

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
APRIL 16, 2026, 7:30 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting was called to order by Chair Lindquist at 7:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Brickner, Countegan, Grant, Lindquist, Mantey, Stimson, Ware

Commissioners Absent: Trafelet

Others Present: City Planner Mulville-Friel, Staff Engineer Emerson, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultant Auerbach (Carlisle Wortman)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Brickner, supported by Mantey, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. CLUSTER SITE PLAN 59-4-2019

LOCATION: 29150 Farmington Rd
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-10-101-002
PROPOSAL: One-family cluster option subdivision (10 units) in RA-2, One-Family Residential District
ACTION REQUESTED: Recommend to City Council
APPLICANT: Cedar of Farmington, LLC (Ayman Rida)
OWNER: Cedar of Farmington, LLC

Planner review

Referencing the February 18, 2026 Carlisle Wortman memorandum, Planning Consultant Auerbach gave the background and review for this request for a 10-unit single-family cluster development on the former Kendallwood Swim Club property, located on the east side of Farmington Road, south of 13 Mile Road. The proposal had been reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission in 2019.

The cluster development process requires a Planning Commission public hearing and review under the ordinance, followed by a recommendation to the City Council, which holds a second public hearing and makes the final determination.

The 2019 process had proceeded almost to completion, but the required development agreement with the City was not finalized or recorded. The project was then placed on hold,

and the site plan expired. Because the applicant now wishes to proceed, the project must go through the process again, although the prior determination that the site qualifies for cluster development remains in effect. The current stage is the initial public hearing and preliminary plan review.

Surrounding land uses include single-family residential to the west, south, and east, with a wooded area and stormwater basin to the north serving multiple properties. The site is approximately four acres. Ten dwelling units are proposed, with a total density of 2.6 units per acre. Approximately 42% of the site would be preserved as unprogrammed open space or natural area.

The lots and building footprints comply with the applicable dimensional standards. Staff had identified minor setback issues, and the applicant had since submitted revised plans showing those corrections. However, because the City had only recently received the revisions, staff still recommended that the corrections be included as a condition to be reflected in the City Council's review if the Planning Commission moves this project forward.

A tree survey was completed in 2022. The applicant identified landmark trees proposed for removal and provided the required replacements. However, conditions may have changed since 2022, and the Planning Commission could require additional information on tree conditions, including an updated tree survey, although, based on the prior meeting discussion, it appeared the Commission did not view that as necessary. The Commission should decide whether to require a new tree survey or accept the survey provided.

Planning Consultant Auerbach reviewed buffer requirements between cluster developments and adjacent residential properties. The immediately adjacent residential area to the south is separated from the subject site by a creek and existing vegetation. The applicant proposes to use existing natural vegetation, with additional plantings, to meet the buffer requirement.

Since the last review, the applicant has provided two renderings showing typical dwelling types. Cluster developments are required to provide typical building elevations and floor plans. The elevations should typically be architectural and scaled to identify building height, and may also identify typical building materials or a material palette. The Planning Commission could require, at a minimum, elevations identifying building heights. If the Commission wants additional specificity or assurance regarding the type or quality of materials, staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to City Council that a standard material palette be required. Typical floor plans still need to be provided.

Planning Consultant Auerbach summarized that after tonight's public hearing, the Planning Commission must recommend approval with conditions or denial to the City Council based on the Cluster Development Ordinance criteria. The Commission may specify whether a new tree

survey is required, whether the roadway location and configuration are acceptable as proposed or need to be reconfigured, and whether a material palette should be provided.

Commissioner Mantey asked why the applicant was being permitted to use the cluster option and whether environmental or natural preservation was one of the reasons, particularly as that related to the buffer zone issues called out in the Carlisle Wortman report.

City Attorney Schultz stated that, based on his review of the prior Planning Commission and City Council minutes, the qualifying reasons for the cluster option included frontage on a major thoroughfare, the unique parcel shape, the presence of flood plain or poor soil, and open space preservation.

