



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BUCHANAN

WEDNESDAY, MAY 06, 2026 – 6:00 PM

CHAMBER OF BUCHANAN CITY HALL - 302 N REDBUD TRAIL, BUCHANAN MI

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Brayak at 6:03 PM.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. Roll Call

Present: Chris Brayak, Dan Carolson, Michael Rowland, Peter Lysy

Absent: Joe Paolucci

City Staff: Kristen Gunderstan and Kalla Langston

IV. Approve Agenda

Motion made by Rowland, supported by Carlson, to approve the agenda as presented. Voice vote carried unanimously.

V. Public Comments - Agenda Items Only (3-minute limit)

Beth Murphy, President of the Buchanan Preservation Society, addressed the Committee regarding the standards used to review proposed changes to downtown buildings. She expressed concern that decisions may appear inconsistent and asked how the Committee determines what is allowed. The Committee explained that applicants present their proposed work, which is then reviewed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, City of Buchanan standards, and Committee discussion. The Committee may approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove a request. Ms. Murphy specifically questioned the decision to allow the Brick and Bloom building to be painted, noting that painting brick is generally discouraged and that downtown Buchanan contains historic brick buildings. Committee members stated that the decision was difficult and involved extenuating circumstances, including multiple brick types, concrete masonry units, metal panels, and the rear of the building becoming a more visible façade due to a planned outdoor patio. Members emphasized that painting brick is generally not preferred, but the decision was based on the full application, needed repairs, building functionality, and code considerations. The Committee noted that the vote was split and that the decision was not made lightly. Ms. Murphy stated that she wanted to make her position known, and the Committee thanked her and the Preservation Society for their work.

VI. Approve Minutes

A. Consider approving the Meeting Minutes from April 9th, 2026.

Motion by Rowland, supported by Lysy, to approve the minutes as presented with the following corrections: revise the sign attachment language to state that the sign will be attached "into the mortar joints," and revise the reference to the "downtown design standards." Roll call votes are carried unanimously.

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Bylaws- Review and consider approving the draft bylaws.

Staff reviewed the proposed bylaw revisions. The draft included the addition of two alternates, comments from legal review, and expanded conflict-of-interest language. The Committee discussed the different actions it may take on applications, including approval, denial, and approval with conditions. Staff explained that conditions need to be clear so the applicants, staff, and inspectors know what is required. Staff also noted that an application can be broken into separate items if the Committee wants to approve some parts and deny others. The Committee discussed whether tabling or postponing an application needed to be listed as a separate option. It was noted that those actions are already available under the meeting procedure. The Committee reviewed the officer section and agreed that the bylaws should refer to a "recording secretary" and clarify that City staff will serve in that role. Several minor edits were also identified, including correcting typos and updating the secretary language for consistency. The Committee also discussed the attendance section. It was clarified that the attendance requirements would apply moving forward after the bylaws are approved. Staff noted that delaying approval until June would also delay City Commission review and could affect progress with the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities process. Because the changes were minor, the Committee can approve the bylaws as amended.

Motion made by Rowland, supported by Carlson, to approve the bylaws as amended.

Voice votes are carried unanimously.

Rowland had to leave for prior commitments at 6:55 PM.

VIII. New Business

A. Design Review Committee and the Unified Development Code- Draft 1 of proposed changes review and discuss.

Staff reviewed the proposed UDC amendments for downtown design review. It was noted that the current UDC references the Committee but does not include detailed standards for review. The proposed changes would create a Downtown Design Review Overlay District and add standards for exterior changes in the downtown area. The Committee discussed the proposed boundaries, zoning map, and whether certain nearby properties should be included. The overlay is expected to generally follow the D Downtown District, with the map to be clarified. The Committee also discussed how future PUD requests would be handled and how exterior design review could be included as part of those approvals. Several text edits were discussed, including changing references from "village" to "city," clarifying overlay district language, and adding language to "protect and promote" the historic and architectural qualities of the city. The Committee had a broader discussion about whether its role is strictly design review or whether it also includes historic preservation. Staff noted that if the Committee wants to formally act as a historic preservation body, the City Commission may need to consider creating a Historic Preservation Commission. The Committee discussed that design review and historic preservation overlap in Buchanan, but clear and consistent standards are needed for applicants, staff, and the Committee. The Committee also discussed standards for windows, doors, storefronts, materials, and exterior alterations. Concerns were raised about protecting important features such as prism glass, original storefront systems, and other architectural details, while still allowing reasonable updates for energy efficiency, functionality, and cost.

Staff will send a Word version of the proposed amendments for review. Comments are due by May 20, so the item can come back at the June 3 meeting. The goal is to continue reviewing in June and July, send the amendments to the Planning Commission in August, and hold a public hearing in September.

B. Board Training

Staff provided training regarding the Michigan Open Meetings Act and board conduct expectations. Topics included meeting notices, quorum requirements, avoiding email or text discussions involving board business, avoiding outside discussions with applicants, and keeping deliberation and decision-making in public meetings. Staff emphasized that factual information may be shared through staff so it can be distributed equally to the full Committee, but discussion of pending applications or items that may come before the Committee should occur during an open meeting. The Committee also discussed general board expectations, including acting in the best interest of the public, maintaining respectful discussion, and ensuring that decisions are made openly and consistently.

IX. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only *(3-minute limit)*

X. Staff/Committee Comments

The Committee discussed ongoing attendance concerns regarding one member. It was noted that the member had indicated they were not resigning but had not been attending meetings. Staff and City administration will discuss how to proceed.

Staff noted that internal processes, permitting procedures, and enforcement mechanisms continue to be improved. The Committee discussed the importance of clear standards, consistent procedures, and having enforceable rules in place.

XI. Adjournment

Motion made by Brayak, supported by Carlson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. Voice vote carried unanimously.

Kalla Langston-Weiss, City Clerk

Chris Brayak, Chairperson