

City of Schenectady
NEW YORK
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION Minutes
March 31, 2026

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order at 6:14 p.m.

II. **ATTENDANCE**

Present: Randall Beach; Susan Nadler; Jason Bogdanowicz-Wilson; Junior Hitllall; Alexandra Bland; Andrew Dachinger, Corporation Counsel; Jack Connelly - Planner I

Excused: Colin Evers; Adam Roselan

III. **Conflict of Interest Check**

There were no conflicts of interest for any of the Commissioners.

Commissioner Beach informed everyone that the meeting will start with the roll call of all the Commissioners that were present, as stated above. Commissioner Beach went on to list the projects that were going to be discussed for the evening, and if anyone was there to speak about a project that wasn't on the list, the Commission wasn't going to be able to speak on it this evening. If the Commissioners have questions, the projects will be introduced, and applicants can come forward to speak about the project to the commissioners. The public will also have an opportunity to speak to the projects.

Commissioner Nadler made a motion to approve the February 18th minutes with **Commissioner Wilson** seconding. The motion carried unanimously.

V. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **104-112 Erie, LLC** requests a 1-year extension on the site plan approval granted in April of 2022, pursuant to Section 264-93(C) of a proposal to demolish 104 Erie Boulevard, construct a 5-story, 110-unit residential building and renovate 106 Erie Boulevard for resident amenities and 3 residential units, renovate 108 Erie Boulevard for 39 residential units and renovate 112 Erie Boulevard for 14 family style units, tax parcel #s 39.78-1-2.1, 4.2, 4.1 and 5.1, all located in the C-4 Downtown Mixed-Use District.

No applicant was present, however Mr. Connelly explained that there had been no changes to the plan since it's previous approval. The Commission felt comfortable granting a one-year extension on approvals.

Commissioner Beach opened the floor for the public hearing, which was closed as no comments were heard.

SITE PLAN RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Hitllall** to issue a one year extension on the site plan approval. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Wilson**, with the following conditions and findings of fact:

1. The extension is valid through March 31st, 2027.
2. All previous conditions of approval remain in effect.

Motion carried unanimously.

- B. Native Partners LLC** requests site plan approval pursuant to Section 264-90(H) of a proposal to construct an office building and flex warehousing buildings at the Maxon Road Extension properties tax parcel #s 39.26-1-1.12, 2, 3, 9 and 10. All properties are located in the M-1 Light Manufacturing and Warehousing District.

Mr. Luigi Palleschi of ABD Engineering came forward to represent the applicant of the project. Mr. Palleschi discussed how this application was previously reviewed by the Commission, but tabled as SEQR was unable to be voted on. Street trees were added to the front of the site, as was previously requested by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Beach mentioned that the rerouting of the bike path was featured in a recent Gazette article, and asked Mr. Palleschi to speak on it as members of the public were in attendance to hear about it.

Mr. Palleschi said that there would be caution signage on either side of the trail as it passes through the site to show trail users that there would be upcoming curves and the trail would be narrowed.

Mr. Palleschi clarified that the fencing was not proposed directly on the edge of the pavement, as had been rumored online, stating that there would be at least a 2-3 foot buffer between the edge of the pavement. This provided roughly 12 feet of width between the two fences.

Commissioner Beach mentioned that the entire idea to reroute the bike path was originally generated at a past Planning Commission meeting by the Commission itself.

Commissioner Nadler asked if there would be lighting on the bike path where it is behind the buildings. Mr. Palleschi confirmed that there would be security lighting but was not certain it would extend to the bike path in all areas.

Commissioner Beach opened the floor for the public hearing.

Mr. Art Clayman, President of Cycle Schenectady, spoke stating his disapproval for the rerouting of the trail. Mr. Clayman believed the proposed trail did not meet American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design guidelines, or guidelines of the Empire State Trail. The narrowing of the trail to 8 feet in width was cited as a concern, along with his belief that the fencing would be directly adjacent to the pavement. Sharp curves and limited site distance were also mentioned as issues.

