



**Ravenna City Council
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2026**

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

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, 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; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Barbara Niemiller, Cynthia Miller, Cheryl Wood, Rich Edmiston, L.A.K. Dank, B. Walebraufe

Planning Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:38 P.M. by member, Tim Calfee

The first item was Ward Redistricting.

Ms. Laudato explained that Ravenna's Ward boundaries have not been substantially reviewed in approximately 70 years, resulting in significant population disparities among the 4 Wards. Ward III currently has more than 1,000 additional residents compared with an adjacent Ward. The League of Women Voters ranked Ravenna second in Ohio for disproportionate Ward representation and is assisting the City with the redistricting process. The committee plans to hold at least two public meetings, one weekday evening and one weekend daytime meeting, to gather public input and allow residents to create and submit their own proposed maps. The City also plans to provide mapping tools and instructions online. The process must be completed before January because the new boundaries could affect upcoming Ward elections and potential candidates.

Mr. Kairis explained that Ravenna must maintain 4 Wards under the City Charter, while the Ward boundaries themselves are established in the city code. Any proposed boundary changes would ultimately require Council approval.

Ms. Laudato noted that the Ohio Revised Code provides guidance on how census blocks and boundaries may be adjusted.

- The item was moved forward.

The second item was Space Requirements for Multi-family Units.

Ms. Laudato presented a proposal to adopt Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) space requirements for multifamily housing. She explained that Ravenna's current requirements are relatively minimal compared with other communities and primarily reflect the Ohio Building Code's basic safety standards. The proposed OHFA standards would require 450 square feet for studios, 550 square feet for one-bedroom units, 750 square feet for two-bedroom units, 950 square feet for three-bedroom units, and 1,100 square feet for four or more bedrooms. Ms. Laudato said the standards would promote livability and quality of life while potentially allowing developers to qualify for low-income housing tax credits. She also proposed requiring enclosed areas for trash and recycling, a 24/7 local contact for rental properties, rental inspections, and

stronger penalties for noncompliance. Ms. Laudato emphasized that the proposed standards would apply to future development rather than retroactively changing existing properties. Ms. Michael supported Ms. Laudato's proposal, citing concerns about poorly maintained multifamily properties and the potential impact on neighborhoods, public safety, police, fire, and city services.

Chief Chapple described instances of multifamily conversions where units lacked proper kitchens and relied on hot plates, creating fire hazards.

Mr. Kairis explained that implementing the OHFA standards would require changes to multiple sections of the zoning code because requirements differ by zoning district. He also noted that Ravenna's code contains separate definitions for dwelling units, duplexes, multifamily dwellings, and rooming houses.

Mr. Finney suggested eliminating rooming houses altogether, citing ongoing problems associated with them.

The committee also discussed existing multifamily properties, nonconforming uses, and the challenges associated with older properties that do not meet current lot-size or setback requirements.

Mr. Finney and Mr. Kairis noted that some properties may only be able to operate as single-family residences or obtain variances for multifamily use.

Richard Edmiston, a resident and contractor, spoke in support of stronger enforcement and standards. He expressed concern about older homes being converted into four-, five-, or six-unit rentals and emphasized preserving Ravenna's historic neighborhoods and community character. The committee discussed clarifying what constitutes a proper kitchen and whether rental units should require certificates of occupancy.

Mr. Kairis suggested that certificates of occupancy could provide an opportunity to verify that new rental units meet dwelling-unit requirements.

Mr. Finney noted that Planning Commission can impose rental-inspection requirements as a condition for new conditional-use approvals, although existing landlords have legal protections against mandatory inspections.

Ms. Laudato emphasized that her immediate priority was moving the OHFA standards forward because they provide clear, bedroom-based requirements that would make it easier for Planning Commission to evaluate proposed multifamily units. She said the standards would protect future quality of life without retroactively changing existing properties.

Ms. Wood urged Council not to make isolated, "spot" changes to the zoning code. She recommended using the recently completed comprehensive plan as an opportunity to conduct a complete review and rewrite of Ravenna's zoning regulations. Ms. Wood supported stronger multifamily housing standards and offered her experience with OHFA programs to assist with drafting.

Mr. Kairis asked Ms. Laudato to prepare specific proposed code language before the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Ms. Laudato agreed, and the proposal was moved forward for further consideration.

- The item was moved forward.

The third item was the Design Review Commission.

Ms. Laudato presented several proposed revisions to the Design Review Commission regulations. Some changes were grammatical and intended to clarify language concerning

vacancies and appointments. Ms. Laudato also proposed changing the conflict-of-interest language so that members with a personal or financial interest would be required to refrain not only from voting, but also from discussing, reviewing, recommending, inspecting, investigating, or taking other action on the matter. She said the expanded language follows recommendations from the Ohio Ethics Commission.

The committee also discussed language concerning the number and timing of Design Review Commission meetings.

Ms. Laudato noted that the current code does not clearly address what happens if the commission cannot meet because it lacks a quorum.

Mr. Kairis and Mr. Silenius recalled previous discussions concerning a 30-day limit, and Ms. Michael recalled that the provision was intended to give applicants an avenue to appeal to Council if they did not receive a timely decision.

Ms. Laudato proposed restoring the 30-day provision.

Mr. Kairis agreed, and the committee supported moving the Design Review Commission revisions to the Committee of the Whole.

The committee also agreed to review the Ohio Ethics Commission conflict-of-interest guidance before final consideration.

- The item was moved forward.

Management Update

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:46 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Carmen Laudato, Chairperson
Planning Committee**