



CITY of HARRISON MI

Planning Commission 2024 Annual Report



1. Introduction

The City of Harrison Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) play a critical role in shaping the city's development and enforcing zoning regulations.

The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and recommending site plans, zoning amendments, and land use policies that guide future growth. It also oversees updates to the City's Master Plan, which serves as the long-term blueprint for development. In 2024, the Planning Commission was heavily involved in the adoption of the 2025 Master Plan, a significant update that will shape land use decisions in the coming years.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), which consists of the City Council, is responsible for hearing and deciding appeals on zoning decisions, granting variances, and ensuring that zoning regulations are applied fairly. In 2024, the ZBA reviewed two variance requests, both of which were approved.

This annual report provides an overview of the activities and decisions made by both the Planning Commission and the ZBA throughout 2024, including site plan reviews, ordinance changes, zoning discussions, and public hearings.

2. Members

The City of Harrison Planning Commission consists of seven appointed members, who are selected by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. In 2024, an ordinance reduced the Planning Commission from nine members to seven to improve efficiency and address quorum challenges. Members serve staggered terms to ensure continuity.

Name	Role	Term Expiration
Stacy Stocking	Chair	January 31, 2026
George Muscott	Vice Chair	January 31, 2027
Tom Mondeau	Commissioner	January 31, 2026
Ed Kerr	Commissioner	January 31, 2026
Tom House	Commissioner	January 31, 2027
Robin Witkowski	Commissioner	January 31, 2027
Dena Woods	Commissioner	January 31, 2025
Justin Cavanaugh	Ex Officio (City Manager, Non-Voting)	Indefinite
Mike Freeman	Code Enforcement (Non-Voting)	N/A

3. Meetings Held in 2024

The City of Harrison Planning Commission meets on the second Tuesday of each month to review land use and zoning matters. Meetings are only held when there is business to discuss. If no agenda items are submitted before the deadline, the meeting is canceled to respect the time of the commission.

In 2024, the Planning Commission held nine meetings. No meetings were held in January, February, or December due to a lack of business.

2024 Meeting Dates

- March 12
- April 9
- May 14
- June 11
- July 9
- August 13
- September 10
- October 8
- November 12

The Planning Commission ensures that meetings are conducted efficiently, with a focus on meaningful discussions regarding site plans, zoning amendments, and policy updates.

4. Master Plan Annual Review

In late 2023 and early 2024, the Master Plan Steering Committee met multiple times with Wade Trim, the city's contracted planning firm, to develop a draft of the updated City of Harrison Master Plan. This process ensured that the plan reflected the city's long-term vision while incorporating input from local stakeholders.

The Planning Commission began its review of the first draft on April 9, 2024, refining key sections and ensuring alignment with the city's development goals. To engage the public, a Master Plan Public Forum was held on May 14, 2024, where residents and community members could provide feedback through a series of board presentations.

Following this input, the Planning Commission voted on June 11, 2024, to recommend the 2025 Master Plan for distribution to required agencies for formal review. The City Council approved this recommendation on July 1, 2024, initiating the 63-day review period.

On October 8, 2024, the Planning Commission held its final Master Plan Public Hearing, allowing for any last-minute feedback before adoption. Finally, on November 12, 2024, the Planning Commission passed Resolution 2024-01, officially adopting the 2025 Master Plan, which will serve as the city's guiding document for land use, economic development, and infrastructure planning in the coming years.

With the Master Plan now in place, the next priority is a Zoning Ordinance Audit to ensure that the city's zoning regulations align with the newly adopted plan. This review, conducted by Wade Trim, will identify necessary ordinance updates to support the goals and strategies outlined in the Master Plan. The Planning Commission will oversee this process throughout 2025, ensuring that zoning regulations reflect the city's long-term vision.

Section 5: Zoning Ordinance Amendments

In 2024, several zoning ordinance amendments were adopted to address regulatory issues and improve city operations. While some amendments were reviewed by the Planning Commission, others were handled administratively or initiated directly by the City Council based on operational needs.