Ms. Gillian Scott came forward with both a letter from herself and a letter from Parks and Trails New York. Ms. Scott mentioned that this trail acts as a sidewalk along Maxon Road Extension, and there is no other safe way to walk down the street.

Commissioner Beach read aloud the letter from Parks and Trails New York who advocated for a denial of the project. The letter stated that the proposal added multiple hazards that are not there now, specifically the width change to 8 feet. The letter said that rerouting the trail would diminish the scenic views and open spaces offered by Maxon Road Extension.

Mr. Daniel Flynn stated that he is a pedestrian throughout the City and has spoken with many bicyclists who have concerns about the proposed plan. Mr. Flynn added that putting pedestrians and bicyclists on busy City streets is a dangerous situation, and adding additional impediments to that, such as this proposal, was not good development.

Ms. Haley Viccaro had spoken with individuals who had issues with the proposed plan and believed more discussion was necessary to make a proper decision on the matter.

Mr. Connelly read the County referral response sent to the City from Schenectady County Planner Steve Feeney. Mr. Feeney opposed the rerouting of the bike trail for the reasons stated by other members of the public, and recommended mitigation of the width, distance between fence and pavement, and the sharp curves. Mr. Feeney recommended keeping the trail on Maxon Road. Mr. Feeney raised concerns about the stability of the top of the bank, close to where the path is to be located.

Mr. Connelly read another email sent by Steve Strichman, former City Zoning Officer and recreational bicyclist. Mr. Strichman discussed a Facebook post written by Cycle Schenectady which mirrored the disapproval of Mr. Clayman earlier. Mr. Strichman disagreed with the post and favored the rerouting of the bike path saying it was good for families and casual riders. The proposal would take the trail off of Maxon Road, which is one of the most dangerous sections of trail, gives riders the ability to ride by the river, and takes them away from the two new curb cuts which the project creates. Mr. Strichman said this change could encourage more riverside trail creation both to the east and west of this site.

Commissioner Beach closed the public hearing as no further comments were heard.

Mr. Palleschi confirmed for Commissioner Beach that the added fence along the river side was necessary to provide protection against the steep slope leading down to the river. Mr. Connelly displayed a graphic from AASHTO guidelines showing that the proposed fence complies with their standards to protect trail users from potentially hazardous slopes.

Mr. Connelly expressed the importance of this decision as the bike trail is a major feature running through Schenectady, connecting to larger statewide trails throughout New York. Mr. Connelly reminded the Commission that Maxon Road is a heavily trafficked industrial corridor, and the addition of two new curb cuts creates serious risk points if the trail were left on the street.

Mr. Connelly added that he had walked this same trail as it extended into Rotterdam off of Rice Road. The trail in this area is 8 feet in width for an extended stretch, much longer than what is proposed in the plan, and functions very well.

Mr. Connelly reviewed the AASHTO standards and confirmed from them that while 10 feet is an optimal width for a path, 8 feet is acceptable in certain areas, and this site falls in line with those guidelines. Mr. Connelly said that most of this trail goes through more rural, forested areas, and having it go through cities such as Schenectady poses geographical issues meaning no design will be without its flaws.

Commissioner Nadler agreed with Mr. Connelly saying that taking the trail away from the traffic was beneficial, especially for younger kids and families. She further asked if signage could be added warning users of the curves and 8 foot width. Mr. Palleschi was agreeable to adding signage on both sides of the site.

Commissioner Bland suggested adding more asphalt to the corners to soften the angle of the curves. Mr. Palleschi agreed to widening the corners.

Commissioner Beach asked Mr. Clayman how he would feel about the mitigation efforts discussed by the Commission. Mr. Clayman said extending the path at the corners would be helpful, but did not share the same concerns regarding the danger of the curb cuts.

