



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

300 Martin Luther King Blvd.

August 25, 2026

TIME: 3:00 PM

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The City of Opelika Planning Commission held its regular monthly meeting August 25, 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: Mayor Eddie Smith, Councilwoman Leigh Whatley, Mr. Sheldon Whittelsey, Mr. Ben Bugg, Mr. Tom Penton, and Mr. Jay Walters,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chair Lucinda Cannon, Dr. Arturo Menefee, and Mr. John Sweatman.

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

Mr. Mosley welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that both the Chair and Vice-Chair were absent. He opened nominations for Chair Pro-tem.

Nomination of Mayor Smith to act as Chair Pro-tem due to absence of Chair Cannon and Vice Chair Sweatman

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Jay Walters
SECONDER:	Sheldon Whittelsey
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm

Mayor Smith assumed control of the meeting.

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes August 25, 2026

RESULT:	Passed
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MOVER:	Jay Walters
SECONDER:	Sheldon Whittelsey
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

II. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS CASES

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRELIMINARY AND FINAL - Public Hearing

1. McKemie Corners First Addition "Division of Lot 1" SD, 7 lots, Lee Road 266 in the Planning Jurisdiction, Hare Engineering, P/F Approval

Mr. Jonathan Smith presented a request for preliminary and final plat approval for McKinney Corners First Addition, a proposed residential subdivision located outside the Opelika corporate limits but within the City's planning jurisdiction in Lee County. The property is generally located on the east side of Lee Road 266, just south of its intersection with Lee Road 268. He stated that the proposed subdivision contains approximately 12.74 acres and would create seven residential lots. Because the property is outside the corporate limits, staff evaluated the lots using the City's R-2 minimum lot standards, and all of the proposed lots exceed those minimum requirements. The subdivision includes three flag-shaped lots and four conventional lots. The flag-shaped lots range from approximately 1.47 acres to 2.38 acres, while the remaining lots range from approximately 1.59 acres to 1.82 acres. According to the applicant, all seven lots are intended for residential development. The Planning Department recommended approval of the preliminary and final plat.

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

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing.

No comments.

Mayor Smith closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant preliminary and final plat approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Sheldon Whittelsey
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

B. CONDITIONAL USE – Public Hearing

2. Colby McConnell, authorized representative for CJCF, LLC, property owner, 110 S 8th Street, C-1 zone, woman's clothing store (Soco House) and alcohol available while shopping.

Mrs. Rachel Dennis presented a conditional use request for SoCo House, represented by Colby

McConnell. The proposed business is a clothing retail store located at 110 S. 8th Street, in an existing C-1 zoning district. She explained that clothing retail is permitted by right in the C-1 district; however, the applicant proposes to serve alcoholic beverages as an accessory to the retail operation, requiring conditional use approval. Mrs. Dennis described the proposed business as a boutique “sip and shop” concept offering curated clothing, personal styling services, styling workshops, trunk shows, and other activities associated with the retail sale of clothing. A small bar area would be located toward the rear of the building and would offer a limited selection of cocktails, mocktails, beer, and wine to customers as an accessory to the primary retail use. The proposed bar area would accommodate approximately 10 people. The establishment would not provide live music, dancing, or food service. The service of alcoholic beverages would remain an accessory to the clothing retail operation rather than function as an independent bar or entertainment use.

Mrs. Dennis stated that staff considered the accessory bar and service of alcoholic beverages to customers to be consistent with other uses in the downtown setting. **The Planning Department recommended approval of the conditional use.**

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

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing.

Colby McConnell – 2336 Barkley Crest Lane, Auburn, Alabama: stated that he and his wife, Charlie McConnell, are the owners of SoCo House. He expressed their enthusiasm about becoming part of the downtown community and stated that he was available to answer questions regarding the proposed business.

Mayor Smith closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Jay Walters
SECONDER:	Councilwoman Ward 3 Leigh Whatley
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

3. Jacqueline Holloway, authorized representative for Hardena Todd, property owner, 301 S 4th Street, C-2 zone, 13,262 square foot lot, after-school daycare center.

Mr. Marty Ogren presented a conditional use request for an after-school child day care center at 304 South Fourth Street, located at the corner of South Fourth Street and Avenue B. The property is zoned C-2, where the proposed day care center requires conditional use approval. The proposed location would replace the applicant's previous facility on Fifth Street, which the applicant was required to vacate after that property was sold and leased to another tenant. The proposed day care would operate Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. and would provide after-school care only. The facility would not provide nursery or toddler care during other hours. The proposed enrollment is 30 students, requiring at least three employees to maintain the Alabama Department of Human Resources required ratio of one employee for every ten students. The facility would also be subject to applicable DHR inspections and requirements, including provision of a fenced outdoor play area.

