



**CITY OF TAVARES  
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING  
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
201 E. MAIN STREET, TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778  
AUGUST 14, 2025**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Gary Santoro, Chairman  
Jay Cunningham, Board Member - Absent  
Deborah Murphy, Vice-Chairperson  
Brooke Matthews, Board Member  
Bruce Peterman, Board Member  
James Sweeza, Board Member  
Dara Treadwell, Board Member**

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Anarquis Frias, City Planner  
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney  
Michelle Winegard, Deputy City Clerk**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Santoro called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and asked those present to silence their cell phones.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Santoro led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Tab 1. Approval of July 17, 2025, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Santoro asked if there were any additions or corrections to the July 17, 2025 Planning & Zoning Board meeting minutes. There were none.

## **MOTION**

Deborah Murphy moved to approve the July 17, 2025 Planning and Zoning meeting minutes, seconded by Dara Treadwell. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

## **IV. SWEARING IN BY CITY ATTORNEY AND DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS**

Attorney Holt stated there was one quasi-judicial item on the agenda: Ordinance 2025-09, rezoning of the Palm Garden property.

Attorney Holt administered the oath to all individuals who wished to provide testimony.

Attorney Holt asked for any ex parte communications. There were none.

## **V. PUBLIC HEARING**

### **Tab 2. Ordinance 2025-08 – Amendments to the City’s Land Development Regulations, Chapter 4 – “Application Procedures and Permitting”, Table 4-B and Section 4-22 –Procedure for Consideration of a Final Plat, and Chapter 16 – “Subdivision Regulations”, Section 16-31 –Forms; and replacement of Form 16-13. (Community Development)**

Anarquis Frias made the following presentation:

*On July 1, 2025, the State of Florida has amended s. 177.071, F.S. (see attached 2025-164 Laws of Florida); requiring that certain plat or replat submittals be administratively approved with no further action by City Council authority. The subject Ordinance proposes amendments to the City’s Land Development Regulations to revise and streamline the approval process for plat and replat submittals. Specifically, the ordinance:*

- *Amends Table 4-B and Section 4-22 within Chapter 4 to reflect changes to the final plat approval process;*
- *Amends Chapter 16, Section 16-31 regarding forms associated with subdivision regulations;*
- *Repeals and replaces Form 16-13 in its entirety;*

*These amendments will allow for administrative approval of plats and replats, where appropriate, in a manner consistent with applicable Florida law.*

**OPTIONS:**

1. *That the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend approval of Ordinance 2025-08.*
2. *That the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend denial of Ordinance 2025-08.*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

*Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend approval of Ordinance 2025-08.*

Chairman Santoro asked for public comment. There was none.

Board Member Murphy stated that she found the proposal reasonable and appreciated that it would not slow down the approval process. However, she expressed concern that once a development was approved by the Planning and Zoning Board, no major changes could have been made before the final sign-off. Mr. Frias responded that by the time a project reached the final plat stage, just before City Council's approval, the project was essentially complete, with only the final documentation remaining to make it official.

Chairman Santoro referred to Ordinance 2025-08 Chapter 4, Section 4-22, Subsection E. He stated that he had no concerns with the proposed changes but asked who the "administrative authority" referenced. Attorney Holt stated that, for final plat approval as proposed, "administrative authority" would include the Community Development Director and City Administrator. She further stated that if the Planning & Zoning Board wished to revise the term to "City Administrator or designee" for consistency, she did not consider it a substantial change.

**MOTION**

**James Sweeza moved to amend Ordinance 2025-08, Chapter 4, Section 4-22, Subsections E and F, by replacing the term "administrative authority" with "City Administrator or designee" to ensure consistency with the rest of the document. Bruce Peterman seconded the motion.**

Chairman Santoro inquired about the proposed language on the Certificate of Approval, Form 16-13. He said it should refer to an individual rather than the city as a whole. Attorney Holt stated the language replaced the former phrase "Certificate of Approval of the Tavares City Council" and that all contracts and agreements processed through the City used the proposed language. She recommended no changes.

**Gary Santoro restated the motion as stated above, noting that Ordinance 2025-08 was approved as amended per Attorney Holt's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.**

**Tab 3. Ordinance 2025-09 – Palm Gardens Property - Rezoning of approximately 20.83 acres located on the northwest intersection of US Hwy 441 and Dead River**

**from City of Tavares Planned Development (PD) zoning to a Mixed Use (MU) zoning district. (Community Development)**

Mr. Frias read the following report into the record:

*The applicant is requesting a rezoning of the subject property from the expired Planned Development (PD Ordinance 2007-24) to the Mixed Use (MU) zoning district. The proposed MU zoning is intended to bring the site into consistency with the City's adopted Future Land Use Map designation of Mixed Use (MU) as outlined in the 2040 "Taking Flight" Comprehensive Plan.*

*The subject property is located at the northwest intersection of U.S. Highway 441 and Dead River, commonly known as Palm Gardens (AKA: Florida Lakefront RV Park). The parcel is approximately 20.83 acres in size. The property is bounded by the Dead River and associated wetlands to the east, U.S. Hwy 441 to the south, jurisdictional wetlands to the north, and a commercial land use (shed sales and storage facility) to the west. Demolition of the former manufactured home park on the site was completed in early 2024. The property is currently vacant, though some structures remain on-site, including a former restaurant, associated structures and boat dock.*

*A traffic study analysis was conducted by the applicant and accepted by the City's traffic consultant. Environmental and wetlands assessments were conducted for the site and provided to the city. Accordingly, any future development on the site will be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City's Land Development Regulations.*

*At this time, the applicant does not have a specific proposed use or project for the site. Therefore, the applicant elects to defer concurrency determination until such time as a final development order. Staff finds the rezoning request to be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations.*

**OPTIONS:**

- 1. That the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend approval of Ordinance 2025-09.*
- 2. That the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend denial of Ordinance 2025-09.*

*Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board moves to recommend approval of Ordinance 2025-09.*

Mr. Frias stated that a representative of the applicant was available to answer any questions from the Board.