After asking clarifying questions regarding the floodway designations on the Natural Features map included in the packets, Commissioner Mantey stated that, based on his reading of the Carlisle Wortman report, ownership of the buffer zone appeared to be a significant issue. Planning Consultant Auerbach confirmed that staff were concerned because a portion of the vegetation would be located on private lots, making maintenance of that vegetation the responsibility of individual property owners.

Commissioner Mantey asked whether, because the proposal is a cluster development, the rear setback for lots along the southern border could be reduced so that the plan could proceed as proposed while changing ownership of the buffer area from individual ownership to common ownership. The proposed lots appeared to show rear setbacks of approximately 32.5 feet or similar dimensions. He asked whether the Commission could approve a lesser setback, such as 25 feet, if a portion of the rear yard was intended to be preserved as a buffer area.

City Attorney Schultz stated that the issue would be whether there was a public benefit to doing so, noting that the proposal already created a buffer and open space. Commissioner Mantey said his concern was the long-term maintenance of the buffer. If the buffer area were placed in private ownership, individual property owners might treat it as their own yard and mow or alter it, while common ownership would make it more likely that the area would remain as a buffer and would be easier for the City to enforce. If the setback could be reduced, the remaining question was how to address ownership of the buffer area, which the Carlisle Wortman review indicated should be addressed. From an environmental standpoint, the concern included fertilizer use near the water, but the primary issue was ensuring an adequate buffer between the proposed homes and existing homes.

Commissioner Brickner stated that if the Commission wanted to prohibit tree removal or mowing in the common area, those restrictions could be established. Alternatively, the road may have been curved for aesthetic reasons, and it could theoretically be straightened, similar to the former pool driveway, which would pull the homes farther from the creek.

Commissioner Brickner pointed out that the plan appeared to show common areas behind all the lots and that open space could be controlled by the subdivision or association rather than individual lot owners. The condominium bylaws or deed restrictions could state that owners may not disturb the common area.

Commissioner Mantey stated that his understanding from the consultant's review was that the proposed preserved open space includes some open space located on individual owners' property rather than entirely in common ownership, and he questioned whether that was acceptable.

City Attorney Schultz stated that the intent would be for the open space to be governed by enforceable restrictions. The question raised by Commissioner Mantey was whether the preserved open space area is sufficient or whether the Commission wants more area preserved.

City Attorney Shultz explained that the Planning Commission and City Council had previously approved the proposal, and the issue was before the Commission again because it had not been documented. The only alternative appeared to be moving the road. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that moving the road would be an option if the Commission wanted to ensure that more of the vegetation was within a common area maintained by the homeowners' association.

Applicant presentation

Jared Prather, Project Engineer, Boston Engineering, 3121 East Grand River Avenue, Howell, was present on behalf of this application for a one-family cluster option subdivision of 10 homes in an RA-2 One-Family residential district. Ayman Rida, owner, was also present.

Mr. Prather stated that the site is slightly less than four acres. He acknowledged the Commission's questions regarding the buffer and the location of the roadway. The buffer was proposed to remain as shown. 14 trees on the lot are indicated for removal and replacement as shown on the landscape plan.

The buffer will be supplemented with additional whips and saplings. These smaller tree saplings can fill gaps in the existing buffer and grow quickly. The current site plan is proposed to avoid impacts to the buffer area, which ranges from approximately 20 to 30 feet in width. Compared to the original "McKenzie Green" plan from 2019, the rear lot edges are closer to the proposed road rather than closer to the Minnow Pond Drain to the south.

Commissioner Countegan asked for clarification regarding the site boundary. Mr. Prather responded that the southern property line is toward the center of the Minnow Pond Drain. Commissioner Countegan stated that the open space area being discussed is essentially the area from the drain line north to the site condominiums; Mr. Prather confirmed that understanding.