Mr. Ogren stated that the property contains approximately 13,500 square feet of land and an existing 1,346-square-foot building that was formerly used as a hair salon. The building has been vacant for approximately eight or nine years and requires repairs and improvements. Staff discussed the condition of the property with the applicant, and the property owner indicated a willingness to make the necessary improvements. The Opelika Fire Department would also inspect the building and determine applicable fire-safety requirements. The site requires eight parking spaces, which are provided on the submitted site plan. Existing trees and shrubs contribute toward the City's landscaping requirements, and additional shrubs are proposed adjacent to the parking area. Mr. Ogren noted that residentially zoned property is located across the street and that the proposed facility is within approximately 3½ miles of four public schools, providing convenient access for transporting children to the after-school program. Staff considered the proposed use a positive addition to the area.

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

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing.

No comments.

Mayor Smith closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use approval with staff recommendations

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Ben Bugg
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

C. CONDITIONAL USE EXTENSION — Public Hearing

4. Foresite Group, LLC, authorized representative for Opelika 26, LLC, property owner, 2900 Society Hill Road, C-2 zoning district, Society Hill Apartments.
CU extension for one year or until August 2027 PC meeting.

Mrs. Rachel Dennis presented a request for an extension of the previously approved conditional use for Society Hill Apartments, a proposed 265-unit multifamily development along Society Hill Road. Mrs. Dennis stated that the conditional use was originally approved by the Planning Commission in November 2025 and that the development proposal remains unchanged from the original approval. She explained that the applicant requested the extension because additional time was required to complete an agreement with Alabama Power concerning parking proposed within an existing 50-foot transmission easement crossing the property. She stated that the delay did not result in changes to the apartment development itself. The Opelika 2040 Comprehensive Plan identifies the area for mixed residential development, and the property connects to other residential and commercial development in the area.

Staff recommends approval subject to the following:

1. **Add residential buffers on the north-east and south sides per the requirements of the zoning ordinance. If an undisturbed buffer is used, additional planting will need to be added to insure the screening is appropriate.**
2. **All four sides of the development we recommend meet the Gateway Corridor cladding requirements with use of masonry consistent with the provided elevations. Buildings shall**

be substantially similar in terms of materials, roofline, fenestration, and other design features with the provided elevations.

3. Garbage facilities must be enclosed on all sides and gated with an opaque fence at a height so that the dumpster is not seen outside the enclosure.

4. All utilities shall be underground except required overhead transmission lines.

5. All mechanical and HVAC units shall be screened from the public right-of-way.

6. Any gates will need to be coordinated and approved by Opelika public safety departments for emergency entry.

7. At least two entry points meeting life safety codes shall be required. Both drives shall provide access for residents.

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

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing.

No comments.

Mayor Smith closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use extension for 12 months with staff recommendations.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jay Walters

SECONDER: Sheldon Whittelsey

AYES: Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3
Whatley

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

5.

William D. Brady, authorized representative for SB Homes, LLC, property owner, 2003 Executive Park Drive, PUD zoning district, Executive Park Townhomes. CU extension for one year or until August 2027.

Mr. Marty Ogren presented a request for an extension of the previously approved conditional use for a 16-unit townhome development on Executive Park Drive. The applicant requested an approximately nine-month extension, through May 25, 2027. The conditional use for the 16 additional townhome units was originally approved by the Planning Commission in September 2025. Mr. Ogren stated that the proposed 16 townhomes remain unchanged from the plans presented with the 2025 conditional use application. The townhomes meet the applicable minimum building setbacks and off-street parking requirements. Exterior materials would consist of a combination of brick and cement materials, consistent with the previously submitted plans. Mr. Ogren stated that the conditions contained in the staff report are the same conditions associated with the September 2025 approval and would continue to apply to the requested extension.

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

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing.

Ledge Nettles – Baseline Surveying and Design, 2004 Yarbrough Drive, Opelika, Alabama: stated that the site work is substantially complete, including paving and utility stub-outs. The applicant plans to return the following month for final plat approval and requested the extension to maintain the conditional use approval while preparing to begin construction.

Mayor Smith closed the public hearing.

Motion to grant conditional use extension for 12 months with staff recommendations.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Tom Penton
SECONDER:	Ben Bugg
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

D. OTHER BUSINESS

6. Rename Maple Avenue to Erick Strickland Court

This item was withdrawn by the City of Opelika.

IV. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn at 3:24 p.m.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Sheldon Whittelsey
SECONDER:	Jay Walters
AYES:	Walters, Bugg, Whittelsey, Penton, Mayor Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3 Whatley
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

_____ **Chair, Lucinda Cannon**

_____ **Matt Mosley**