

**OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AUGUST 27, 2026**

AGENDA

PUBLIC HEARING: BED & BREAKFAST INN (4824 SOUTH 1ST STREET)

PUBLIC HEARING: UNIFIED CARE FACILITY (5516 WEST N AVENUE AND ADJACENT VACANT PARCEL)

PUBLIC HEARING: PRINCIPAL USE SOLAR MORATORIUM

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held Thursday, August 27, 2026, commencing at 6:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 West Main Street.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Chapman, Township Board Liaison
Grace Engels
Scot Jefferies
Alistair Smith, Chair
Jeremiah Smith (arrived at approximately 6:01 p.m.)
Ron Ver Planck

MEMBERS ABSENT: Deb Everett, Vice Chair

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Randall Brown, Township Attorney; Colten Hutson, Zoning Administrator; Leeanna Harris, Planning and Zoning Administrator; Jennifer Wood, Recording Secretary; and approximately 28 members of the public.

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair A. Smith called the meeting to order. Those in attendance joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair A. Smith introduced the agenda and asked if there were any additions or modifications. There were none.

Trustee Chapman made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Jefferies supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF AUGUST 13, 2026

Chair A. Smith asked if there were any additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes of the August 13, 2026, meeting. There were none.

Trustee Chapman **made a motion** to approve the Minutes of August 13, 2026, meeting as presented. Commissioner Jefferies **supported the motion**. The **motion passed** unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: BED & BREAKFAST INN – (4824 SOUTH 1ST STREET)

Planning Director Jodi Stefforia presented the request of Jeff Ross for special-use approval to operate 7 Oaks Ranch & Retreats as a bed and breakfast inn at 4824 South 1st Street, parcel 05-31-380-021. The approximately 18-acre property is zoned RR, Rural Residential, and contains the applicant's residence and four detached cabins. The proposal would provide three guest rooms in the residence and one guest room in each cabin, for seven guest rooms total.

Ms. Stefforia explained that a bed and breakfast inn is a special use in the RR District. The Zoning Ordinance permits no more than six guest rooms and anticipates guest rooms within the principal dwelling. The applicant therefore would need Zoning Board of Appeals variances for a seventh guest room and for use of the four detached cabins. She reviewed the special-use standards, noting the property's wooded setting, low traffic volume on South 1st Street, adequate gravel parking, existing well and septic facilities, and the absence of a proposed commercial sign. Staff found the limited operation generally compatible with the surrounding rural area, subject to the requested variances and the conditions in the staff report.

Mr. Ross described the property as his home and said the cabins were built primarily for his adult children and extended family. He proposed hosting small, screened retreat groups rather than operating a conventional commercial lodging business. Retreats would generally occur between May and October, including no more than seven participants and a facilitator, and be limited to three to six weekends per year. He stated that he continued to work full-time and did not intend to operate a large event venue or a full-time lodging business. He also described prior small gatherings and equine-coaching activities held on the property.

Commissioners asked about building, electrical, plumbing, well, and septic inspections for the cabins; whether the cabins had already been occupied; the anticipated season of operation; weddings and other events; and whether the approval could affect future regulation of vacation rentals or accessory dwelling units. Mr. Ross stated that family and a limited number of nonpaying guests had used the cabins and that inspections and corrective work had been completed after he learned which permits were required. Staff and legal counsel emphasized that the Commission was considering a narrowly defined special use and that the detached cabins and seventh guest room could not be used as proposed unless the Zoning Board of Appeals granted the necessary variances.

Chair A. Smith opened the public hearing. Three individuals spoke. Topics included retreat benefits, traffic, cabin use, and future precedent. Chair A. Smith closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Jefferies made a motion to deny the request. The motion failed for lack of support.

Trustee Chapman **made a motion** to approve the special-use request for the Bed & Breakfast Inn - located at 4824 South 1st Street, finding that the applicable special-use standards were satisfied, subject to the following conditions: the Zoning Board of Appeals granting variances for seven guest rooms and use of the four cabins as guest rooms; retreats are limited to seven individuals plus a facilitator and no more than six weekends per year, with any expansion returning to the Planning Commission; Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department approval is required for food service and the well and septic systems; and the conditions run with the land regardless of ownership. Commissioner Ver Planck **supported the motion**. The **motion passed**, with Commissioner Jefferies opposed.

PUBLIC HEARING: UNIFIED CARE FACILITY - (5516 WEST N AVENUE AND ADJACENT VACANT PARCEL)

Zoning Administrator Colten Hutson presented the revised special-use request of Phi Nguyen and PDN Properties, LLC, for adjoining parcels at 5516 West N Avenue, parcel 05-36-380-120, and the adjacent vacant parcel, 05-36-380-110. Both parcels are zoned R-2, Residence District. The proposal was to establish three state-licensed Adult Foster Care Small Group Homes as a Unified Care Facility: one home for up to six residents in the existing residence and two homes for up to six residents each in a new duplex on the vacant parcel.

Mr. Hutson reviewed revisions made after the Commission tabled the request on April 23, 2026. The new building had been changed from a congregate facility to a single-story duplex; its area was reduced from 4,875 to 4,046 square feet, its height from 26 to 20 feet, and its depth from 65 to 53 feet. Parking was increased from eight to nine spaces, with room for two additional spaces at the existing residence, and a connecting drive was added between the parcels. He explained that the proposed 76-foot-wide building remained substantially larger than nearby ranch homes, that the nine parking spaces would serve three employees and visitors to as many as 18 residents, and that the Commission should determine whether the design, traffic, parking, and intensity of use were compatible with the neighborhood. Public water and sewer were available.

