

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Schumann called the Planning Commission meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 PM.

**ROLL CALL**

Present were members Frank Toth, Steve Ali, Council Liaison Bruce Abens and Vice-Chairman Paul Schumann.

Chairman James Smolik was excused.

Also present were Director Kimberly Lieber and Deputy Clerk of Council Tina Wieber.

**MINUTES**

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked if the members had any questions, comments or concerns regarding the regular meeting minutes of September 9, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Administrative Approvals**

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked Director Lieber to discuss the administrative approvals.

Director Lieber stated that she just wanted to point out that the City had quite a good year in 2025 of new businesses coming into North Ridgeville in filling some of the underutilized industrial spaces, in particular. She discussed that it was just nice to see that their strategy was working and new businesses were coming to North Ridgeville and stated that there had been seven new businesses since the last meeting.

1. PPZ2025-0372 White Rose Ballet Academy, 6287 Lear Nagle Rd, Unit 4  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for a ballet studio.
2. PPZ2025-0378 Little Buckeye Learning Center, 34740 Center Ridge Rd  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for a childcare center and preschool.
3. PPZ2025-0379 Alejandra Studio LLC, 35590 Center Ridge Rd, #104  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for a permanent makeup-beauty studio.
4. PPZ2025-0381 Gym Skills Cleveland, 33553 Liberty Parkway  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for a gymnastics and tumbling center.
5. PPZ2025-0383 D&S Automotive North Ridgeville, 34343 Mills Rd  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for an automotive service garage.

6. PPZ2025-0384 Impact Counseling Solutions, 39160 Center Ridge Rd, Unit C  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for medical services.
7. PPZ2025-0386 Invacare America, 38850 Taylor Parkway  
Approval of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance for distribution and light assembly.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- O 2025-110      An Ordinance amending Sections 1266.02, 1268.02, 1270.02, and 1272.04 of the North Ridgeville Zoning Code to update use regulations for automobile service station and gasoline station.**  
(Introduced by Councilman Abens; First Reading on 07-21-2025; Council referred to Planning Commission and Building and Lands on 07-21-2025; to Building and Lands on 08-18-2025; to Planning Commission on 09-09-25; Council approved PC extension on 09/15/2025)

Ordinance was read.

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked Director Lieber if she wanted to discuss the legislation.

Director Lieber stated that she would turn it over to the sponsor who drafted some proposed amendments and provided some additional information to the Commission.

Council Liaison Abens stated that the purpose of the legislation was to address the high number of gas stations already located within North Ridgeville, particularly along Center Ridge Road between Route 83 (Avon Belden Road) and Barton Road. He provided a map showing the locations of existing stations and the distances between them.

In response to concerns raised at the previous meeting, he explained that revisions were made to clarify that the ordinance would not affect existing stations — it would apply only to future developments. He noted that he had driven throughout the city to identify all current and former gas station sites, finding several that had closed, including one many residents may not realize is no longer in operation.

He explained that the goal of limiting new gas stations is to prevent future blight. Once a property becomes a gas station, it is often difficult to redevelop after closure due to environmental concerns and demolition costs, as illustrated by the former BP station at the nearby corner and another closed station at Cook and Lorain. He also mentioned the station at Case and Center Ridge, along with several others that have since been converted to automotive repair facilities, such as Van's Automotive Service and a repair shop near Root Road by Westgate. He pointed out that even the used car lot at the corner of Route 83 and Lorain, as well as a now-vacant greenfield site nearby, were once gas stations.

He emphasized that the legislation aimed to prevent future blight caused by an oversaturation of gas stations. A new, larger modern station could force smaller ones out of business, leaving behind vacant and difficult-to-reuse properties. Abens questioned how many gas stations the city truly needed, noting that they often hinder broader development. He described gas stations as a “parasitic type of business,” explaining that they depend on nearby development rather than contributing to it.