Mr. Palleschi told Commissioner Wilson that previous conversations with the City Engineer detailed the City sewer line easement in the rear of the property which prompted the need to push the buildings up

closer to the road. This spurred the idea between the applicant and City staff to reroute the path away from Maxon Road and closer towards the river.

Commissioner Hitlall stated that he frequently goes bike riding with his children, and finds the proposal much safer than leaving the trail on the street. Commissioner Hitlall said the current conditions of the trail on Maxon Road were unsafe enough that he would not take his children there without these changes.

Mr. Connelly said if the situation was reversed and the applicant was planning on moving the trail away from the river and closer to Maxon Road it would never get approved.

Mr. Connelly pointed out curves as the trail descended below Freeman's Bridge which were very similar to most of the curves proposed, and also are curving while simultaneously going down the steep slope.

Commissioner Wilson mentioned a dangerous slope and sharp curve that was existing on this trail in Niskayuna by the GE campus, and believes this proposal is definitely safer than that portion of the trail.

Mr. Palleschi told Commissioner Nadler that the total length of the reroute was roughly 850 feet.

Commissioner Wilson said that his biggest concern was pedestrians bypassing the trail and using the shortest possible route, but also lives close by to the site and has never noticed much foot traffic on that section of trail.

Commissioner Bland discussed the difficulties of turning left from Alexander Street onto Maxon Road due to the traffic, stating she sometimes waits multiple minutes and would like to remove bikes and pedestrians from that street. Commissioner Bland further Commissioner Hitlall's point that she would never take her children on the trail as it currently sits on Maxon Road due to the traffic safety concerns.

Commissioner Beach reiterated the conditions of approval that were discussed earlier, including widening the pavement along each of the new corners introduced to the plan, adding signage to warn trail users of the upcoming curves and narrowing of the trail, and creating a buffer area of at least two feet between the edge of pavement and all fencing.

Mr. Palleschi stated he would create revised plans showing each of the conditions and send to the City Planner for a final sign-off.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Nadler** to issue a negative SEQR declaration for the project. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Wilson**.

Motion carried unanimously.

SITE PLAN RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Hitlall** to approve the project with the following conditions and findings of fact. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Nadler**:

1. The addresses will be prominently displayed so that they are easily visible from Maxon Road Extension.
2. Metal roll gates and iron bars will not be installed on any doors or windows at any time in the future.

3. Pursuant to Section 264-93, site plan approval is valid so long as building permits are pulled within one year of approval.
4. Signage will be added on both sides of the rerouted trail to indicate that there would be upcoming curves and the trail would be narrowed to only 8 feet in width.
5. All added corners will be widened with asphalt to make the curves more navigable.
6. All fencing will be a minimum of 2 feet from the edge of the pavement.

Motion carried unanimously.

- C. **Emma Perdomo** requests site plan approval pursuant to Section 264-90(M) of a proposal to operate a church at 1369 Lower Broadway, tax parcel # 49.37-2-14, located in the M-1 Light Manufacturing and Warehousing District.

Ms. Emma Perdomo said she had reviewed the staff comments and had no concerns with them. Mr. Connelly stated the staff comments for the record, mentioning that the curb cut must be narrowed to a maximum of 40 feet in width, the sidewalks along Lower Broadway must be fixed, all extra signage on site must be removed and the rear of the building has windows missing, which must be replaced. Additionally, a Public Assembly License is required to operate the church, so any interior violations will be addressed through that process.

Mr. Connelly told Commissioner Nadler that there were enough parking spaces on site to satisfy City requirements. Commissioner Beach added that the site plan details that the lot is to be paved and striped.

Commissioner Beach opened the floor for the public hearing.

Mr. Matthew Wagoner, attorney representing the owner of the cannabis dispensary, adult entertainment store and bar all located on Lower Broadway, discussed the uncertainty of the laws regulating proximity of cannabis dispensaries to churches. While these businesses are currently operating legally, Mr. Wagoner's client is concerned that the addition of a church will make it difficult to renew his licenses as is required by State law. As his client had invested significant money into the properties, and had gotten all necessary approvals and permits, the Planning Commission should review the potential ramifications on the businesses before issuing approvals.

