PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
300 Martin Luther King Blvd.
December 16, 2025
TIME: 3:00 PM

I. WELCOME - Some items at this meeting will have a designated public hearing (noted below). Individuals are limited to one 5-minute comment period per public hearing.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Arturo Menefee
SECONDER:	Tom Penton
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

The City of Opelika Planning Commission held its regular monthly meeting on December 16, 2025 in the Meeting Chambers, located at the Opelika Municipal Court. Certified letters have been mailed to all adjacent property owners for related issues.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Lucinda Cannon, Mayor Eddie Smith, Mr. Sheldon Whittelsey, Councilwoman Leigh Whatley, Dr. Arturo Menefee, Mr. Tom Penton, Mr. Jay Walters and Mr. Ben Bugg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. John Sweatman.

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Matt Mosley, Planning Director
Mr. Martin Ogren, Assistant Planning Director
Mrs. Rachel Dennis, Planner
Mrs. Dana Gafford, Planning & Zoning Technician
Mr. Scott Parker, City Engineer
Mr. John Gwin, Public Works Director
Mr. Robbie Treese, City Attorney

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Lucinda Cannon called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Cannon introduced Mr. Ben Bugg and welcomed him as the newest member of the Planning Commission.

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes for November 18, 2025

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Arturo Menefee
SECONDER:	Tom Penton

AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman, Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Ben Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

III. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS CASES

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. **PLAT (Preliminary Only) – Public Hearing**

1. Laurel Lakes SD, Phase 2, 158 lots, Blake Rice, BSI, Inc., authorized representative for Flatiron Farms, LLC, property owners, Ridge Road, preliminary approval.

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for the request of preliminary plat approval for 158 lots in a 338-lot subdivision within Laurel Lakes- Flatiron PUD. He stated that the density for the 160-acre development is 2.11 dwellings per acre. The single-family homes will be built on 153 lots and detention/open space occupy the remaining 5 lots. The single-family lots range in size from 10,800 square feet (sf) to 18,999 square feet with a minimum lot width of 72 feet.

The Planning Staff recommend preliminary plat approval subject to the following:

1. **The entrance road connection from Ridge Road should be added as part of this plat.**
2. **A temporary turnaround is required for all dead-end streets or stubs over 150 feet in length. This includes Onterio Road, Street D, and Street B.**
3. **On final plat add a note providing the lot standards.**
4. **Revise Lot 247 to meet the minimum lot size and width.**
5. **Install underground utilities.**
6. **Install sidewalks on both sides of all streets.**
7. **Add street names to the final plat.**
8. **Add the following note: The Laurel Lakes HOA is owner of Lots 336, 337, 338, 339 and 1002-A-2-A as shown on the plat. These lots are open space/common area and detention for the Laurel Lakes property owners. The Laurel Lakes HOA is responsible for the maintenance of all detention/open space on Lots 336, 337, 338, 339 and 1002-A-2-A.**
9. **Change Opelika Utilities to Opelika Water Board in the signature section.**
10. **Jeffrey S. Ham is the PLS signatory on Sheet 1 but the duplicate PLS certificate on Sheet 2 references Jonathan Ham in the body of the Certificate, but also shows Jeffrey S. under the signature line.**
11. **Show both the designer’s and the developer’s name and address.**
12. **On the east side of Lot 197, does the 115.25’ distance seem to include the 25’ buffer distance also?**

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
No comments.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant preliminary plat approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Arturo Menefee
SECONDER:	Jay Walters
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg

NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

B. **FINAL PLAT**

2. Hidden Lakes-Lake Condy SD, 28 lots, Blake Rice, BSI, LLC, authorized representative for SMB Land, LLC, property owner, Lake Condy Road, final approval.

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for the final plat approval request of 28 lots in the Hidden Lakes Subdivision: Phase Lake Condy Addition (20 lots) and a revision to Hidden Lakes West 4B (8 lots). Mr. Mosley stated that the subdivisions will have access from Lake Condy Road and connect to the original Hidden Lakes PUD by way of Brock Drive. The residential lot sizes for Lake Condy Addition PUD range from 10,161 to 32,998 square feet. Mr. Mosley noted that the master plan requires landscape buffers along the outside of the PUD and at the Lake Condy Road entrance.