Commissioner Brickner asked whether the current proposal contains fewer lots than the prior design. Mr. Prather stated that the original McKenzie Green plan was, to his recollection, 13 lots, later reduced to 10 lots and approved as 10 lots. When the current team received the plan to continue the process, they kept the proposal at 10 lots.

Commissioner Brickner stated that under the cluster option, the ordinance allows a range in the number of houses per acre or unit density, and that the applicant had selected the lower density. The larger discussion concerned preservation of the area between the rear of the lots and the southern property line. That area needs to be identified by name as a common area. Common areas are typically regulated and maintained through the Master Deed. If a Master Deed will be filed, it should preserve the area between the end of the lots and the southern property line, and individual lot owners should not be permitted to build on the area, maintain it as lawn, apply fertilizer, or otherwise alter it. The area should remain a natural buffer.

Commissioner Brickner stated that he liked the curve in the road and understood that straightening the road could push the development farther north, closer to the regional retention facility. His preference was to retain the curved road design.

Mr. Prather explained that the road configuration is both aesthetic and functional. The alignment provides enough space for utilities to be installed. Moving the road farther north would make it much more difficult to install both sanitary and stormwater utilities. The lots themselves would not be subject to the one-hundred-year floodplain area. This had been discussed by the Planning Commission at the prior meeting when it was confirmed that there would be no issue with the buildable areas being within the one-hundred-year floodplain. The site plan dimensioning had been updated and submitted the prior week, but there had not been enough time for the updated plan to be included in the meeting materials.

Regarding lighting, Mr. Prather stated that no site lighting is proposed and that coach lighting from the garages would be used instead.

Mr. Prather concluded his remarks.

Public hearing

Chair Lindquist opened the meeting to public comment.

Lauren Hermann, 29000 Kendallwood Drive, pointed out that her home abuts the subject property, which had been a problem for the small number of nearby residents for years. To some extent, she looked forward to something being done with the property because the last several years had been very difficult. The creek was currently very high and had already crested and washed away a significant amount of trash. The site has a major trash problem due to the way the lot has been used. Ms. Herman had significant environmental concerns regarding any construction on the property, regardless of the specific plan. She was particularly concerned

about the wildlife in the area, and wanted the buffer zone to be as large as possible and protected long-term. She was concerned about what would happen after residents moved in and attention to the buffer declined. The creek area was a major feature of her home and neighborhood, and one of the reasons residents bought their homes was to protect the creek. With this plan, some existing homes would have a high density of new houses behind them, with some residents potentially having three houses behind them. If houses are to be built, five houses with larger lots would better match the existing neighborhood.

Commissioner Countegan pointed out that the proposed building envelopes appeared to be approximately the same distance from the creek as Ms. Herman's and her neighbors' homes. Ms. Herman responded that the situations were different because her home is already built, the proposal includes significantly greater density, and the existing trees and wildlife habitat would be disturbed.

Commissioner Countegan explained that the Commission must review the proposal under the ordinance and cannot reduce the applicant's permitted density if the ordinance criteria are met. The cluster option allows the City to preserve and control the buffer area, whereas a standard development could allow trees to be removed and lawns to be maintained closer to the creek. Ms. Herman said she did not understand why the homes could not be designed to better match the existing neighborhood. The issues might be different if five houses were proposed, but the proposal includes significant density, and the proposed lots are less than half as wide as her lot.

Commissioner Countegan stated that the Commission is compelled by the ordinance, which allows a certain level of density if the criteria are met, including factors such as frontage on a mile road and irregular parcel shape. The ordinance specifies how much density the developer must be allowed if the property meets standards, and the Commission cannot say that the developer may not have the density permitted by the ordinance. The Commission is required to review plans that fall within the ordinance standards. Commissioner Countegan acknowledged the concerns regarding density and lot width, but stated that Ms. Hermann's question was directed to the environmental argument regarding the distance between the rear of the existing homes and the rear of the proposed homes, which was to be approximately equal.

