



Agenda

**Athens Planning Commission
Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 12:00PM**

Streaming is available <https://www.ci.athens.oh.us/video>

Establish Quorum

Disposition of Minutes

- June 17, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Cases

Communications

- Athens County Children Services — Recommended Zoning

Reports

Opportunity for Citizens to Speak About Items Not Covered on the Agenda

Announcements & Other Business

Adjournment

The City of Athens supports the Americans with Disabilities Act. Requests for reasonable accommodation may be made with the ADA Coordinator in the City Building or by calling 592-3367.

Athens City Planning Commission

A regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on June 17, 2026, at 1:00 PM.

1. Call to Order

Chair John Kotowski called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM and administered the oath to those in the audience intending to speak before the Commission. A quorum was established.

Planning Commission Members

- Chris Knisely, Vice Chair-Present
- John Kotowski, Chair-Present
- Steve Patterson, Mayor-Absent
- Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director-Present
- Ally Rapp Lee-Present

Staff Present:

- Tom Pyle-Director of Development and Code Enforcement
 - Meghan Jennings-City Planner
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2. Approval of the minutes from the May 6, 2026, meeting.

Motion: Ms. Knisely moved to approve the minutes as presented.

Second: Mr. Stone seconded the motion.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Cases

No cases were presented.

4. Communications

Title 21 Application-Avanelle Crossing

General Overview – James Hunley, Sunset Development

- Mr. Hunley, lead developer, introduced the proposed Avanelle Crossing subdivision.

- Mr. Hunley requested Planning Commission approval for the proposed 60-unit residential development consisting of 1-3 bedroom units.
- Mr. Hunley noted that he is working with David Funk of Capstone and Garrett Spargur of McCarty Associates.

Project Overview – Garrett Spargur, McCarty Associates

- Mr. Spargur explained that the proposed multifamily development would be accessed from Avanelle Drive and Donna Lane.
- Mr. Spargur stated that Donna Lane would be improved as part of the project.
- He described the proposed development as including:
 - Two three-story apartment buildings.
 - Two two-story townhouse-style buildings.
 - One maintenance office building.
- The development would provide 120 parking spaces.
- Utility improvements would include:
 - Extending sanitary sewer from Avanelle Drive using a force main, with gravity sewer throughout the site leading to a lift station.
 - Extending a water line from Hooper Lane along Avanelle Drive to serve the development.
- Mr. Spargur stated that a stormwater detention basin would be constructed at the rear of the property to provide stormwater management.

Code Office Comments – Tom Pyle, Director of Development and Code Enforcement

- Mr. Pyle stated that he reviewed the submission with former Co-Director David Riggs.
- Mr. Pyle asked whether the developer anticipated requesting any subdivision variances, noting that none were apparent from the application.
- He stated that clarification is needed regarding the required performance bond, including whether it would be held by Athens County, since the roadway would be built to county standards.
- Mr. Pyle noted that the sanitary sewer would be designed to County standards and the water system would be designed to Le-Ax Water District standards.
- He noted that the existing tree canopy could provide natural screening for Lots 5 and 6 if preserved.
- Mr. Pyle reported that the plans had been forwarded to the Richland Area Fire Chief (primary responding agency), Athens Fire Chief (secondary responding agency), and the Athens County Planner for review and comment.
- Mr. Pyle noted that the site is not located within a floodplain.

- Mr. Stone asked about the applicability of planned unit development (PUD) regulations, noting that City zoning does not apply outside the City limits.
- Mr. Pyle clarified that any deviations from the subdivision regulations would require a subdivision variance rather than a zoning variance, and that the Planning Commission may recommend such a variance to City Council.

Richland Ave. Fire Department Comments – Ralph Phelps, Chief

- Chief Phelps stated that his department would serve as the primary responding agency for the development.
- Chief Phelps expressed concerns regarding emergency access to the site.
- He recommended adding fire hydrants near Buildings 1 and 2 and ensuring adequate access around the buildings for ground ladders and other firefighting equipment.
- Chief Phelps noted that the proposed turning radius may not accommodate Athens Fire Department's ladder truck and suggested design modifications.
- He recommended that water lines and operational fire hydrants be installed before construction begins.
- Chief Phelps requested additional information regarding FDC locations, sprinkler systems, and alarm system types.
- He noted that the Richland Area Fire Department is not currently equipped with Knox Box keys and explained the financial impact of implementing the Knox Box system.
- Chief Phelps also requested that the property manager establish a process to ensure maintenance personnel are available to respond promptly during emergency incidents.
- Ms. Knisely asked what a Knox Box was.
- Chief Phelps explained that a Knox Box is a secure key box that provides emergency responders with access to a building without forcing entry.

Athens County Planner Comments – Connor LaVelle

- Mr. LaVelle expressed concern regarding the proposed concave roadway design on Donna Lane and recommended further discussion with the County Engineer.
- He noted that the existing duplex may need to be connected to the proposed sanitary sewer system and that lot line adjustments may be necessary to address county septic system requirements.
- Mr. LaVelle recommended coordinating with the Athens City-County Health Department regarding septic system requirements.
- He clarified that his comments regarding planned unit development (PUD) regulations were based on Athens County subdivision regulations.
- He recommended that any easement for the proposed force main clearly define ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

Athens County Township Trustee- Steve Pierson

- Mr. Pierson said inverted roadways can create challenges for snow removal and emergency vehicle access.
- He explained that roadway approval would follow the appropriate review process and that the City, Township, and County Engineer would coordinate as needed.
- He noted that Regional Planning Commission reviews consider the potential for future annexation of adjacent properties.
- Responding to a question about Avanelle Drive, Mr. Pierson said the intersection was previously improved but remains difficult due to its steep grade and limited sight distance.
- He added that the Township prioritizes major roads during winter weather and lacks the authority to require traffic studies, collect impact fees, or mandate infrastructure improvements, as Ohio townships have limited powers under state law.