The Planning Staff recommend final approval subject to the following:

1. **Provide sidewalks on both sides of the street.**
2. **All utilities shall be located underground.**
3. **Provide a minimum of one tree per yard for single-family lots. Trees may be placed in the adjacent right-of-way with the approval of city staff.**
4. **Vinyl or aluminum siding shall not be the primary cladding material for single-family homes.**
5. **Buffers shall be undisturbed unless an alternate plan is approved. The undisturbed buffers shall be supplemented in any areas where the buffer does not provide a near full screen. Landscape buffers should be shown on the plat to ensure property owners are aware of the buffer requirements.**
6. **Provide access to Lot 20. This should be through an easement unless another route can be determined.**
7. **A note should be added to limit Lot 20 to open space or for public use and not for residential use.**
8. **Name and address of the owner/developer should be shown.**

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
No comments.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant final plat approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Mayor Eddie Smith
SECONDER:	Tom Penton
DISCUSSION:	**Chair Cannon:** Inquired if canopy trees would be required. **Mr. Mosley:** Stated that one tree in each yard is required and would not be pines.
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

C. **CONDITIONAL USE – Public Hearing**

3. Will Register, authorized representative for James Kirk, property owner, 1510 2nd Avenue, C-2, GC-S zoning district, Church (Iglesia Ebenezer).

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for a conditional use request by Iglesia Ebenezer Church, to be located at 1510 2nd Avenue. He stated that the proposed lot is 15,950 square feet (.36 acres), and the church's building is 3,500 square feet. The church's regular attendance is 50 adults and 15 children. The church sanctuary area will have 75 seats. The church meets for services or scheduled meetings five times a week at the following times: (1) Monday 8 am to 9 am, (2) Wednesday worship service 6 pm to 8 pm, (3) Friday meeting 8 am to 9 am, (4) prayer service Saturday 8 to 9 pm, and (5) Sunday worship service 6 to 8 pm. The church will not have a child daycare service or private school. Minimum parking space requirements for a church is 1 parking space per 4 people at maximum sanctuary capacity. The church's maximum capacity is 75 people and the minimum parking requirement is 19 parking spaces.

The Planning Staff is recommending conditional use approval subject to the following:
1. Stripe the parking spaces (minimum 9x18) and one parking space must be handicapped accessible parking.

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
No comments.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Councilwoman Ward 3 Leigh Whatley
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

4. Roy Assf, authorized representative for Pace Commons, LLC, property owner, at 1105 Columbus Parkway, C-3, GC-P, Convert a 108-unit hotel into a multi-family residential development (apartments).

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for the request of conditional use approval for Pace Commons LLC. Mr. Mosley stated that the Planning Commission granted conditional use approval to convert a 108-unit motel into 108 apartment units subject to conditions at the April 2024 meeting. The Zoning Ordinance states that a conditional use approval expires one year from the date of approval if a building permit has not been obtained. The applicant has been moving forward with this project and was unaware of the expiration date. Therefore, they have come back to get approval again. Mr. Mosley stated the applicant submitted a revised site plan for the December 2025 PC meeting. The December site plan shows a total of 81 parking spaces, including one handicap parking space. The minimum off-street parking requirement for a residential dwelling is 2 parking spaces per dwelling unit. For the 108 apartments, 216 parking spaces are required. At the April 2024 meeting, a total of 127 parking spaces were proposed. A condition of approval in April 2024, concerning parking space, required a variance from the Zoning Board to allow 127 parking spaces for the 108 apartment units. The revised layout includes: parking spaces, a landscape plan for screening, updated floor plans for the units and common spaces, a co-working space, a workout room, and re-modeled interior and exterior.

The Planning Staff recommends approval subject to the following:

1. **Conditional use approval is subject to the Zoning Board approval of a variance for off-street parking.**
2. **Approval of the density to allow an increased number of units by the Planning Commission.**
3. **The applicant should work with Opelika Police Department on ways to increase safety and security to potentially include lighting, cameras, access control, fencing, security personnel, and other measures.**
4. **Lighting for all parking spaces and entrances/exits shall meet security lighting standards as recommended by a professional lighting designer/engineer.**
5. **Each apartment must have at a minimum the kitchen appliances as described in this report. The refrigerator must have a freezer.**
6. **No unit shall be rented for any term less than 90 days.**
7. **Landscaping shall meet all requirements of the ordinance.**
8. **Any new lighting poles or electrical service shall be run underground.**
9. **Air handling units shall integrate into the units and screened to the extent possible.**
10. **Dumpsters shall be screened through means of a fence and gate meeting corridor approved materials and additional landscaping.**
11. **Any modification to the buildings shall meet the gateway corridor cladding and screening requirements.**

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
No comments.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Arturo Menefee
DISCUSSION:	**Tom Penton:** Asked who would monitor the 6-month or 60-day lease? **Matt Mosley:** Answered that the police will keep us informed.
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

D. **AMENDMENT TO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN and REZONING - Public Hearing**

5. (a) Rezoning Request, David Green authorized representative for David N. Rhyne and Diane M. Rhyne, property owners, 1300 block Crawford Road, 71.4 acres, from R-1 to PUD.

(b) Amendment to Future Land Use Plan, 1300 block Crawford Road, from a residential growth land use category to a mixed-use land use category.

(a) Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for the request of rezoning from R-1 to PUD by David Green, representing David Ryan. Mr. Mosley stated the subject property is 73 acres on the southwest side of Crawford Road. The applicants have made significant changes to the proposal that was before the Planning Commission in August 2025. The changes include:

- A reduction of units from 223 to 171 total units.
- An increase in lot size from 60-foot wide lots to 70-foot wide lots, which would make it closer to an R-3, making it more inline with the surrounding area.
- Increased the buffer from 15-ft to a 25-ft buffer.
- The density has decreased from three units per acre to 2.33 units per acre.

Mr. Mosley stated that the discussion at the August meeting centered around traffic safety and access to Crawford Road. He stated that the traffic situation will still be closely monitored, but the new plan provides turn lanes based on the commissioned traffic study.
Staff recommends the Planning Commission send a positive recommendation to the City Council to rezone the property from R-1 to PUD subject to the following:
1. Sidewalks are required on both sides of the street. Sidewalks shall be 5 feet wide.
2. All utilities shall be located underground.
3. Provide a minimum of one tree per yard for single-family lots. Corner lots provide a tree for each street. Trees may be planted in the adjacent right-of-way with city staff approval.
4. All attached single family homes shall meet the Gateway Corridor cladding requirements.
5. Vinyl or aluminum siding shall not be the primary cladding material for single-family homes.
6. Buffers shall be undisturbed unless an alternate plan is approved. The undisturbed buffers shall be supplemented in any areas where the buffer does not provide a near full screen.
7. Provide future stub-out streets to the south and west.
8. Approval of both access streets connecting to Crawford Road by ALDOT shall be required prior to approval of any construction plans. If the access streets shown cannot be provided, the PUD will be required to come back through the PUD process for approval of an alternate plan.
9. ALDOT's approval of the developer's traffic study with turn lanes or ALDOT's improvements to address traffic concerns.

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
Ezekiel Rawlins,1305 Crawford Road: Expressed concern about traffic during construction. Stated his opposition.
David Green, 2140 Varist Court: Stated that after the August meeting, he spoke with neighbors and the Planning Staff, and has made changes to address the concerns that were brought up. He then explained further the changes that have been made.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to send a positive recommendation for rezoning to City Council with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Mayor Eddie Smith
SECONDER:	Tom Penton
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

(b) Mr. Mosley stated that the Amendment To Future Land Use portion of this item is not necessary based on the 2040 Master Plan.

E. **VACATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY**

6. Thomas Gamble, property owner, between 1200 and 1114 First Avenue, Requesting to vacate right-of-way.

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for a request to vacate right-of-way by the owner, Thomas Gamble. Mr. Mosley stated that Mr. Gamble is requesting to vacate a 60-foot-wide portion of 12th Street. The section of right-of-way is located adjacent to the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The applicant is developing a new distillery at 1200 1st Avenue. They have recently purchased the property on the other side of the right-of-way. They are proposing to use the property for outside seating or parking. The right-of-way currently has utilities within it. Easements will be required to ensure the location of power, water and sewer utilities. The amount being vacated is approximately 200 feet in length. All the surrounding property owners will retain access to public streets.
Staff recommends a positive recommendation be sent to the City Council regarding the proposed right-of-way for 12th Street between the railroad and 1st Avenue.