Ordinance Number	Title	Description	Adopted Date
2024-01	Repeal of Section 35.004 (Keeping of Vicious Animals)	This ordinance was repealed administratively due to a conflict with an existing city ordinance that already prohibited vicious animals.	January 1, 2024
2024-02	Revisions to Sidewalk Display Regulations	The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended clarifications to sidewalk display regulations after a local business dispute raised enforcement concerns. Discussed in July, August, and September PC meetings before adoption.	October 7, 2024
2024-03	Amendment to Planning Commission Membership	The City Council reduced the Planning Commission from 9 to 7 members based on a recommendation from the City Manager, due to ongoing quorum issues and existing vacancies.	October 7, 2024

Additionally, in August and September, the Planning Commission discussed potential regulations regarding the city's stray cat population. After reviewing existing ordinances, it was determined that the city's Junk and Blight Ordinance already includes public safety provisions that sufficiently address concerns related to stray animals. As a result, no new ordinance was recommended at this time.

Section 6: Developmental Reviews

The City of Harrison Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing site plans, special land use permits, and other developmental applications to ensure compliance with zoning regulations and the city's Master Plan. These reviews help guide responsible growth and development in the community.

Before projects reach the Planning Commission, the administrative team, consisting of the City Manager and Code Enforcement Officer, provides free conceptual plan reviews for interested developers. This step allows applicants to receive early feedback and ensure their proposals align with zoning requirements before a formal review.

The table below summarizes the developmental reviews conducted by the Planning Commission in 2024:

Project Address	Type of Review	Project Description	Approval Status
714 N First Street	Full Site Plan Review	Taco Bell – New commercial development	Approved
717 N First Street	Full Site Plan Review	Biggby Coffee – New commercial development	Approved
215 N Second Street	Special Land Use Permit & Full Site Plan Review	The Lynx Indoor Golf – Golf simulator facility	Approved
1961 Sullivan Dr	Minor Site Plan Review	Federal Broach – Facility modifications	Approved
215 N Second Street	Minor Site Plan Review	Addition of a pole building for The Lynx Indoor Golf	Approved

Section 7: Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Cases

The City of Harrison City Council serves as the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), making decisions on variance requests and appeals to zoning ordinances. The ZBA hears cases where applicants seek relief from zoning requirements due to unique property conditions or hardships.

In 2024, the ZBA met twice, approving two variance requests:

Case Number	Date of Decision	Property Address	Request	Outcome
ZBA 2024-01	October 7, 2024	439 S. Lake Street	Variance for a side setback requirement to allow a 14x13 home addition that does not encroach further on the non-conforming setback.	Approved
ZBA 2024-02	November 4, 2024	2764 N. Harrison Ave	Variance for a side setback requirement to allow the placement of a gazebo on a concrete pad within the setback area.	Approved

Both variance requests in 2024 were related to setback requirements, highlighting a recurring issue with the city’s existing zoning regulations. As part of the upcoming Zoning Ordinance Audit with Wade Trim, the Planning Commission will be reviewing these setback requirements to determine if adjustments should be made to reduce the need for variances in similar cases while maintaining the intent of the zoning ordinance.

The Zoning Board of Appeals granted both variances, ensuring property owners could improve their properties while balancing the city’s zoning goals. These decisions were based on findings that the requests were reasonable, did not negatively impact

neighboring properties, and represented the minimum adjustment necessary to accommodate the applicant's needs.

Section 8: Joint Meetings

The City of Harrison Planning Commission and City Council worked closely throughout 2024, with council members attending several Planning Commission meetings to collaborate on zoning and development matters. Their participation was particularly focused on the Master Plan update and implementation discussions to ensure alignment between planning efforts and city policies.

Mayor Daniel Sullivan attended the March 12, May 14, July 9, September 10, and November 12 meetings. Council Member Angela Kellogg-Henry and Connie Huffman also participated in the May 14 Master Plan Public Forum, while Bob Stewart attended meetings on July 9, September 10, and November 12.

These joint discussions helped strengthen coordination between the Planning Commission and City Council, ensuring that zoning updates and development priorities reflect the city's long-term vision.

Section 9: Future Goals & Priorities for 2025

With the 2025 Master Plan officially adopted, the Planning Commission's primary focus for 2025 will be to work through the Zoning Ordinance Audit in collaboration with Wade Trim. This process will ensure that the city's zoning regulations align with the Master Plan and provide a clear, consistent framework for future development.

Once the audit is completed, the Planning Commission will begin a systematic review of zoning items identified in the Master Plan, addressing goals that are directly impactable by the City of Harrison. These updates will focus on refining regulations, improving zoning efficiency, and removing barriers that have historically required variance requests.