Director Lieber stated that she had a few specific and general comments regarding the proposed amendment. She explained that the amendment added the B-2 district, which had not been included in the original version of the legislation under Chapter 1266. The current version also added under conditional uses, Section B-6, “automobile service station” with the one-mile separation requirement.

She noted that if that amendment remained, Section (b) under conditional uses on page 4 of the ordinance would need to be revised. Specifically, under conditional uses, B-1 currently reads “automobile service station and/or public parking garage provided that...” She recommended striking “automobile service station and/or,” and also removing the phrase “any minor automobile repair work,” as that typically relates to a gas station rather than a public parking garage. She explained that because “automobile service station” appears in both Sections B-1 and B-6, those changes would help avoid confusion about which standards apply.

She stated that the zoning map provided was a very helpful tool, showing existing service stations in red and former stations in yellow. Using that map, the Law Department had asked her to identify what land would still be available for a new station if the proposed regulations were adopted.

Based on her analysis, she found that the only potential area meeting the one-mile separation requirement would be along Center Ridge Road on the north side, near Meadow Lakes Boulevard. The stretch would extend roughly a half mile east until the beginning of the B-5 zoning area. This location is approximately one mile from the existing station at Case Road and another one near Ridge Plaza Drive east of Route 83.

She noted that while there is also some B-3 zoning within the Ridgefield subdivision, that area is fully developed as residential, making future commercial development unlikely due to homeowners’ association restrictions. A third B-3 area near Route 83 and Mills Road is occupied by Northridge Senior Apartments, a residential senior facility. Therefore, in practical terms, the proposed legislation would allow only one new gas station — in the B-2 area between Meadow Lakes and the start of the B-5 district.

She stated that she had shared this information with the Law Department, with the Deputy Clerk of Council copied on the correspondence. She noted that the Law Department had raised questions about whether the ordinance, as drafted, could create a de facto prohibition on new gas stations, and whether it allowed a reasonable opportunity for that type of development. Although Assistant Law Director Morgan could not attend due to illness, she sent an email for the Commission’s consideration, which the Deputy Clerk would distribute.

From a planning perspective, she expressed concern about the impact of the legislation on the B-4 district — the Commercial Parkway District. She explained that the B-4 district was intended for land adjacent to major highway interchanges to serve the motoring public, including uses such as gas stations, restaurants, motels, and hotels. In North Ridgeville, this district includes land near I-480 and the Ohio Turnpike, where heavy traffic enters and exits the city.

Her primary concern was that the proposed restrictions could effectively prevent any new gas station development in these interchange areas, even though such uses align with the purpose of the B-4 district. She stated that, from a planning standpoint, it would be inappropriate to close the door on future gas station development in areas specifically designed to serve highway travelers.

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked Director Lieber if she would you repeat the changes she recommended making to page 4 of the legislation.

Director Lieber stated that on page 4, under 1266.02 (b)(1), she would strike “automobile service station and or” and leave “public parking garage” and then she would probably strike the whole section (c) because she didn’t know of a public parking garage that had an accessory automobile repair and that would ensure that the restrictions that had been drafted in 6, weren’t in conflict with the existing requirements in 1.

Vice-Chairman Schumann stated that she had discussed the auto service district.

Director Lieber stated that B-4 was the commercial parkway district and was Chapter 1270 and currently it was a permitted use and the legislation kept it in the permitted category but did additionally create that separation. She mentioned that she would recommend that the separation not be included for B-4. She added that potentially it could be made a conditional use, but in that particular district, the separation was less appropriate than in other districts because of the specific stated intent of before.

Council Liaison Abens asked about the concept of “unreasonable distance” and whether it was being determined based on what was considered a “reasonable distance.” He requested Director Lieber’s opinion on what a reasonable distance would be.

Director Lieber responded that the question of reasonableness had been raised by the Law Department, which did not provide specific guidance on an exact distance. Instead, they considered the practical effect of the proposed separation requirement given the existing number of gas stations in the city. She noted that because the ordinance would effectively limit new gas station development to roughly a half-mile stretch of Center Ridge, it was considered potentially too restrictive. However, the Law Department did not make a formal recommendation.

