

**DRAFT MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026**

1. CALL TO ORDER

An adjourned meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order by VICE CHAIR ROMANELLI at 7:02 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Schachter led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Nicklas, Romanelli, Medawar, Olson, Repp-Loadsman, Schachter, Yoo

City Staff Present: Jeannie Naughton, Community Dev/Public Works Director
Katrina Kawagoe, Senior Planner
Cameron Hall, Assistant Planner
Denise Jaramillo, Administrative Assistant

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. APPROVAL OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES, APRIL 6, 2026

COMMISSIONER REPP-LOADSMAN made a motion, seconded by COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER to:

APPROVE THE PLANNING COMMISSIONER MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 6, 2026.

There being no objection, VICE CHAIR ROMANELLI ordered.

5. AUDIENCE ITEMS

NONE.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. READING IN FULL OF ALL ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION WILL BE WAIVED AND ALL SUCH ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS WILL BE READ BY TITLE ONLY.

COMMISSIONER YOO made a motion, seconded by COMMISSIONER REPP-LOADSMAN to:

APPROVE ITEM 6A

There being no objection, VICE CHAIR ROMANELLI so ordered.

COMMISSIONER ROMANELLI RECUSED HIMSELF FROM ITEMS NO. 7A and 7B DUE TO RESIDING WITHIN 500 FEET RADIUS OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY.

COMMISSIONER YOO assumed chairing duties until the arrival of the Chair.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 260077; APPLICANT: LOURDES CAWILE & DEBRA BEST; LOCATION: 39 SILVER SADDLE LANE; A Neighborhood Compatibility Determination (NC-260078) to legalize existing unpermitted retaining walls and a Grading Permit (G-260079) for the import of more than 20 cubic yards of earth materials and for grading on a slope greater than 35%.

Senior Planner Kawagoe presented Planning Application No. 260077 for the property located at 39 Silver Saddle Lane, requesting a Neighborhood Compatibility Determination and a Grading Permit to legalize unpermitted retaining walls and stabilize the rear yard slope. The 16,995-square-foot property is designated Medium Density Residential, zoned RA-15, and located within the Los Ranchos Verdes Homeowners Association, which was notified and provided no comments. Staff explained the application resulted from a 2023 Code Compliance investigation that identified unpermitted retaining wall construction and unauthorized removal of a street guardrail; although as-built plans were submitted, the walls were found structurally insufficient under current building code. The project proposes two supplemental low-profile retaining walls, limited grading including import of approximately 62 cubic yards of material, and reconstruction of two wall segments to meet setback standards. Staff found the project compatible with the neighborhood, the grading minimal and necessary for safety, noted no public comments were received, and stated the homeowners were present to answer any questions.

Staff recommended that the Planning Commission approve Planning Application PA-260077, subject to the conditions outlined in the staff report.

COMMISSIONER OLSON inquired whether the Homeowners Association (HOA) had been notified of the proposed project and if any comments had been received. Senior Planner Katrina Kawagoe confirmed that the HOA was notified and that no comments were submitted. Commissioner Olson also asked about the contractor responsible for the work, including whether the contractor held both local and state licenses. Senior Planner Kawagoe identified the contractor as Dan Martinez, noting that he frequently performs work within the City and, to her understanding, is licensed at both the local and state levels, although she was not personally familiar with him beyond his name.

COMMISSIONER OLSON asked about the purpose of the retaining of the walls and raised concerns about their condition and construction access from Hawthorne Boulevard. Senior Planner Katrina Kawagoe explained the work was intended to stabilize existing walls, clarifying they are structurally insufficient under current codes but were not defective when built, and that removal was not recommended due to cost. She noted that access would require an encroachment permit, traffic control, and coordination with Public Works, with Director Naughton confirming that liability insurance and a hold harmless agreement would be required.

COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER asked about the number of non-conforming walls, and Senior Planner Kawagoe explained that the two walls would be reconstructed to meet setback requirements while the top wall would remain, noting they were installed by a prior owner.

CHAIR YOO opened public comment, during which homeowner Lourdes Kawilli expressed support on behalf of herself and co-owner Deborah Best; no additional testimony was received. During deliberation, COMMISSIONER MEDAWAR supported the project for slope stability, while COMMISSIONER OLSON raised concerns about additional wall construction and retroactive approval of unpermitted work. Senior Planner Katrina Kawagoe confirmed applicable penalties and noted the work was likely completed by a prior owner. Ms. Kawilli stated there are no plans for future development, confirmed the walls were present at purchase, and indicated they were unaware of any permit issues.

