CITY OF LAVONIA COUNCIL

PLANNING & ZONING – MINUTES

July 27, 2026
5:30 PM

Present: **Laurie Whitworth, Pam Stone, Bruce McGee, Ben White, and Morris Rivers**

Media: None

Staff: City Manager – Robert Ogburn
Planning and Zoning Administrator – Alexandria Gunter
Mayor – Courtney Umbehant

Item 1. **Call to Order**
Ben White called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Item 2. **Invocation/Pledge**
Board Member Bruce McGee led the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. **Approval of Minutes – February 23, 2026**
A motion to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2026 meeting was made by Board Member Pam Stone and seconded by Board Member Morris Rivers. The motion carried.

Item 4. **New Business**

R-2026-004: Ponder Development, LLC / Douglas Whitlow Trust – Rezoning ±20.0 Acres from B-2 to R-1B

The Commission considered an application by Ponder Development, LLC, with Douglas Whitlow, Trustee of the Douglas Whitlow Trust, as property owner, to rezone approximately 20.0 acres of Tax Parcel 053-179 on Highway 17 from B-2 (Local Business District) to R-1B (Single-Family Residential District – High Density) for a proposed 73-lot single-family subdivision.

The applicant was represented by land use attorney Stanton Porter, accompanied by real estate broker Ed Fickey and listing agent Andrea Anderegg.

The applicant's representatives argued that the rear portion of the subject tract has no road frontage on SR 17 and limited commercial visibility, making viable B-2 development highly unlikely. They proposed workforce housing priced around $300,000 for owner-occupied, single-family homes, contending the residential component would supply the rooftop density necessary to attract further commercial development along the SR 17 frontage. They also highlighted the availability of existing sewer infrastructure draining to the rear of the property, which would support development without requiring a lift station, and noted the presence of a natural berm along Interstate 85 as a noise buffer comparable to conditions at the adjacent hospital.

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Commission members expressed general appreciation for the concept and acknowledged the city's need for workforce housing and residential rooftops to support commercial growth. However, several concerns were raised, including the adequacy of school capacity in Franklin County, the absence of green space in the conceptual site plan, the risk of setting a zoning precedent along the commercial corridor, and the possibility that owner-occupied homes could transition to rentals over time. The Commission also noted that the matter required more information before a sound recommendation could be made.

City Manager Robert Ogburn advised that the Commission's available options included tabling the item to allow additional time for the applicant to address outstanding questions and submit a revised site plan. The applicant's counsel indicated willingness to return with a revised plan incorporating green space, a reoriented street layout, and potential zoning conditions responsive to the Commission's concerns.

A motion to table application R-2026-004 was made by Bruce Mcgee and seconded by Morris Rivers. The motion carried. The item will be brought back before the Planning Commission at its next regular meeting, with the applicant directed to provide a revised conceptual site plan and proposed zoning conditions addressing the Commission's questions.

Item 5. **Closing Comments**

There were no closing comments.

Item 6. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:26 PM.

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Ben White, Chairman Alexandria Gunter, Planning and Zoning Administrator