Council Liaison Abens followed up, noting that while he understood the concern, the ordinance’s impact would essentially prevent most, if not all, new gas station development along Center Ridge. He questioned how many stations were actually needed along that corridor, pointing out that Center Ridge already had a sufficient number of stations. Regarding the highway interchange area near the Turnpike, I-480, and Route 10, he noted there were already three stations serving that area.

He added that he did not have concerns about the B-4 district, but asked for clarification on conditional use permits. Specifically, he wanted to understand under what circumstances a conditional use could be denied without raising legal issues.

Director Lieber stated that conditional use permits typically include specific standards outlined in the code. She cited the B-2 district as an example, noting that the “service station” provisions address factors such as proximity to residential property and required additional screening. She explained that conditional use is not merely a mechanism for denying a request but allows the commission to impose heightened standards or additional requirements to mitigate negative impacts of a proposed use.

Council Liaison Abens noted that the legislation would not prevent the Circle K development on Root Road and Lorain Road, which he understood was close to receiving permits. He expressed concern that developers often view parcels primarily as potential gas station sites, which can hinder broader

development. He added that the provision allowing gas stations as part of a larger overall development helps mitigate the one-mile separation requirement and encourages more substantial development.

Abens mentioned rumors that a Sheetz location had been discouraged but was now being considered as part of a more extensive development. He emphasized the importance of fostering substantial developments rather than allowing isolated gas stations, which may operate for decades and then leave difficult-to-redevelop properties.

He reflected on past planning decisions, noting a historical lack of foresight evident in R-1 zoning and the city's prior tendency to allow gas stations without restrictions. He contrasted this with fast-food establishments, which can be removed with minimal environmental impact. He suggested that if a one-mile separation is too restrictive, reducing it to one-half mile could provide additional development opportunities while still limiting Center Ridge, where further gas stations are unnecessary.

Abens concluded by expressing concern about the long-term development of Lorain Road, cautioning that over the next 10 to 20 years, it could face similar over-saturation by gas stations as Center Ridge, potentially limiting future development, even though it is currently mostly R-1 residential.

Member Toth stated that he had reviewed the map provided and analyzed it from a service standpoint for residents. Using Route 83 as a central axis, he divided the city into quadrants. He noted the following observations:

- Northeast Quadrant: No active service stations were present to serve residents.
- Center Ridge Corridor (east of Route 83): Five stations were located along Center Ridge, with two additional stations at Lear Road and Lorain Road, creating a saturated area.
- Southwest Quadrant: Only one station existed at Center Ridge and Case, which was not easily accessible for residents of the Waterbury area. Other than the Snappy Gas Station at Chestnut and 83, the quadrant lacked service stations.
- Southeast Quadrant: The station at Chestnut and 83 and the proposed Circle K at Root and Lorain would primarily serve residents of Ridgefield and accommodate anticipated future growth south of the city.

Member Toth concluded that the proposed one-mile separation requirement would not effectively serve residents in the southwest, southeast, or northwest quadrants. While the northeast quadrant was clearly saturated, the other areas could benefit from additional service stations. He noted some B-3 zoned areas near the relocated Route 83 and Lorain Road that could potentially accommodate new stations.

He added that he viewed the one-mile restriction as an overly broad tool to address oversaturation, suggesting that a more targeted approach would be preferable. Consequently, he was reluctant to recommend that the City Council pass the ordinance as currently drafted.

Vice Chairman Schumann stated that he agreed with Member Toth's observations. As a Waterbury resident, he noted that he often goes into Elyria for gas, as it is the most convenient option. He commented that with all the new housing in Waterbury, it seems the community is missing an opportunity for local services that could remain in North Ridgeville.

