the approved use variance for the property requires City Council approval or confirmation; Ms. Binegar stated it does not. Mr. Kash then expressed his confusion about how the application before them reconciles the approved use variance and referenced City staff's comments in the staff report about the proposed use. Ms. Binegar stated the property is zoned R-4, and based on the current zoning regulations in addition to the future land use map, the application does not meet the criteria for a conditional use approval. Mr. Kash inquired about in the event the Commission does not approve the conditional use application, how it would affect the use variance; Mr. Galvin advised the Commission to apply the code to the best of their ability on the application before them and do not be encumbered by what the Board of Zoning Appeals has or has not done. Mr. Daniel discussed an item, but it was inaudible on the recording.

With no additional questions for staff, Mr. Mentel opened the public hearing, inviting anyone who wished to speak in support of the application to come forward. Seeing none, Mr. Mentel then asked anyone who wished to speak in opposition to the project to come forward. Seeing no additional testimony, Mr. Mentel closed the public hearing.

Moving into deliberation, Mr. Mentel explained the background the Board of Zoning Appeals case on that approved the use variance for the automotive sales and leasing and explained one of the staff recommendations that would prohibit further encroachment of the commercial use into the residential neighborhood. Ms. Binegar asked the Commission to ensure they are focused on the zoning of the property and the zoning regulations rather than an applicant's livelihood. Mr. Mentel stated he wanted to add context. Mr. Mentel then asked if the Ohio dealer's license had been submitted by the applicant; Ms. Binegar stated it had not been. Mr. Mentel stated he shared his thoughts on the case but noted when looking at the current zoning of the property, the proposed use is not permitted in the R-4 district. Mr. Daniel noted the applicant did not seem to be helping themselves by cooperating.

Mr. Schoenlein motioned to deny the application; Mr. Daniel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Deny
Roger Daniel – Yes to Deny
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Deny
David Kash – Yes to Deny
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Deny

Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Deny

PUBLIC HEARING: CONDITIONAL USE – RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (INDOORS)

555 N. Verity Parkway

Mr. Mentel introduced the next item on the agenda as a request by applicant Leah Allen on behalf of property owner Marlin Hill for Conditional Use approval to allow for a bingo hall at the approximate 0.69-acre parcel known as Q6532008000006 or 555 N. Verity Parkway. The parcel is zoned UC-S: Urban Core Support Subdistrict where recreational facilities (indoors) are a conditional use according to Table 1204-3 of the Middletown Development Code which requires Planning Commission review and approval. Mr. Mentel then asked Ms. Binegar for the staff report. Ms. Binegar presented the staff report using a PowerPoint presentation and displayed the recommended staff conditions, review criteria, time limit, and appeals process at the end of the presentation to conclude her staff report.

Mr. Mentel asked if there were any questions for staff; Mr. Daniel asked if the nearby property owner give any reason for their opposition; Ms. Binegar responded that there was no reasoning provided, and the correspondence had been forwarded to the Commission. Mr. Mentel asked what the Community & Economic Development Department meant by activating the area in the staff report; Ms. Binegar provided an example on a previous case the Commission had seen – the church in the former movie theater. Ms. Binegar explained that Commission had understood that while the church would not align with the future land use map, there would be an immediate benefit for the surrounding businesses and activate the area. Mr. Mentel then asked for further clarification on the charity's status; Ms. Binegar explained that a charitable organization's status can be researched on the IRS's website and that just because the status is rejected or denied, does not indicate that the organization is not legitimate, such as the organization has not been in operation or there had been a lapse. Ms. Binegar then noted this status is of importance because the requirements to seek approval from the State of Ohio's Attorney General to operate a bingo hall. Mr. Kash asked if during her research, if Ms. Binegar found that it was required that a charitable organization be registered as a 501c3 to operate a bingo hall; Ms. Binegar stated she had looked for the information, but could not find conclusive requirements.

With no additional questions for staff, Mr. Mentel opened the public hearing, inviting anyone who wished to speak in support of the application to come forward. Leah Allen was sworn in. Ms. Allen explained the tax exempt suspension staff had referenced, noting the suspension was due to an accounting error and the tax exempt status has since been reinstated. Ms. Allen then discussed the need to find a new space following the rent increase at her current location and the proposed use.

