Ravenna City Council
Community & Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2026

The public meeting was held in person in Ravenna City Council Chambers.

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Tyler Marovich, Tim Calfee, Christina West, Matt Harper, Carmen Laudato

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Service Director, Tim Contant; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Interim Council Clerk, Cindy Kaderle; Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Barbara Niemiller, Cynthia Miller, Peter Martin, Mike Bogo, Carlee Krause, Trisha Krause

The Community & Economic Development Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairperson, Christina West.

The first item was to modify loads made to Portage Housing I, II, III.
Ms. West convened the Community and Economic Development Committee and introduced Mike Bogo of Neighborhood Development Services (NDS) to present proposed modifications to the City's loans for the Portage Housing I, II, and III affordable housing developments.
Ms. West noted that the City's original investment had successfully fulfilled its goal of creating affordable homeownership opportunities in Ravenna.
Mr. Bogo explained that NDS is requesting three modifications: setting the interest rate on the existing loans to 0%, forgiving $307,540.05 on the Portage Housing II loan, and forgiving $608,272.00 on the Portage Housing III loan. He stated that because interest continued to accrue while homes were sold over time, the amount each homeowner was required to pay increased, creating inequities among buyers. The proposed changes would freeze the loan balances, eliminate further interest accrual, and establish a consistent payoff amount for the remaining homeowners. Mr. Bogo noted that the City's original $340,000 investment is projected to return more than $900,000 over the life of the program.
Ms. West asked about the positions of the Portage County Commissioners, the City of Kent, and Ravenna Township, which also participated in the projects.
Mr. Bogo responded that all entities were reviewing the revised proposal but had not yet made final decisions.
Mr. Calfee asked about the effect of the proposal on Phase I homeowners and future use of the repaid funds.
Mr. Bogo explained that Phase I required no debt forgiveness because enough homes had already been sold to satisfy the remaining debt. He added that repayments would continue to flow into the Revolving Loan Fund and could be used for eligible housing and economic development activities, including recently approved down payment assistance programs. Mr. Bogo also noted that a new seven-unit single-family housing project is planned, pending resolution of state program issues.
Ms. Michael confirmed that the proposed project would consist of single-family homes.

Ms. Laudato asked how similar programs could be structured differently in the future to avoid debt forgiveness.
Mr. Bogo responded that the program itself had been highly successful and suggested that future reviews of loan balances should occur before homes become eligible for purchase. He attributed the program's success in Portage County to strong local housing markets and local government support.
Ms. Laudato also asked whether a larger share of Revolving Loan Fund proceeds could be directed toward economic development, which Mr. Bogo indicated would be a policy decision for Council.
Committee members expressed support for the proposal, and Ms. West moved the loan modification request forward for Council consideration.

- The item was moved forward.

The second item was to add a new code chapter on Self-Storage Facilities
Ms. West introduced a discussion regarding self-storage facilities, noting that the current moratorium was nearing expiration and that feedback from Council had been incorporated into proposed regulations. She thanked Mr. Kairis for assisting with drafting potential language and turned the discussion over to him.
Mr. Kairis presented an overview of the proposed self-storage facility regulations, explaining that while storage facilities serve a purpose, the City needed standards to control future development. He noted that residents use self-storage facilities for additional space and that the City's restrictions on storing items such as boats and RVs create a need for alternative storage options. However, he stated that self-storage facilities present economic development concerns because they occupy large amounts of land, provide limited employment opportunities, and generate minimal economic benefit compared to other uses. Mr. Kairis explained that the focus of the proposed regulations was determining the community's capacity and need for additional storage facilities. He reviewed industry standards and formulas used to calculate storage demand, including acreage, building footprint, rentable storage space, and population. Mr. Kairis determined that using the City limits as the market area was the most practical and legally defensible approach rather than attempting to calculate a five-mile radius, which would be difficult to accurately measure. Using the formula, Mr. Kairis calculated that the two existing self-storage facilities within Ravenna—the Freedom Street facility and the Loomis Parkway facility, provide approximately 122,000 square feet of storage capacity, or nearly 11 square feet per capita. Based on industry standards, he stated that Ravenna is currently near the upper limits of being oversupplied with storage space. Mr. Kairis proposed adding self-storage facilities as a conditional use within industrial districts, requiring approval from the Planning Commission. The proposed code would require the Planning Commission to consider community need, economic development goals, surrounding land uses, and potential impacts. Additional standards included limiting total storage acreage based on population, restricting facilities to no more than four acres, limiting individual facilities to 50,000 square feet of rentable storage space, and requiring buildings to occupy no more than 40% of the lot area.
Committee members discussed whether the regulations could effectively create a ban on new storage facilities.
Mr. Kairis clarified that the intent was not to prohibit them but to establish objective standards demonstrating whether additional facilities were needed. He stated that the current formula

would likely prevent additional facilities because the City is already at or above capacity based on industry standards.
Mr. Calfee questioned whether the proposed ordinance was modeled after existing municipal codes and raised concerns about the legal considerations included in the draft.
Mr. Kairis explained that he used information from various sources, including AI-assisted research, but reviewed and revised the language to fit Ravenna's needs. He noted that architectural and design standards could be added if Council desired.
Larry Silenius questioned whether the prevalence of larger accessory structures on residential properties, approved through the Board of Zoning Appeals, should factor into the storage calculations.
Mr. Kairis explained that those structures would not be considered commercial self-storage facilities and therefore would not be included in the formula.
Public comment was provided by Cliff Soudil, who expressed concerns that self-storage facilities provide little economic benefit, create visual issues, and may prevent higher-value businesses from locating in the City. He questioned enforcement of promises made during the approval process and urged the City to take stronger action to limit additional facilities.
Mr. Kairis acknowledged the concerns and explained that the proposed regulations would provide the City with standards and legal justification to control future development rather than allowing unrestricted growth. He noted that completely banning self-storage facilities could create legal challenges because they are a legitimate business use.
Ms. Michael and Ms. Laudato discussed concerns regarding enforcement and Planning Commission responsibilities.
Ms. Laudato, drawing from her prior Planning Commission experience, stated that having an objective formula would assist commissioners in making consistent decisions. She noted that applicants often make promises during approval processes that may not always be fulfilled, creating challenges for enforcement.
The group also discussed economic development impacts, including whether self-storage facilities could replace opportunities for businesses that create more jobs.
Mr. Kairis noted that while self-storage facilities may provide limited employment, they still contribute some economic activity through business profits and taxes.
Mr. Moskun commented on the importance of how businesses impact the appearance of the City and agreed that attractive commercial development is preferable to facilities that may negatively affect community character.
Ms. West emphasized that while existing facilities cannot be changed, the proposed regulations would provide a framework to guide future development and prevent additional uncontrolled growth.
Mr. Marovich asked whether annexations or additional land could impact the calculations.
Mr. Kairis explained that the formula is based primarily on population and storage capacity, not land area, and that future annexations would require consideration of both population and existing storage facilities.

- The item was moved forward.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Christina West, Chairperson
Community & Economic Development