



**CITY OF TAVARES
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 E. MAIN STREET, TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778
FEBRUARY 19, 2026**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

**Antonio Fabre, Director, Community Development
Anarquis Frias, Planning Manager
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 January 15, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Santoro asked if there were any additions or corrections to the January 15, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board meeting minutes. There were none.

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to accept the January 15, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes. Jay Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

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

Attorney Lindsay Holt stated that Ordinance 2026-01 is legislative, so the only quasi-judicial matter is Resolution 2026-03. She swore in those in attendance who wished to speak on the matter.

Attorney Holt asked the Board if there were any ex parte communications to disclose. There were none.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Tab 2. Ordinance 2026-01 – Amending Chapter 8 Zoning Regulations, Section 8-12 Supplemental Regulations of the Land Development Regulations to allow for Request of Reasonable Accommodation of Certified Recovery Residences consistent with both Florida SB 954 (2025) and Section 397.487 of the Florida Statutes (Community Development)

Attorney Holt made the following presentation:

The Florida Legislature requires local governments to adopt objectives and procedures for processing requests related to Certified Recovery Residences per SB 954 (See Attached). Florida law establishes a statewide framework for the certification and oversight of recovery residences that provide housing to individuals recovering from substance-use disorders (Section 397.487, Florida Statutes). The proposed ordinance amends Chapter 8 of the Land Development Regulations to implement a narrowly tailored review process applicable only to Certified Recovery Residences according to section 397.487, Florida Statutes.

Furthermore, the proposed ordinance establishes a written application process, defined review timelines, and objective standards for approval or denial, while ensuring consistency with the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Adoption of the proposed ordinance will bring the City into compliance with state law while preserving the City's authority to enforce generally applicable land development, health, and safety regulations.

Attorney Holt stated that City Staff recommend that the Planning and Zoning Advisory Board move to recommend approval of Ordinance 2026-01.

Attorney Holt stated that, pursuant to the recently passed bill, Section 397.487 of the Florida Statutes had been amended. She further stated that, as of that date, the City of Tavares had no Certified Recovery Residences within its city limits. The amendment required the City to establish a local procedure to track and process these applications.

She explained that all applicants must first complete the required state reviews and obtain certification through the state. Once certified, applicants would be eligible to submit to the City for an expedited review that bypasses the public hearing requirement. She noted that each local government is required by law to codify this process.

Chairman Santoro inquired whether an applicant could convert a motel into a Certified Recovery Residence. Discussion ensued among Community Development Director Antonio Fabre, Chairman Santoro, and Attorney Holt regarding the number of residents permitted in such facilities. It was clarified that the large occupancy number (100+) referenced by Chairman Santoro was contained in a different portion of Chapter 397 that had not been amended. Attorney Holt stated she would confirm the allowable number of residents and provide that information prior to the item being presented to City Council.

Attorney Holt reiterated that, before any Certified Recovery Residence could operate within the city, the applicant must first obtain state certification and then complete the required local process.

Chairman Santoro also asked whether there were any location restrictions for Certified Recovery Residences. Attorney Holt stated that there were no specific location stipulations at that time; however, she noted that future legislative changes could alter the law. She emphasized that the City was currently required to codify the expedited review process. Chairman Santoro expressed concern and stated for the record that there was no local control over the placement of these residences.

Chairman Peterman inquired whether a church could open this type of facility. Attorney Holt responded that such facilities would still be subject to the City's Land Development Regulations and applicable standards; however, the City did not have authority to dictate their specific location.

Board Member Cunningham inquired about the process being “voluntary,” as stated in the first line, and requested clarification on whether the City is required to approve this in its entirety or may request provisions to safeguard the City. Attorney Holt advised that the term “voluntary” referred to the applicant’s decision to apply. She also stated that she saw no latitude in restraining it because it is based on state law.

Board Member Cunningham asked for examples of “reasonable accommodations”. Mr. Fabre explained that, in his view, if the facility operates like a normal home in a residential area, the City may be legally required to allow it as a reasonable accommodation, even if the zoning document doesn’t clearly permit it — but it still must go through City review and approval.

Mr. Fabre mentioned that if a Certified Recovery Residence fails to comply with regulations, the state can revoke their certification, and the City would then revoke the permit as well. He continued to explain that during the application process, he will require the fire and police departments to be aware of these residences.

Attorney Holt stated she appreciated that the language applies only to certified residences, not to other types of housing, land use, or accommodation requests.

Board Member Treadwell inquired whether the provisions would apply to a private rehabilitation facility. Attorney Holt advised that they would, provided the facility completed the required state certification process.

Chairman Santoro clarified that the state is responsible for certifying Recovery Residences and that the City lacks the authority to question or override the state’s certification decision. Attorney Holt confirmed that he was correct.

MOTION

Jay Cunningham made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-01. Dara Treadwell seconded the motion.

Prior to the vote, Chairman Santoro acknowledged that adoption of the ordinance was required by law but emphasized his concern that the City Council should understand that the City does not have control over where these facilities may be located.

Board Member Treadwell expressed concern regarding how the state determines the appropriate placement of these residences within the city. Antonio Fabre stated that the state is requesting coordination with local governments, so municipalities are informed of certified facilities operating within their jurisdiction.

Discussion followed regarding fire inspections and ADA compliance. Attorney Holt stated that the City would not serve as the authority responsible for

determining whether a facility is properly state-certified. She noted that there is a hotline or reporting mechanism through the state whereby concerns about compliance can be submitted, which may trigger a certification review.

A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Tab 3. Resolution 2026-03 – Request to Vacate a section of a 50-foot-wide platted right-of-way located adjacent to 510 Ridge Place (Community Development)

Mr. Fabre made the following presentation:

This is a request to vacate a platted undeveloped right-of-way lying adjacent to the property located at 510 Ridge Place, Tavares, Florida 32778. The current adjacent property owner is petitioning to vacate an existing right-of-way since it is undeveloped and not practical as a future right-of-way. City staff reviewed the vacate request and determined no conflicts in the vacation regarding drainage, utilities, health, safety, or welfare of the Public. As a result, this official vacation will remove the city's public interest in this land.

Chairman Santoro asked whether this was one of the properties the City had previously identified as unnecessary and was seeking to remove from its inventory. Mr. Fabre responded that the City does not proactively dispose of such properties but instead acts upon receipt of a formal vacate request. He confirmed that a petition had been submitted for this property and stated there was no need for the City to retain ownership.

Board Member Peterman inquired whether there were any structures, improvements, or hazardous materials located on the property. Mr. Fabre confirmed that the area was vacant and unimproved.

Chairman Santoro invited the applicant, Cathleen Rettig, to speak. Ms. Rettig stated that she had been maintaining and mowing the property for approximately 27 years. She further stated that she had contacted the developer who owns the neighboring property and was advised that they were not interested in acquiring the right-of-way.

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to approve Resolution 2026-03. Dara Treadwell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Tab 4. Community Development Director Report

Mr. Fabre stated that the Far Reach Ranch application had been withdrawn, and the City acknowledged the withdrawal. No reason was provided.

Chairman Santoro thanked the Board for their trust in him and Vice-Chairperson Murphy, who continue to serve in their designated roles.

VII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

There were no comments.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Gary Santoro moved to adjourn the meeting. Bruce Peterman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle Winegard
Deputy City Clerk