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Home > Big Issues Coming to EL City Council and Planning Commission This Week

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## Big Issues Coming to EL City Council and Planning Commission This Week <sup>[1]</sup>

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By:

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East Lansing City Council has a packed agenda for its discussion-only meeting this Tuesday, and on Wednesday, Planning Commission may make a decision on the site plan for the property the City auctioned off on eBay and will consider a proposed move of the downtown bar/restaurant P.T. O'Malley's.

City Council is due to talk about the **deer overpopulation problem** at its Tuesday meeting, which is set to start at 7 p.m. in the courtroom upstairs at City Hall. ELi has been tipped off that Council is likely to call for a citywide discussion of the subject this coming fall.

ELi recently surveyed its readers about their experiences with and attitudes toward deer in East Lansing. You can see the survey results here <sup>[2]</sup>.

State law requires that municipalities with income taxes set up an **Income Tax Board of Review** to hear appeals. Tuesday's Council agenda <sup>[3]</sup> includes discussion of the setting up of that Board for East Lansing.

Tuesday's agenda also includes discussion of a **housing study** to better understand the supply and demand for housing, in particular the higher-density multifamily housing that includes rental, owner-occupied, and income-qualified products, according to a staff memo [4].

That housing study would come in response to concerns raised by members of the Planning Commission [5] about possible saturation of the student-apartment rental market in East Lansing, but may also be coming in response to concerns about the Royal Vlahakis deal [6] and about the desire of Core Spaces to build another Hub project [7].

Will the housing study also look at the question of senior housing? Developers Harbor Bay Real Estate and Ballein Management are said to be having real trouble renting out the 55-and-over rental apartments in Newman Lofts under construction over the new parking garage. In May, East Lansing's Downtown Development Authority was told that only 5 of those 93 apartments [8] have been pre-leased. The developers have not responded to requests to confirm or correct that figure.

Tuesday's meeting will also see discussion of a related issue – a possible **moratorium on new building projects** in the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) District. ELi reported [9] that this issue showed up pretty much out of the blue on Council's agenda last week. Then, just before the meeting, it disappeared [10]. Now Council will discuss it.

Downtown businesses are continuing to suffer in the wake of construction, so City Council will hear from staff on Tuesday about an idea [11] to provide **half-hour free downtown parking** for all visitors to gated garages (Grove, M.A.C., Charles, and Division) and the gated Bailey surface lot in July and maybe also August.

Such a plan is estimated to cost the City about \$35,000-\$40,000 per month in lost parking revenue.

Staff also wants to present to Council answers to its questions about what it would cost to fix and upgrade the **Community Center at Valley Court Park**. Mayor Mark Meadows has repeatedly expressed interest in replacing that building with something new, including possibly senior housing, so what we may be seeing is groundwork being laid for demolition and replacement of that building.

Meadows has also indicated he wants that building and all of Valley Court Park out of the Historic District [12] to allow for Council to more easily change the structures in the park. Council voted 4-1 in early May [13] to **shrink the Oakwood Historic District** in preparation for redevelopment of the area on the south, but Council has not taken the final action required to make the Historic District change and has not explained why it hasn't.

Council has also remained mum on what's going on with the **search for the next City Attorney**. ELi reported last week that newly-released documents reveal [14] a number of interesting issues in that search.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday [15], Planning Commission will again take up the **site plan from Kodiak Landarc** and its affiliates to redevelop the property it obtained the right to buy from the

City on Merritt Road, near Costco, through an eBay auction [16] that was largely kept quiet [17]. The developers want to put in a marijuana provisioning center, a hotel, and a strip shopping mall [18].

The Planning Commission will also consider a **request from P.T. O'Malley's to move** its operation from its Abbot Road location to 115 Albert Avenue, where Menna's Joint used to be. The owners want [19] to "add on approximately 78 sq. ft. of space by bumping the wall out in the front of the building" and to add "a garage door type window for open air dining during seasons of mild weather."

### **Want to weigh in on any of this?**

You can speak at public comment near the start of City Council's meeting on Tuesday. See the agenda here [20]. You can also send email to City council at [council@cityofeastlansing.com](mailto:council@cityofeastlansing.com) [21].

You can also speak at public comment near the start of Planning Commission's meeting on Wednesday. You can see that agenda here [15], and you can send email to Planning Commission via staff member David Haywood at [dhaywood@cityofeastlansing.com](mailto:dhaywood@cityofeastlansing.com) [22].

### **Who else keeps you this informed?**

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### **Related Categories:**

[City Council](#) [24]

[City Attorney](#) [25]

[Development and Planning](#) [26]

[Downtown Development Authority](#) [27]

[Finance and Taxes](#) [28]

[Government](#) [29]

[Historic Structures](#) [30]

[Local Businesses](#) [31]

[Center City District](#) [32]

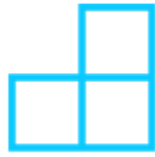
[Big Development](#) [33]

[Park District](#) [34]

[Parks & Rec](#) [35]

[Senior Life](#) [36]

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- [2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/we-asked-about-deer-east-lansing-here-are-your-answers>
- [3] [http://eastlansing.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&event\\_id=1869](http://eastlansing.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1869)
- [4] [https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&event\\_id=1869&meta\\_id=79556](https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1869&meta_id=79556)
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- [8] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/dda-recommends-allowing-later-and-louder-outdoor-dining-and-drinking>
- [9] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/council-consider-halting-all-redevelopment-downtown>
- [10] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/council-members-deny-development-moratorium-election-motivated>
- [11] [https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&event\\_id=1869&meta\\_id=79558](https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1869&meta_id=79558)
- [12] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/what-happens-if-valley-court-park-leaves-historic-district>
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- [17] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/revealed-who-city-notified-about-ebay-land-sale>
- [18] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/ebay-land-sale-plan-now-brings-surprises>
- [19] [https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&event\\_id=1962&meta\\_id=79584](https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1962&meta_id=79584)
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- [27] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/dda>
- [28] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/finance>
- [29] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/government>
- [30] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/historic-structures>
- [31] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/localbusiness>
- [32] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/center-city-district>
- [33] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/bigdevelopment>
- [34] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/park-district>

[35] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/panksnrec>

[36] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/senior>