Ms. Herman pointed out that the existing homes are already developed and that she has no choice but to move her house farther away from the creek. The proposed development would affect trees and wildlife habitat where animals live and nest, and some of the area has already been partially destroyed by machinery. If she could move her house farther away from the creek, she would, but that is not an option. She asked why the development could not include houses that match the existing neighborhood.

Commissioner Countegan explained that the cluster option allows the City to establish and preserve a buffer area and provides some protection of natural areas. If the property were

developed as a standard plat, it could be developed to the creek, and trees could be cut or lawns maintained in the area of concern. He referenced Mr. Mantey's concern regarding fertilizers near the water. The cluster option gives the City some protection of natural areas and avoids infringing on those areas. The City cannot give the applicant less than the ordinance allows, but the cluster option appears to protect the area between the proposed lots and the creek. The proposal appeared to be a compromise between the owner's right to develop the property and preservation of the natural area with the buffer.

Ms. Hermann stated that the issue was not simply whether the proposed homes would be farther from the creek than the existing homes. The Kendallwood neighborhood has natural character and few fences. Placing 10 houses where she believed approximately five houses would fit would not feel like a compromise to nearby residents. The new homes would intrude upon and negatively affect the natural creek bed, which was one of the reasons residents purchased their homes. The former swim and tennis club had been a benefit to property values and the neighborhood, but the current proposal would not be. She understands the property should be developed because it has become a nuisance, and she was not arguing against development, but asked that the City require as much buffer as possible and ensure that the buffer is protected, both out of respect for the nearby residents who have dealt with problems at the site for years and for the benefit of the wildlife.

Commissioner Ware asked Mr. Prather what is located behind Lot 10. Mr. Prather stated that Lot 10 backs up to existing trees and existing landscaping.

Shirley Horn, Kendallwood Drive, stated that her property will face the houses that back up to the creek. Based on the plans and discussion, she was concerned that the proposed homes would be 30 feet tall, approximately 40 feet wide, and located close together. Instead of seeing the existing tree line, she would see structures that could appear to her like a large apartment building. She did not see how the proposal would positively affect the neighborhood and believed it would bring down the value of her home. She also had significant concerns regarding the buffer zone. She stated that Lots 9 and 10 appear to back up to other homes on Ardwick.

Commissioner Countegan clarified that the dimensions shown for the properties represent the building envelope, not necessarily the size of each house.

Commissioner Brickner pointed out that Ms. Horn's subdivision would also allow 30-foot-tall homes under the ordinance, although the homes there were not built that way.

As no other public indicated that they wished to speak, Chair Lindquist closed public comment and brought the matter back to the Commission for discussion and/or a motion.

Commission questions and discussion

Commissioner Mantey asked about the Commission's authority regarding dimensional standards. Planning Consultant Auerbach said that the Planning Commission can modify setback requirements and can approve modifications to dimensional requirements for the district.

Commissioner Countegan said that for comparison purposes, the standard RA-2 zoning standards were included so the public could see what the cluster ordinance allows compared to what a standard plat would allow. In this case, the discussion appeared to be confusing the cluster ordinance with standard platting. Had the staff calculated how many lots could be achieved if the property were developed as a standard plat?

City Attorney Schultz reminded the Commission that in 2019, the plan had been approved by the Planning Commission and City Council, with the final step being an agreement documenting that approval. In the RA-2 district, the minimum lot size is generally 15,000 square feet, and the proposal qualified for cluster development because, in exchange for smaller lot sizes, approximately 42% of the parcel is preserved as open space.

City Attorney Schultz continued that under the cluster option, the Commission can reduce lot sizes and waive or modify setbacks. The question was not necessarily whether the building setback should be made smaller, but whether the lots should be made smaller in order to create more open space or a wider buffer along the southern side. The consultant had suggested, from a planning perspective, that moving the road north could create more open space or buffer, and the applicant had explained why that was not being proposed. The Commission could ask the applicant whether he would be willing to shrink the lots to create more open space to the south.