Mr. Nguyen stated that he had turned to adult foster care after working as a pharmacist and that the revised plan responded to the Commission's earlier concerns. He described the need for small, residential-scale care homes where Oshtemo residents could remain near their families. He said each home would have one caretaker during the day and one at night, and that the revised building was lower, smaller, and designed with residential materials and a hip roof.

Commissioners asked about staffing, resident capacity, visitor parking, licensing, room occupancy, the separation of the three licenses, outdoor space, and the appearance and maintenance of the site. Discussion focused on whether the new duplex would function as a residence or appear institutional, whether front-yard parking and additional vehicle trips would alter the neighborhood, and whether the vacant parcel could be developed as a duplex by right even if the requested adult foster care use were denied. Legal counsel explained that the special-use request allowed the Commission to consider compatibility, external design, and neighborhood impacts even though a code-compliant residential duplex could otherwise be permitted by right.

Chair A. Smith opened the public hearing. Seven individuals spoke. Topics included neighborhood compatibility, building scale, parking, traffic safety, property maintenance, outdoor space, and property impacts. Chair A. Smith closed the public hearing.

The Commission separated the request into two actions. Chair A. Smith stated that the proposed duplex would increase traffic at an already busy location and that its 76-foot width, 53-foot depth, and institutional appearance were not compatible with the established residential neighborhood. Commissioner Engels added that the amount of open space around the proposed building was not comparable to nearby residences.

Chair A. Smith **made a motion** to deny the portion of the special-use request for construction and use of the duplex on parcel 05-36-380-110 because of increased traffic and congestion, the external design and institutional appearance of the building, incompatibility with the residential neighborhood, and insufficient open space compared with surrounding residences. Commissioner Engels **supported the motion**. The **motion passed**, with Commissioner Jefferies opposed.

The Commission then considered the existing residence at 5516 West N Avenue as a single Adult Foster Care Small Group Home rather than a Unified Care Facility. Staff confirmed that the alternate conditions on Packet Pages 29 and 30 addressed the revised scope.

Commissioner J. Smith **made a motion** to approve special use of the existing residence at 5516 West N Avenue as an Adult Foster Care Small Group Home for up to six adults, subject to the following conditions: require State of Michigan licensing documentation before permits for interior alterations; a Road Commission driveway permit; a soil erosion and sedimentation control permit if applicable; an administratively approved revised site plan showing parking, access, and landscaping; no parking on West N Avenue; and connection of the building to public water and sewer. Chair A. Smith **supported the motion**. The **motion passed**, with Commissioner Ver Planck opposed.

PUBLIC HEARING: PRINCIPAL USE SOLAR MORATORIUM

Ms. Stefforia presented proposed Zoning Ordinance No. 697, which would establish a six-month moratorium on applications for principal-use solar energy systems while the Township develops consolidated energy-system regulations. She stated that accessory solar installations would not be affected. The Township Board had adopted a corresponding general-ordinance moratorium, and the zoning moratorium was proposed because principal-use solar remained a special use under the current Zoning Ordinance. If no replacement ordinance were adopted before the moratorium expired, the existing solar regulations would again apply.

Chair A. Smith opened the public hearing. One individual spoke. Topics included hybrid systems and size thresholds. Chair A. Smith closed the public hearing.

Commissioners agreed that the draft should be revised before a recommendation was sent to the Township Board. They discussed adding hybrid systems and correcting language in the opening sentence so the moratorium would not leave unintended gaps. Staff recommended tabling the item and resuming the public hearing when the energy systems language review resumed at the next meeting.

Trustee Chapman **made a motion** to table the proposed principal-use solar moratorium until the September 10, 2026, Planning Commission meeting so the draft could be revised and the public hearing resumed. Commissioner Jefferies **supported the motion**. The **motion passed** unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair A. Smith opened the floor for public comment. Three individuals spoke. Topics included energy standards, fire safety, ownership changes, enforceable conditions and open burning. Chair A. Smith closed public comment.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Ver Planck asked how residents in the Westport and Bluffton areas would receive responses to concerns submitted regarding ~~the sanitary sewer project~~ **opposition to any road connection with Bluffton Avenue**. Ms. Stefforia stated that Public Works staff were preparing responses and a question-and-answer resource for the Township website. Commissioners emphasized the importance of closing the communication loop with residents who submitted written questions.

OTHER UPDATES AND BUSINESS

Ms. Stefforia asked the Commission to consider additional meetings in November and December because of the workload associated with the energy-system ordinance, groundwater and wellhead-protection work, the zoning ordinance update with Progressive, and pending development applications. The proposed schedule would move the regular meetings in those months to the first Thursday and add a second meeting on the third Thursday. Staff noted that a meeting could be canceled if there was insufficient business.

Trustee Chapman **made a motion** to move the November and December meetings to the first Thursday of each month and add a second meeting on the third Thursday of each month. Commissioner Jefferies **supported the motion**. The **motion passed** unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Minutes Prepared: August 30, 2026
Minutes Approved: September 10, 2026