Chairman Santoro asked for public comment. There was none.

Chuck Hiott, a Professional Engineer at Halff, located at 902 N. Sinclair Ave., introduced himself and stated that they agreed with staff's recommendation and supported the approval of the ordinance. He explained that there was no end user identified at this time, as the applicant was seeking zoning approval first before pursuing potential users.

Board Member Peterman commented that the request felt vague and wished there had been more detail on future plans. Mr. Hiott responded that the immediate goal was to finalize zoning. He noted that any future development would need to comply with environmental, stormwater management, and City of Tavares regulations. He also explained that the property currently had no zoning, as the former Planned Unit Development (PUD) had expired.

Mr. Frias clarified that at that stage, the purpose was to bring the parcel into compliance with the City's Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan through rezoning. He emphasized that City codes for stormwater and environmental protection were stringent and would apply to any future plans.

Board Member Sweeza asked about the approval process. Mr. Frias explained that, since the applicant was requesting straight zoning, the process would proceed through Community Development without additional public hearings.

Board Member Treadwell sought clarification that there were no end users identified and that a mixed-use zoning classification would align with the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hiott confirmed this.

Board Member Matthews asked what it meant that the property currently had no zoning. Mr. Frias explained that the expired planned development left the parcel without zoning, and that the City typically does not proactively rezone property without applicant interest.

Board Member Sweeza asked how long the rezoning would remain in effect if approved. Mr. Frias stated it would remain until another rezoning request was submitted. Attorney Holt stated that any future rezoning request would be returned to the Planning and Zoning Board for review.

Board Member Peterman asked if the new development would fall under the recently adopted impact fees. Mr. Frias confirmed that it would.

Board Member Murphy raised concerns about potential development in the area. Mr. Hiott noted that prior residential buildings on the property were inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan but were grandfathered in because they had existed before the plan was adopted.

Chairman Santoro commented that most rezoning requests are tied to specific development proposals. He expressed concern about removing opportunities for public

input and did not want the public to feel the Board was attempting to “slip something by them.”

Attorney Holt stated that public comment was available at the present meeting and the Board’s role was to determine whether the rezoning request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. She also provided background on the former development, the non-conforming subdivision, and the lack of existing zoning.

Chairman Santoro agreed but reiterated his concern that the public could not comment on a specific development plan since none had been submitted.

Troy Vick, Chief Executive Officer of Capital Group, clarified that approval of the ordinance would not permit unrestricted development. He stated that any project would be required to comply with mixed-use zoning regulations and that his intent was to align with the Comprehensive Plan by including both residential and commercial components.

Board Member Treadwell asked how the applicant could proceed without a defined plan. Mr. Vick explained that securing the zoning designation first was necessary before investing in detailed design plans.

Board Member Sweeza expressed concern that approving the rezoning would mean the matter would not return to the Board. Mr. Frias reiterated that the request was consistent with the City’s long-term vision for the area.

Board Member Treadwell confirmed with Mr. Frias that any development plans would be submitted to the Community Development Department, including the City Planner. Mr. Frias affirmed this was correct.

As a follow-up, Board Member Treadwell asked when and how the Planning and Zoning Board would be informed of the plans. Mr. Frias explained that once plans are submitted, they become public records and are available to anyone through a public records request made to the City Clerk’s office.

Chairman Santoro stated that while he trusted the City to enforce its codes, he was concerned about approving a rezoning without associated plans. He noted this was the first such instance he had encountered and worried about public perception.

Mr. Vick responded that he understood he would need to request variances for anything outside of code requirements. He stated that he was ready to invest in the property; however, he could not proceed without knowing what zoning would be.

Discussion continued between Chairman Santoro and Mr. Vick regarding the rezoning request and its role in advancing development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Santoro further noted that this was the first time he had seen a property without active zoning due to expiration.

Attorney Holt stated that normally, such properties include a “reverter” clause that restores the prior zoning classification. In this case, no reverter was in place, leaving the parcel without zoning. If it had reverted, it would have returned to a mobile home park designation, which would not be consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Santoro reiterated his concerns about approving rezoning without plans and asked for Attorney Holt’s opinion. Attorney Holt stated that she could not provide a judgment but stated that the applicant’s request was legally consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. If approved, it would provide the applicant with the zoning “rulebook” needed to move forward.

**MOTION**

**Brooke Matthews made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-09 – Palm Gardens Property - Rezoning of approximately 20.83 acres located on the northwest intersection of US Hwy 441 and Dead River from City of Tavares Planned Development (PD) zoning to a Mixed Use (MU) zoning district. Dara Treadwell seconded the motion. The motion failed 4-2 as follows:**

**Bruce Peterman: No  
Brook Matthews: Yes  
Dara Treadwell: Yes  
Gary Santoro: No  
Deborah Murphy: No  
James Sweeza: No**

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

**Tab 4. Community Development Director Report**

Mr. Frias stated there was nothing to report.

Chairman Santoro expressed appreciation to the Building Department City staff for their efforts.

**VII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD**

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION**

**Bruce Peterman moved to adjourn the meeting. There was no second. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Michelle Winegard*

Michelle Winegard  
Deputy City Clerk