Commissioner Mantey clarified that the applicant had explained that moving the road would be more expensive because utilities are located toward the north, and would likely be more disruptive to the natural area, requiring disturbance of the area in a way that could defeat the purpose of moving the road.

Chair Lindquist asked Mr. Auerbach for clarification regarding a public comment that Lots 9 and 10 back up to houses. The view shown on the screen appeared to indicate that those lots back up to a larger amount of open space and existing undisturbed vegetation, with some distance from existing homes. Mr. Auerbach stated that the staff did not have information beyond what was shown in the aerial photographs.

Commissioner Mantey stated that the Carlisle Wortman report mentioned that one lot included a buildable area in the one-hundred-year floodplain, and the report indicated the Commission should address the issue. Commissioner Mantey did not believe further action was needed, but reminded the developer that any construction occurring within the one-hundred-year floodplain must be one foot above the elevation of the one-hundred-year floodplain.

Commissioner Countegan clarified that the eastern boundary is off the screen and that the property follows the drain line to the east. The applicant had indicated that the property extends to the middle of the drain, and Kendallwood residents had stated that their property also extends to the middle of the drain.

Commissioner Grant asked what the square footage of the homes would be. Ayman Rida, owner and developer, stated that the homes would be approximately 2,500 to 3,500 square feet. The lots will not be sold individually; he will develop the land and build the homes. Mr. Rida said that with 10 homes and an average of approximately five residents per home, there would be about 50 residents behind the existing homes. The proposed development will be beneficial to the City through increased taxes and will result in fewer people and less activity than the prior swimming pool and club use.

MOTION by Brickner, support by Ware, to recommend that the City Council approve the Cluster Site Plan 59-4-2019 proposal based on the information provided by the applicants, public hearing comments, the March 7, 2026 Carlisle/Wortman review letter, the March 3, 2026 City Engineer review letter, the March 2, 2026 Fire Marshal review letter, and the findings that, given its frontage on a major thoroughfare, unique parcel shape, and presence of a flood plain and poor soil, and the development's preservation of open space, the proposal meets the letter and spirit of Section 34-3.17 of the City of Farmington Hills Zoning Ordinance, applicable Zoning Ordinance requirements, and the goals and objectives of the City of Farmington Hills Master Plan.

In addition, the Commission finds that

- a. Road configuration: The proposed site configuration is acceptable.
- b. Tree Survey: Prior to the City Council's review, an updated tree survey must be provided.
- c. Elevations: Prior to City Council's review, typical dwelling elevations, floor plans, and a standard building material palette must be provided.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to City Council's review, the applicants must submit typical dwelling elevations, floor plans, and a standard building material palette.
2. All items identified in the March 7, 2026 Carlisle/Wortman review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner.
3. All items identified in the March 3, 2026 City Engineer review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer.
4. All items identified in the March 2, 2026 Fire Marshal review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.

5. **Buffer area behind all lots will be considered a common area to be preserved in its natural state and placed in the master deed, so that the area will be maintained by the homeowner association.**

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

B. SPECIAL APPROVAL SA 51-3-2026

LOCATION: 32130 Bonnet Hill Road
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-10-405-006
PROPOSAL: Temporary staging area for Kendallwood 3 Subdivision Water Main Replacement Project within the RA-2: One Family Residential District
ACTION REQUESTED: Special Land Use Approval
APPLICANT: Murphy Pipeline Contractors
OWNER: Farmington Public Schools

Planner comments

Referencing the April 10, 2026 Carlisle Wortman memorandum, Planning Consultant Auerbach provided the background and review for this request for a temporary construction staging area associated with a City water main improvement project. The staging area would be located in the northernmost portion of the Kenbrook Elementary School property. The applicant is the contractor hired by the City. The application materials indicate that the contractor selected the proposed location in coordination with Farmington Public Schools.