Commission Questions

- Ms. Knisely asked about access to public transportation for future residents, particularly if the development is intended to provide affordable housing, and whether residents would have adequate access to services such as grocery stores and medical appointments.
- She asked questions regarding hillside runoff and stormwater management, including how runoff would be controlled as part of the development.
- Ms. Knisely also inquired about traffic safety at the intersection with U.S. Route 50 and whether there had been discussions with ODOT or the Athens County Engineer regarding potential improvements.
- Mr. Kotowski asked whether the proposed roadway design would accommodate school buses, noting that the Fire Chief's earlier comments regarding roadway access appeared applicable to school bus operations.
- Ms. Jennings stated that she was not aware of any current plans to improve the Route 50 intersection but noted that ODOT is evaluating traffic safety improvements farther north near Blackburn Road.
- Ms. Jennings explained that the City's subdivision regulations and engineering standards address stormwater management and drainage requirements and that she did not identify any immediate concerns with the proposed site design.
- Regarding public transportation, Ms. Jennings acknowledged its importance but explained that the property is located within the City's three-mile planning jurisdiction rather than within the city limits. She noted that the Planning Commission is reviewing the subdivision under the regulations applicable to properties outside the city limits.

- Ms. Jennings stated that a traffic study could be requested but was uncertain whether public transportation could be considered as a basis for approving or denying the application under the subdivision regulations.
- Mr. Stone stated they would review the City's code to determine whether a traffic study would be required for the proposed development. He noted that Title 41 requires a traffic study when a development is expected to generate more than 5,000 vehicle trips per day.
- Mr. Pyle referenced a provision applicable to developments located within 300 to 500 feet of the centerline of a major highway, noting that it would not apply to the proposed subdivision.

Public Comments

- Mr. Hunter submitted a petition on behalf of nearby residents and supporters.
- He stated that he supports affordable housing but requested that the proposed Avanelle Crossing subdivision comply with Ohio Revised Code 711.09.
- He expressed concerns regarding increased traffic on Avanelle Drive, pedestrian and school bus safety, and requested a traffic and pedestrian impact study before approval.
- Asked whether the applicant had consulted with the Athens City or Athens County School District regarding access to the development.
- Mr. Spargur responded that they had not but would be willing to do so.
- Ms. Snotty expressed support for affordable housing but questioned whether the proposed development would provide residents with adequate access to essential services.
- She stated that the site has limited pedestrian access, no sidewalks, and limited access to public transportation, making it difficult for residents without vehicles to reach grocery stores, medical services, and government offices.
- She requested that the Commission consider how future residents would access necessary services before approving the development.
- She invited Planning Commission members to visit the site to observe the roadway conditions and access concerns firsthand.
- Ms. De La Cruz urged the Planning Commission to follow the requirements of Ohio Revised Code Chapter 711 for the proposed Avanelle Crossing subdivision.
- She stated that residents of unincorporated Athens County rely on the Commission to ensure the required review process is followed and that the public has an opportunity to participate.
- She requested a full subdivision review, a public hearing with notice to affected residents, a traffic impact study, and developer-funded road improvements before any plat is approved.
- Mr. Wrage stated that he had only recently learned of the proposed development and expressed concerns about the lack of notice provided to nearby residents.

- He expressed concerns that Avanelle Drive does not have the capacity to safely accommodate the anticipated increase in vehicle and pedestrian traffic, citing its steep grade, narrow width, blind curves, lack of sidewalks, and existing roadway conditions.
- He raised concerns regarding the absence of public transportation serving the area and questioned how future residents would access services without personal vehicles.
- He also questioned whether the site design could allow for future expansion of the development, which he stated could further increase traffic and safety concerns.
- Mr. Ziff, Mobility Coordinator for HAPCAP, stated that fixed-route bus service is not currently planned for the proposed Avanelle Crossing development due to existing roadway conditions.
- He noted that Athens On Demand Transit would be able to serve the development using accessible minivans.
- Mr. Stone asked about the current Albany transit route, its service frequency, and how adding a stop for the proposed development would affect the route under existing conditions.
- Mr. Ziff stated that the Albany route operates hourly and currently does not have sufficient time or funding to add a stop at the proposed development. He noted that the nearest existing stop is across U.S. Route 50 at Dollar General and that future service changes could be considered if conditions and resources allow.
- Mr. Phelps asked about the water supply for fire suppression and whether the hydrants would be privately maintained.
- Mr. Spargur stated that an 8-inch water main would be extended from Hooper Road to provide fire flow and that a water capacity study had been completed in coordination with LE-AX.
- Mr. Stone asked how the proposed 8-inch water main would connect with the existing 2-inch main.
- Mr. Spargur responded that the existing 2-inch main would remain in place and tie into the new 8-inch main, subject to LE-AX approval.

5. Reports

Meghan Jennings, City Planner

- Ms. Jennings reported updates on the Comprehensive Plan, ADA Transition Plan, and the Welcome Home Ohio Planned Unit Development, which is expected to come before the Commission after a neighborhood meeting.

Tom Pyle, Director of Development and Code Enforcement

- Nothing to report.

6. Opportunity for Citizens to Speak About Items Not Listed on the Agenda

- No additional comments were made.

7. Announcements & Other Business

- No announcements or other business.

8. Adjournment

Motion: Ms. Rapp Lee motioned to adjourn.

Second: Ms. Knisely seconded the motion.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