He added that on the east end of town, near the Turnpike and I-480, there is significant traffic, and the gas stations in that area are consistently busy. While he recognized the city's interest in controlling development, he observed that much of the revenue generated by these stations comes from non-residents, which can still benefit the city. He noted that the development of gas stations in these areas appears to have occurred organically.

Vice-Chairman Schumann also raised a question regarding the eventual closure of these stations, asking what happens after 30 or 50 years. He inquired whether station owners are responsible for cleanup and whether the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency currently enforces removal of tanks and remediation of the site.

Director Lieber stated that, while it may seem straightforward, addressing contamination from old gas station sites is often challenging. She explained that holding responsible parties accountable for remediation can be difficult and costly. Using the BP site as an example, she noted the challenges of working with that property owner to ensure cleanup obligations are met. She clarified that liability for contamination remains with the party that caused it, even if the property changes ownership, which adds to the complexity and expense.

She noted that the city has faced similar issues, citing the southwest corner opposite BP, which required two \$250,000 grants for remediation over the past decade or more. She observed that older stations are more likely to have contamination due to less stringent regulations in the past. While brownfield funding is available from the State of Ohio and other sources, it requires a motivated property owner to pursue remediation.

Director Lieber agreed that some areas of the community appear saturated with gas stations and acknowledged that few residents are enthusiastic about them as a use. However, she emphasized that Planning's concern is to locate gas stations where traffic is, ensuring competition and access for residents without completely zoning them out. She described gas stations as an essential service, necessary for fueling vehicles, and stressed the need to determine the most appropriate locations and reasonable spacing. She concluded that the discussion was helping them move toward finding a balanced approach that limits overconcentration without unnecessarily restricting future development.

Vice-Chairman Schuman asked what about charging stations, if they would be a part of the legislation as well and how would that work.

Director Lieber stated that the current code does not define "service station" to include electric vehicle charging stations. She explained that in the upcoming code update, they plan to clarify the definition to cover both traditional fueling and charging. Currently, charging stations are generally treated as accessory uses to parking. She noted that freestanding charging stations are uncommon, as they are typically installed at locations such as fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, or hotels. While the landscape may change in the future—potentially creating hubs that function more like traditional gas stations—at present, charging stations are considered equipment associated with parking rather than a separate use.

Vice-Chairman Schumann stated that the legislation allowed for bigger total development and asked what that meant exactly, if they were talking about a Sam's Club and they had a gas station, that would be allowed.

Director Lieber stated that further discussion was needed regarding the term “accessory use.” She explained that in some cases, such as a Sam’s Club with an attached gas station, the gas station could reasonably be considered accessory. However, she noted that an outparcel development, such as a Sheetz next to a Giant Eagle, would not be considered accessory, as it is a separate use. She emphasized the need to clearly define what qualifies as an accessory use. She added that car washes are easier to classify as accessory, since they are commonly attached to or integrated with existing gas stations but they could have a gas station provider that says, hey, if I’m on the same lot as this other use, I’m accessory. So, she thought they might want to kind of define that so that they all understand what accessory to meant.

Council Liaison Abens stated that when Circle K was proposed, residents in the area were overwhelmingly opposed, so servicing Waterbury was not a major factor to consider. He suggested that reducing the one-mile separation requirement to one-half mile could allow new gas stations at Sugar Ridge and at the corner of Route 83 and Lorain Road, providing a less restrictive approach.

He noted that many residents currently travel to Elyria for gas, which is not far, and mentioned a rumor of another gas station being proposed at the corner of 83 Extension and Chestnut, where Community Health Partners (now Mercy Health) had originally planned development. That property is zoned B-3, and a housing development across the street is also being proposed.

Abens discussed the concept of accessory uses, noting that a gas station attached to a Sam’s Club could reasonably be considered accessory because gasoline is not the store’s primary business. However, he expressed concern that a developer might claim a freestanding fast-food Sheetz’s gas pumps as an accessory use, which he would not consider accessory since the primary business is gasoline.