Mr. Mentel asked if the location would be used for storage and distribution for the charity; Ms. Allen confirmed. Mr. Daniel asked where the applicant was operating currently; Ms. Allen stated that she had a storage unit and there have been difficulties for operational logistics. Mr. Daniel asked where she had been operating; Ms. Allen stated that she had been operating at the Crown Plaza. Mr. Mentel then asked how many individuals play bingo on a regular basis; Ms. Allen stated it varies as some nights there would be sixty people, other nights there would be twenty people.

Then, Mr. Mentel invited anyone who wished to speak in opposition to the request. With no public testimony, Mr. Mentel closed the public hearing.

Moving into deliberation, Mr. Mentel asked Ms. Binegar if the additional charitable use of the property would be wrapped into the application; Mr. Galvin responded that the bingo hall use would be what the Commission would be considering, any additional uses would be separate. Mr. Kash noted if the application were approved, the bingo hall can operate up to three nights a week, but explained his confusion on the separate use of clothing distribution to those in need as the application does not request use of the property for clothing distribution. Mr. Mentel responded that Table 1204-3 permits community centers with standards in the subject zoning district but noted the use may not be a community center. Mr. Galvin reminded the Commission the application before them was for a conditional use approval to operate a bingo hall and any other uses would be separate. Mr. Mentel asked Ms. Binegar to display the staff recommended conditions; the slide in the PowerPoint with the staff recommended conditions of approval was displayed. Mr. Mentel motioned to approve the application with the conditions recommended by staff which included:

- The applicant provide the City the State of Ohio Attorney General's issued license to operate a bingo hall at the time of Certificate of Zoning Compliance application submission.
- The applicant be in full compliance with the City of Middletown Building Inspection Division's requirements.
- Planning Commission may revoke a conditional use approval after holding a hearing if it is determined that the terms and conditions of the conditional use approval have not been or are not presently being met.

Mr. Kash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Approve

Roger Daniel – Yes to Approve

Nancy Griffith – Yes to Approve

David Kash – Yes to Approve

Tara Ramsey – Yes to Approve

Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Approve

PUBLIC HEARING: FINAL PLAT

The Townes of Lincoln Village

Mr. Mentel introduced the next item on the agenda as the final plat for The Townes of Lincoln Village and asked Ms. Binegar for the staff report. Ms. Binegar presented the staff report using a PowerPoint presentation and displayed the review criteria for major subdivisions to conclude the analysis.

Mr. Mentel asked if the comment from Public Works Department was substantial; Ms. Binegar responded that the comment was administrative.

With no additional questions for staff, Mr. Mentel opened the public hearing, inviting anyone who wished to speak in support of the application to come forward. Mihail Sevastakis was sworn in. Mr. Sevastakis spoke about the ongoing project, noting the request for the evening

was the final step to create the parcels and finalize the development. Mr. Sevastakis then stated he would work with staff to resolve the administrative issues and asked for the Commission to approve the final plat.

Mr. Mentel offered if anyone else wished to speak in support of the application to come forward. Seeing none, Mr. Mentel then offered if anyone else wished to speak in opposition to come forward. With no additional testimony, Mr. Mentel closed the public hearing.

Moving into deliberation, Mr. Mentel noted it was another straightforward case and asked if anyone had any comments. Mr. Daniel stated that the Commission had seen various applications for the project. Mr. Mentel motioned to approve the final plat; Mr. Schoenlein seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call with a 6-0 vote.

AJ Mentel – Yes to Approve
Roger Daniel – Yes to Approve
Nancy Griffith – Yes to Approve
David Kash – Yes to Approve
Tara Ramsey – Yes to Approve
Gabriel Schoenlein – Yes to Approve

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

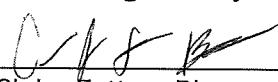
Mr. Mentel asked if any members had Old or New Business. Ms. Binegar reminded everyone of the upcoming special meeting of Planning Commission, for the Middletown Development Code Update. The Commission had agreed to a 4:00 p.m. start time, but with Mr. Mentel's availability starting at 4:30, Ms. Binegar asked if the Commission would be open to starting at 4:30. Mr. Mentel noted he was flexible. The Commission agreed to start at 4:30. Ms. Binegar then explained she would get the updated draft to the Commission as soon as she could and reminded the Commission that the draft document is very much a working session, so the updates are a first draft meant to guide discussion in the workshop.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting and was seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.



AJ Mentel
Planning Commission Vice Chairman



Claire Fettters Binegar
City Planner

*Full recording of the meeting is available on the City of Middletown's YouTube page.