The Commission agreed that it would not be fair to make a decision without having full knowledge of the law. Mr. Dachinger said he would look into this issue and be able to provide clarity for the Commission at the next meeting.

SITE PLAN RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Hitlall** to table the site plan application until the law regarding the proximity of churches to cannabis dispensaries, bars and adult entertainment stores was understood. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Bland**.

Motion carried unanimously.

- D. **Deli Zhang** requests site plan approval pursuant to Section 264-90(M) of a proposal to operate a spa at 1833 Broadway, tax parcel # 48.52-2-26.1, located in the C-2 Mixed-Use Commercial District.

Ms. Chein Hua Cheng was present virtually to discuss the proposal for 1833 Broadway. Mr. Connelly mentioned that there was a spa previously in this location, which closed shortly after the City passed legislation requiring a Certificate of Use for all massage parlors.

As Ms. Cheng has difficulty understanding English, Mr. Connelly sent her an email making sure she understood the requirements to obtain a Certificate of Use prior to opening, and the Certificate must be reapplied for every year. After translating the email, Ms. Cheng confirmed that she fully understood the process.

Ms. Cheng told Commissioner Beach that there would only be two employees for the business.

Commissioner Beach opened the floor for the public hearing, which was closed as no comments were heard.

SITE PLAN RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Wilson** to approve the application with the following conditions and findings of fact. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Bland**:

1. The address will be prominently displayed so that it is easily visible from Broadway.
2. Metal roll gates and iron bars will not be installed on any doors or windows at any time in the future.
3. Pursuant to Section 264-93, site plan approval is valid so long as building permits are pulled within one year of approval.
4. The business requires a Certificate of Use prior to opening. The Certificate of Use must be renewed every year.

Motion carried unanimously.

- E. Ravin Seecoomar** requests site plan approval pursuant to Section 264-90(J) of a proposal to operate an autobody and repair shop at 9 Edison Avenue, tax parcel # 49.31-1-2, located in the M-1 Light Manufacturing and Warehousing District.

Mr. Ravin Seecoomar passed around a rendering of his proposed signage, and explained his business for the Commission. Mr. Seecoomar said that he had removed the graffiti that was noted on the staff report. He had no comments on any of the rest of the staff report.

Mr. Seecoomar confirmed that no more than 16 cars will be parked on site at any given time, as detailed on the site plan.

Mr. Seecoomar told Commissioner Wilson that no materials will be stored outside, and no work will take place outside.

Commissioner Beach opened the floor for the public hearing.

Mr. Mohamed Hafez, who owned property nearby, said that he had no objection to the business, but mentioned that there is an easement on Mr. Seecoomar's property that he wanted to make sure was maintained. Mr. Seecoomar said he was aware of the easement and would not do anything to violate it.

With no further comments being heard, the public hearing was closed.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Wilson** to issue a negative SEQR declaration. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Nadler**.

Motion carried unanimously.

SITE PLAN RESOLUTION

Motion made by **Commissioner Hitlall** to issue site plan approval. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Bland** with the following conditions and findings of fact:

1. The address will be prominently displayed so that it is easily visible from Edison Avenue.
2. Metal roll gates and iron bars will not be installed on any doors or windows at any time in the future.
3. Pursuant to Section 264-93, site plan approval is valid so long as building permits are pulled within one year of approval.
4. The curb cut along Edison Avenue must be narrowed to 40' wide.
5. No more than 16 cars may be parked on site at one given time. Cars must be parked in an organized manner as detailed in the site plan.

Motion carried unanimously.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

ADJOURN

Motion made by **Commissioner Hitlall** to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by **Commissioner Wilson**. The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.

Motion carried unanimously.