MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF TAVARES PLANNING & ZONING BOARD MEETING
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 E. MAIN STREET, TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778
MARCH 19, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Antonio Fabre, Director, Community Development
James Frye, City Planner
Anarquis Frias, Planning Manager
Amanda Boggus, 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 February 19, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Santoro asked if there were any additions or corrections to the February 19, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board meeting minutes. There were none.

MOTION

James Sweezea moved to accept the February 19, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes. Dara Treadwell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

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

Attorney Amanda Boggus administered the oath to all individuals providing testimony and inquired whether any Board Members had ex parte communications. None were disclosed.

Board Member Matthews joined the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

Tab 2. Resolution 2026-08 – Special Use Permit for a Laundromat at 1248 Wells Avenue (Community Development)

Mr. Frye gave the following presentation:

> *An application for a Special Use Permit has been submitted to allow the operation of a laundromat at 1248 Wells Avenue. The subject property is located on the west side of Wells Avenue at the north corner intersection with South Duncan Drive. The building on the site was most recently occupied by a convenience store with gas & fuel sales. The property is located within the Mixed Use (MU) zoning district, where a laundromat is permitted only upon approval of a Special Use Permit by the City Council.*
>
> *Accordingly, the applicant has included a Special Use Site Plan that has a list of conditions of approval for construction. Please note that the existing gas tanks and canopy are scheduled to be removed. The Special Use Site Plan is attached for your review and consideration.*
>
> *The subject property is contiguous to a commercial (C-1) zoned development (Dora Canal Plaza) to the north and is surrounded by a mix of Planned Development (PD) commercial uses and Residential Multi-Family (RMF-3) zoning. Based on the surrounding land uses and zoning patterns in the area, staff finds that the proposed laundromat is a compatible and appropriate use for the property.*

Mr. Frye then showed photographs of the subject property as it currently stands, along with the proposed site plans and photographs.

Chairman Santoro invited the property's representative to speak; however, he said he would be available to answer questions.

Board Member Peterman expressed support for improvements to the property and inquired about removing the existing gas tanks, including whether soil testing would be conducted. Mr. Frye advised that the applicant and property owner were coordinating removal in compliance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and all applicable statutory requirements. He further stated that any permits obtained would be provided to the City for the record.

Board Member Peterman also inquired whether ingress and egress to the site would remain the same. Mr. Frye stated that the Civil Engineer intended to improve the layout and reduce the size of the access area.

Board Member Peterman inquired whether the existing damaged sign would be replaced. Mr. Frye stated it would likely be replaced but noted that the applicant would be better suited to address that question. He further stated that signage is not specifically addressed in the approval criteria.

Board Member Cunningham asked whether the proposed laundromat would replace the existing laundromat located behind the property or operate alongside it. Mr. Frye confirmed it would operate alongside it, as the properties are under separate ownership.

Board Member Cunningham also inquired about the remediation process if contamination was discovered. Mr. Frye stated that any remediation efforts would be determined based on environmental review and FDEP recommendations.

Board Member Matthews noted her question regarding soil testing had been addressed.

Board Member Treadwell had no questions.

Board Member Sweezea expressed concern regarding the proximity of two laundromats and the use of a large parcel for a single purpose. He asked whether additional uses for the property were anticipated in the future. Mr. Frye stated that approval of the Special Use Permit would allow the property to be used for a laundromat.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy expressed concern about the large ingress and egress access and the potential for cut-through traffic, which could create safety issues. Mr. Frye stated that the site design would help limit traffic but noted that additional input from engineering or public works may be appropriate. He also suggested that signage could be considered to enhance safety.

Chairman Santoro expressed support for the project and appreciation for improvements to the property.

Board Member Peterman inquired about landscaping. Mr. Frye confirmed that landscaping was included in the site plan.

Chairman Santoro invited the applicant's representative to speak.

Robert G. Owens Jr., AIA, project architect with RGO Design Group, Inc., addressed concerns regarding ingress and egress, stating that the design had been evaluated during planning and that the owner was willing to modify curbing to meet City standards.

Chairman Santoro inquired whether site lighting would comply with City standards and avoid impacts to adjacent properties. Community Development Director Antonio Fabre confirmed compliance. Mr. Frye added that the resolution requires all development to be consistent with the City of Tavares Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan.

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to approve Resolution 2026-08 – Special Use Permit for a Laundromat at 1248 Wells Avenue. The motion was seconded by Brooke Matthews and carried unanimously, 7-0.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Tab 3. Community Development Director Report

Community Development Director Antonio Fabre stated he had no items to report; however, Planning Manager Anarquis Frias provided the following updates:

- The Cresswind development is preparing to begin Phases II and III, with permits expected to be issued soon.
- The City is nearing issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the Waterman facility. The Building Official indicated that the facility was being constructed to a high standard of quality.

Chairman Santoro expressed concern regarding the volume of signage along State Road 19, noting multiple signs at intersections from Dead River Road to Slim Haywood Avenue. He inquired whether the City could regulate the number of signs.

Mr. Fabre stated that off-site signage is not permitted and that Code Enforcement would review the matter; however, jurisdiction may be impacted as portions of State Road 19 fall under state control.

Board Member Cunningham noted similar signage concerns at Main Street and State Road 19.

Chairman Santoro inquired whether permission is required prior to placing such signs. Attorney Amanda Boggus stated that requirements depend on whether the signs are located within the right-of-way or on private property, and jurisdiction may fall to the City, County, or State accordingly. Discussion occurred regarding signage on private property, and Mr. Fabre advised that temporary signage is permitted.

Attorney Boggus noted that, with the upcoming campaign season, additional signage may be expected and that enforcement is typically initiated by complaint, with documentation necessary to establish applicable timelines.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy inquired about the status of the property formerly known as Palm Gardens. Mr. Frias stated no updates had been received. Chairman Santoro expressed concern about the property's condition and suggested that staff review the site, noting reports of debris accumulation near the canal.

Board Member Sweezea inquired about the parcel located across from Dollar General on State Road 19. Mr. Frias stated there has been no recent activity on the property. Code Enforcement previously reviewed the site and determined that the removed trees were already down or dead, and the clearing activity was consistent with routine maintenance.

Board Member Peterman inquired about long-standing “For Sale” signage on the property. Mr. Frias stated that staff would review the signage for compliance.

Board Member Cunningham requested an update on the traffic signal at State Road 19 and County Road 561. Mr. Fabre stated that there was no new activity; however, the project is expected to be completed around June 2026.

Board Member Sweezea inquired about the property on Mansfield Street involving two mobile trailers. Mr. Frye stated the property owner is working with Code Enforcement, has submitted a plan to remove one unit, and intends to bring the remaining unit into compliance as a permitted residence.

VII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

There were no comments.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to adjourn the meeting. Dara Treadwell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Winegard

Michelle Winegard
Deputy City Clerk