He concluded that if the one-mile restriction were reduced to one-half mile, it would still prevent additional development along Center Ridge and limit development on Lorain Road, while opening opportunities along the Route 83 corridor.

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked if Council Liaison Abens wanted to work a little more on the legislation and commented that he thought the residents would probably appreciate if there were some controls, especially after what happened. with the most recent gas station proposal.

Council Liaison Abens stated for the record that the proposed legislation, in its current form or any future version, would not have prevented the Circle K project, as that property was properly zoned and located more than a mile from any other gas station. He noted that the property at the corner of Bagley and Lorain was a prime location for a gas station but expressed that the area did not need another one. He stated that he would prefer to see a different type of development there, adding that while gas stations are necessary, the question remains how many are truly needed to meet the community’s needs.

Vice-Chairman Schumann asked if any of the legislation would affect any of the town center that they were looking at.

Director Lieber stated that the town center district that they would be creating would not include gas stations at all. That it was meant to be less auto-centric and more people-centric.

Member Toth stated that when reviewing the totals, he noted that if they disregarded the concentration of gas stations along Center Ridge Road and the two located at Lear and Lorain Roads, there were seven stations in that area. He pointed out that North Ridgeville currently had nine gas stations in total, meaning seven were concentrated on one side of the City, leaving only two to serve the rest. He observed that with 36,000 residents and nine stations, oversaturation did not appear to be a significant problem.

He agreed that the Center Ridge corridor should not be further developed with additional gas stations to avoid potential blight. However, he expressed concern that limiting opportunities in other quadrants of the City would inconvenience residents who would need to travel farther for a basic service. He emphasized that fueling is a necessary, routine errand rather than a discretionary activity.

Member Toth stated that imposing a fixed distance restriction could unfairly inhibit development and that a more effective approach might be to use the conditional use standards previously shared by the Planning Director to evaluate applications on a case-by-case basis. He concluded that the issue was better addressed with a targeted solution rather than an arbitrary, one-size-fits-all restriction.

Council Liaison Abens stated that, as previously noted, a conditional use does not prevent a gas station from being established; it only allows the imposition of additional requirements. He explained that, for example, a developer could propose a gas station on Center Ridge where it is already zoned for such use. Conditional use allows the city to require measures such as additional lanes or screening, but it does not provide the authority to deny the project.

He cited the long-standing proposal for a gas station at the corner of Ranger Way and Center Ridge, noting that under current codes, the city could not have blocked it. While residents had expressed strong opposition when the proposal was publicized, the existing conditional use regulations would not allow the city to stop a similar proposal in the future, which he identified as a limitation of the current system.

Vice-Chairman Schumann stated that they could do one of two things, they could amend the legislation and then vote on it or Council Liaison Abens could bring it back to the Commission with some changes.

Council Liaison Abens stated that he was afraid they didn't necessarily have that time.

Director Lieber stated that they had one more meeting.

Council Liaison Abens stated that if the Commission thought that 1/2 mile would be more acceptable with some of the changes that were suggested, if they thought that would be agreeable and they could do something like that.

Vice-Chairman Schumann stated that it might be good to have the Chairman there as well because he had some experience with that kind of thing too.

Council Liaison Abens stated that he had already ran the numbers for the half mile and that would open up the west side for a few gas stations along 83.

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING-TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025**

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Moved by Abens and seconded by Ali to table the legislation to the next Planning Commission meeting.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried.

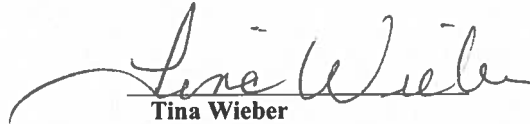
Yes - 4 No - 0

**NEW BUSINESS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Vice-Chairman Schumann adjourned the meeting at 7:52 PM.

  
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**James Smolik**  
Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Tina Wieber**  
Deputy Clerk of Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wednesday, November 12, 2025  
**Date Approved**