Commissioner Mantey asked whether the Planning Commission has authority over school property.

Planning Consultant Auerbach explained that although the staging area is on school property, it is not a school project. City Attorney Schultz stated that there are two issues involved – this is a City project, and the staging area is on school property. Even though the City is exempt from its own zoning ordinance, the City has a history of bringing these types of matters to the Planning Commission so the public can see them and so there is a full review that provides an opportunity for comments.

Public hearing

Chair Lindquist opened the meeting for public comment. As no public indicated they wished to speak, Chair Lindquist closed public comment and brought the matter back to the Commission.

Commission discussion and/or motion

MOTION by Ware, supported by Mantey, to approve the temporary staging area for the Kendallwood 3 Subdivision Water Main Replacement Project, based on the information provided by the applicants, public hearing comments, the April 10, 2026 Carlisle/Wortman

review letter, the April 9, 2026 City Engineer review letter, and the April 9, 2026 Fire Marshal review letter.

The Commission finds that the proposal meets the standards listed in Section 34-4.20 of the City of Farmington Hills Zoning Ordinance, as follows:

- i. The applicants selected the proposed location in coordination with FPS and considered alternatives, but found that no other feasible locations are available.**
- ii. The proposed enclosure is adequate, and existing vegetation provides adequate screening.**
- iii. The proposed staging area layout and operations minimize the potential impacts to the site and the surrounding area.**
- iv. The proposed activity will not change the current use of the property.**
- v. Use of the staging area is permitted from April 2026 through the end of October 2026 as specified by the applicants. Additional time may be granted, subject to the City Planner and Engineer's approval.**

The Commission also finds that the proposal meets the standards listed in Section 34-6.3 of the City of Farmington Hills Zoning Ordinance, as follows:

- 1. The proposal is harmonious with the surrounding uses because it minimizes the impact on school operations and on adjacent properties to the extent possible.**
- 2. The proposed traffic control measures will minimize hazards to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.**
- 3. The proposed operational and mitigation measures will minimize the project's impacts on adjacent properties.**
- 4. The proposal is associated with public infrastructure improvements and will not pose any long-term negative impacts.**
- 5. The staging area will enable an infrastructure project that will improve the provision of public services in the area.**
- 6. Provided that any concerns identified by FPS, City Planner, City Engineer, and Fire Marshal are addressed, the proposal adequately protects public health, safety, and welfare.**
- 7. The applicants have indicated that the location will be remediated when the project is complete.**
- 8. The applicants appear to be taking the necessary precautions to minimize any potential pollution.**
- 9. The proposal will facilitate an improvement to public infrastructure.**
- 10. The proposal has no architectural or design characteristics to consider.**

Approval is subject to the following condition:

- 1. Construction working hours are limited from 7 am to 7 pm, Monday to Saturday. Any noise, traffic, or unauthorized construction activity issues must be addressed as per the requirements of the City Code and City Engineering Division.**

Regarding the condition, City Attorney Schultz said that he was comfortable with the condition being included in the motion, with the understanding that circumstances will dictate what actually occurs.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES March 19, 2026

MOTION by Grant, supported by Mantey, to approve the March 19, 2026 meeting minutes as submitted.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS

The Commission discussed scheduling either a special meeting or a discussion during a regular meeting with the Planning Consultant and City Attorney to review the Planning Commission bylaws and the motion-making process.

Commissioner Brickner thanked the City for following up regarding the sign about 696 improvements that had been on Drake Road for several years; the sign had been removed.

The Commission discussed upcoming planning training opportunities, including the American Planning Association National Planning Conference in Detroit and the Michigan Association of Planning training programs. Commissioner Mantey noted that the City has paid for similar training in the past and encouraged Commissioners who are interested to notify the City. Staff stated that they would look into registration options.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ware, supported by Grant, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting ended at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Tanji Grant
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem

