



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

300 Martin Luther King Blvd.

July 28, 2026

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.

The City of Opelika Planning Commission held its regular monthly meeting July 28, 2026 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, Councilwoman Leigh Whatley, Mr. Ben Bugg, Mr. Tom Penton, Mr. Jay Walters, and Mr. John Sweatman.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Arturo Menefee, Mr. Sheldon Whittelsey,

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Matt Mosley, Planning Director
Mr. Martin Ogren, Assistant Planning Director
Mr. Jonathan Smith, Planner
Mrs. Rachel Dennis, Planner
Ms. Dana Gafford
Mr. Scott Parker, City Engineer
Mr. Robbie Treese, City Attorney

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve Minutes from the June 23, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Director John Sweatman
SECONDER:	Tom Penton
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Director Sweatman
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

III. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS CASES

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. **CONDITIONAL USE – Public Hearing**

1. David Slocum, Pinnacle Design Group, Inc., authorized representative for Kyu Jin Jang, property owner, 1108 Walker Gray Court, C-3, GC-P zone, 14,911 square foot office/warehouse building.

Mr. Martin Ogren presented a conditional use request for property located at 1108 Walker Gray Court, off Veterans Parkway. The property is owned by AJ Company, LLC, with Pinnacle Design Group, David Slocum, serving as the applicant's representative. The property is zoned C-3, GCP (General Commercial, Gateway Corridor Primary). The applicant proposed an approximately 12,081-square-foot office/warehouse building with five employees. Mr. Ogren noted that the building had increased approximately 1,400 square feet from the size shown in the staff report but remained compliant with applicable site requirements. Warehouse use requires conditional use approval within the C-3/GCP district, and outside storage is prohibited. He explained that the property fronts both Veterans Parkway and Walker Gray Court, but access would be provided exclusively from Walker Gray Court. The building meets the required setbacks along Walker Gray Court and the north and south property lines. Along Veterans Parkway, the building is proposed to be approximately 20 feet from the property line, rather than the required 40 feet. Because the property has alternative access from Walker Gray Court, the Planning Commission may approve a reduction of the Gateway Corridor setback pursuant to Section 7.3.

The site requires eight parking spaces and provides 11 spaces, all located toward Walker Gray Court. The landscape plan meets the required base and parking lot landscaping standards and provides both the required residential buffer along the south property line adjoining R-4M zoning and the Gateway Corridor buffer along Veterans Parkway. Evergreen plantings would be staggered to provide year-round screening. Approximately 64 percent of the site would be impervious surface, below the 70 percent maximum. The dumpster would be located near the cul-de-sac turnaround and screened with fencing and landscaping.

Staff recommends conditional use approval subject to the following:

1. Planning Commission approve a 20 foot variance from the minimum 40-foot front setback along Veterans Parkway.
2. Outside storage is prohibited in the GC-P zoning district.
3. Any fencing must meet Gateway Corridor standards in Section 7.6 of Zoning Ordinance.
4. Outdoor lighting must not exceed 1 foot candle at the property line.
5. The rear wall of the proposed building will be 20 feet from the Veterans Parkway right-of-way, a Gateway Corridor. All utility meters, air conditioning units and similar mechanical units shall be screened so as not to be visible from a public right-of-way. All rooftop mechanical units shall be screened from the gateway corridor by a parapet wall or other acceptable methods.

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: Mayor Eddie Smith

SECONDER:	Director John Sweatman
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Director Sweatman
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

B. VACATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY - Public Hearing

2. Opelika Industrial Development Authority (OIDA), 2401 JoAnn Drive (Faith Way), Request to vacate a portion of the right-of-way used for a turn around. JoAnn Drive is being renamed to Faith Way.

Mrs. Rachel Dennis presented a request from the Opelika Industrial Development Authority (OIDA) to vacate a portion of the existing cul-de-sac right-of-way associated with Joan Drive/Faith Way. She explained that the request is related to the proposed Opelika workforce support campus and redevelopment of the surrounding property. The vacation would allow the existing cul-de-sac area to be incorporated into the larger development site. Mrs. Dennis reviewed the location of the right-of-way and explained that the existing roadway terminates within property controlled by OIDA. The portion proposed for vacation is no longer necessary for its current public street configuration because the surrounding property is being assembled and redesigned as part of the workforce support campus. She noted that the vacation would facilitate development of the site while maintaining appropriate access to surrounding properties.

Planning staff recommends the Planning Commission send a positive recommendation to the Opelika City Council to vacate this right-of-way.