Mr. Parker provided the reports for Engineering, Opelika Water, and Opelika Power Services.

Motion to send a positive recommendation to City Council

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Arturo Menefee
SECONDER:	Mayor Eddie Smith
DISCUSSION:	**Sheldon Whittelsey**: Asked if the property is being utilized. **Matt Mosley**: Stated that some are, but it will not cut off access to public property.
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

V. OLD BUSINESS

F. **CONDITIONAL USE — Public Hearing**

7. Dave King, authorized representative of King Automobiles, Inc., Northwest corner of Dunlop Drive & Hwy 280, C-3, GC-P, Commercial retail. *(This item was tabled at the November t8th Planning Commission meeting.)*

This item will remain on table.

8. Dave King, authorized representative of King Automobiles, Inc., Front corner of Highway 280 Northwest corner of Dunlop Drive and Hwy 280, C-3, GC-P, Commercial retail. (*This item was tabled at the November 18th Planning Commission meeting*.)

This item will remain on table.

9. Tyler Hearin, authorized representative for Leslie Greene Dudley, property owner, 1525 Old Columbus Road, M-1 zoning district, Recovered material processing facility. (*This item was tabled at the November 18th Planning Commission meeting*.)

This item will remain on table.

10. Arbour Valley Development, LLC, authorized representative for Michael V. Shannon/ Weaver C/O Crooked Creek, property owner, Fox Run Avenue and Fox Run Parkway Intersection, 144 apartment units. (*This item was tabled at the November 18th Planning Commission meeting*.)

No action. This item was withdrawn by the applicant.

G. **AMENDMENT TO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN and REZONING – Public Hearing**

11. (a) Rezoning Request, Blake Rice, BSI Inc., authorized representative for Gateway Development, LLC, property owner, Gateway Drive, 5.1 acres, from R-4 to PUD. *(This item was tabled at the November t8th Planning Commission meeting.)*

    (b) Amendment to Future Land Use Map, Gateway Drive, 5.1 acres, from a residential growth land use category to a mixed-use land use category. *(This item was tabled at the November t8th Planning Commission meeting.)*

Mr. Mosley presented the staff report to the Planning Commission for an Amendment to the Future Land Use Map and Rezoning request from Blake Rice, authorized representative for Gateway Development, LLC. This item was presented and tabled at the November 2025 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Mosley stated that the Planning Staff have been working with the applicant to make modifications to the allowed uses in pod 13. The allowed uses would be interior retail, office type uses and some light, small manufacturing. The applicant has put restrictions and limitations on packaged liquor stores and fueling stations for the overall project. These limitations would positively impact Pod 13 and the nearby residential neighborhoods. In addition, the applicant has allowed for the existing trees to remain and has provided additional screening for the residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Parker stated that Engineering has no comments regarding the proposed rezoning approval. He gave reports from Opelika Power Services and Opelika Water Board.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.
No comments.
Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to remove from table

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Arturo Menefee
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Motion to send a positive recommendation for rezoning to City Council with staff recommendations

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Sheldon Whittlesey
SECONDER:	Arturo Menefee
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Motion to approve the Amendment to the Future Land Use Map with staff recommendation.

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Mayor Eddie Smith
SECONDER:	Sheldon Whittelsey
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

H. Approve the dates for the November and December 2026 Planning Commission Meetings

12. Approve November 17th and December 15th as the dates for the November and December Planning Commission meetings in 2026

Mr. Mosley requested a vote on the 2026 Planning Commission dates. Due to the holidays in November and December, the Planning Staff requested that the regular meeting dates be changed to: Tuesday, November 17, 2026, and Tuesday, December 15, 2026.

Motion to approve 2026 Meeting Schedule

RESULT:	**Passed**
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Arturo Menefee
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith, Bugg
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

VII. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn at 4:00 p.m.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Arturo Menefee
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Whittelsey, Penton, Menefee, Mayor Smith
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

______________________________**Lucinda Cannon, Chairman**

______________________________**Matt Mosley**