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 send a positive recommendation to the City Council to vacate right-of-way.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Jay Walters
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	Councilwoman Ward 3 Leigh Whatley, Director John Sweatman

C. TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE OPELIKA ZONING ORDINANCE - Public Hearing

3. Revision to Section 2.2 Definitions, Section 7.3. C. Use Categories (matrix table) for alcohol uses, and Section 8.28.5 Package Liquor Store Standards for Use - A public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council on proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Mosley presented a proposed amendment to the City of Opelika Zoning Ordinance

addressing alcohol-related retail uses. He explained that the amendment had been reviewed by the Planning Commission during previous meetings and revised based on Commission comments and additional staff review. The amendment establishes and clarifies definitions and development standards for Package Liquor Stores, Beer and Wine Stores, and ABC Stores, and identifies the zoning districts in which these uses may be permitted. He explained that the amendment distinguishes a Package Liquor Store from a Beer and Wine Store based upon the products offered for sale. Package liquor stores include the retail sale of distilled spirits for off-premises consumption, while beer and wine stores are limited to beer and wine products. ABC Stores, operated by the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, are treated as a separate use classification.

Mr. Mosley reviewed the proposed standards for package liquor stores, including requirements concerning the size and configuration of the establishment, separation from certain other uses, exterior appearance, security features, and limitations intended to prevent undesirable concentrations of package stores. The proposed regulations would also establish where package liquor stores and beer and wine stores are permitted by right or require conditional use approval under the zoning use table. He stated that the proposed standards were intended to provide clearer distinctions between alcohol-related retail uses and establish consistent land-use requirements for future applications. He noted that the amendments had been refined through the Commission's previous discussions and were now being presented for a recommendation to the City Council.

Planning Staff recommend the Planning Commission send a positive recommendation to the City Council for text amendment.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.

No comments.

Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to send a positive recommendation for text amendment to City Council with staff recommendation.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Director John Sweatman
SECONDER:	Jay Walters
DISCUSSION	Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley: Inquired about the proximity of stores to churches and schools.
	Mr. Mosely: The best way to address this issue is through using the conditional use process.
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Director Sweatman
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

4. Revision to Section 2.2 Definitions, Section 7.3. C. Use Categories (matrix table) for hemp/CBD uses, and Section 8.28.6 CBD Hemp Standards for Use - A public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council on proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Mosley presented a proposed amendment to the City of Opelika Zoning Ordinance addressing hemp/CBD and tobacco/vape-related retail uses. He explained that staff began

reviewing these uses in response to new State regulations concerning hemp and CBD products that took effect earlier in the year. Because the Alabama ABC Board regulates both alcohol and hemp-related products, staff initially reviewed the issues together but subsequently divided them into separate ordinance amendments so they could proceed independently if necessary.

Mr. Mosley stated that the amendment establishes specific definitions for a Tobacco/Vape Store, Hemp Store, Pharmacy Hemp Store, and Grocery Store with Hemp Sales. A tobacco/vape store would be an establishment primarily engaged in selling tobacco, hookah products, electronic smoking devices, accessories, or a combination thereof. He emphasized that the definition is intended for businesses where these products constitute the primary use and would not apply to a grocery store, gas station, or pharmacy that sells tobacco or vape products incidentally. He explained that a Hemp Store would primarily sell hemp and CBD products, while a Pharmacy Hemp Store would be a pharmacy selling hemp products as part of its broader operations. A Grocery Store with Hemp Sales would be a grocery store containing at least 14,000 square feet that also sells hemp products. He noted that pharmacies and grocery stores are subject to State requirements governing the manner in which hemp products may be displayed and sold. Dedicated hemp stores are more specifically oriented toward hemp/CBD sales and are subject to age restrictions on entry.

Mr. Mosley reviewed the proposed zoning use table and explained that the different uses would be permitted, conditionally permitted, or prohibited depending upon the underlying zoning and applicable Gateway Corridor designation. The amendment also establishes special development standards for tobacco/vape and hemp stores, including prohibiting sales through walk-up windows or drive-through windows and requiring exterior security measures to be appropriately screened. For dedicated hemp stores, the proposed standards would require a minimum 1,500-foot separation from another hemp store. Mr. Mosley also explained that staff proposed treating dedicated hemp stores similarly to package liquor stores because package liquor stores may also be licensed to sell hemp products. Under the proposed language, a hemp store would be permitted only within a shopping center containing three or more commercial tenants, with an appropriate mix of uses such as a grocery store, pharmacy, restaurant, or consumer-goods retailer, and containing at least 14,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Planning Staff recommend the Planning Commission send a positive recommendation to the City Council for the text amendment.

Chair Cannon opened the public hearing.

No comments.

Chair Cannon closed the public hearing.

Motion to send a positive recommendation for text amendment to City Council with staff recommendation.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Director John Sweatman
SECONDER:	Ben Bugg
DISCUSSION	Mayor Smith inquired about hours of operation for alcohol and CDB stores on Sunday.
	Mr. Mosley: Stated that Planning would follow the City language and guidelines on Sunday alcohol sales. He stated that the City doesn't have time guidelines to limit hemp sales.
AYES:	Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley, Director Sweatman

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

V. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn at 3:29 p.m.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Director John Sweatman

SECONDER: Tom Penton

AYES: Chair Cannon, Walters, Bugg, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3
Whatley, Director Sweatman

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

Lucinda Cannon, Chariman

Matt Mosley