PRIOR TO THE VOTE, THE RECORD WAS NOTED THAT CHAIR NICKLAS JOINED THE MEETING AT 7:15 P.M.

COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER made a motion, seconded by COMMISSIONER MEDAWAR to:

APPROVE PLANNING APPLICATION PA-260077, SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT.

Ayes: Medawar, Repp-Loadsman, Schachter
Noes: Olson, Yoo
Absent: None
Abstain: Nicklas

Director Naughton stated that the Planning Commission has approved Planning Application No. PA-260077, a Neighborhood Compatibility Determination to legalize existing unpermitted retaining walls and a grading permit for the import of more than 20 cubic yards of earth materials, and for grading on a slope greater than 35%, at 39 Silver Saddle Lane. There is a 20-day appeal period by which any member of the public or the Council, by its own motion, may appeal this project.

B. EXTENSION OF PERMIT TIME NO. 260081; APPLICANT: PRAVEEN GATTU; LOCATION: 58 SILVER SADDLE LANE; a request for approval of a one-year time extension (EPT-260081), as permitted under RHEMC 17.72.110.C.2, for entitlements approved under Planning Application No. PA-220190.

Assistant Planner Hall provided a presentation summarizing the staff report for the extension of permit No. 260081, request for a one-year time extension for Planning Application No. PA-220190 located at 58 Silver Saddle Lane. Assistant Planner Hall reported that the original approval included a Neighborhood Compatibility Determination for a 2,743-square-foot deck consisting of hillside and at-grade decking with two attached patio covers and required a variance because the deck exceeded 50 percent of the lot width. Staff reported that notices were mailed within a 500-foot radius on April 23, 2026, with no public comments received, and that site visits were conducted with neighboring properties to address prior privacy concerns, including a meeting with the residents at 6 Shady Vista Drive. Staff confirmed that the existing condition requiring installation of a tree valued up to \$10,000 would remain in effect and reviewed the fee history, noting the extension fee of \$2,350.75 as a proportionate alternative to full reapplication costs.

Staff recommended that the Planning Commission approve EPT-260081, granting a one-year time extension for PA-220190, as permitted in RHEMC Section 17.72.110.C.2, subject to the conditions outlined in Resolution No. PA-220190.

COMMISSIONER OLSON clarified that the original approval included a condition requiring the planting of one mature tree, selected and approved by staff, with a value not to exceed \$10,000. He noted that the current staff report wording could be interpreted to allow any tree under that amount, whereas the Commission's original intent was specifically a mature tree comparable to the one previously removed. He requested that this clarification be corrected to reflect the original motion's intent.

CHAIR NICKLAS requested clarification regarding the fee comparison between the extension request and a full reapplication. Assistant Planner Hall confirmed that the applicant paid \$2,350.75 for the one year extension and that, if the extension were denied and a reapplication required, total fees would be \$6,164.31.

CHAIR NICKLAS opened the discussion. Tony Williams, 6 Shady Vista Drive, spoke regarding privacy concerns, stating that while his household is the most directly impacted, they do not oppose the project. He emphasized that the required mature tree was a key mitigation measure and noted that a tree approved at \$10,000 four years ago would likely cost more today, expressing concern that a less mature tree would be ineffective for many years.

Commissioners discussed whether a single mature tree would adequately address privacy impacts. CHAIR NICKLAS requested clarification on the definition of a "mature tree," and the Commission reaffirmed the original intent that staff select a large specimen tree capable of providing effective visual screening. COMMISSIONER REPP-LOADSMAN noted that, based on inflation, the comparable value of the originally approved tree would be approximately \$11,300.

Director Naughton displayed the original 2022 approved plans. It was clarified that the trees shown near the underside of the deck were illustrative and intended to screen the structure itself, not replace the required single mature tree located downhill.

The applicant, Praveen Gattu, owner of property 58 Silver Saddle Lane, addressed the Commission and stated that he previously met with neighboring residents Tony and Jennifer Williams to address privacy concerns and conducted a drone study from the proposed deck location. He provided photographs and images to the Commissioners and stated that the materials showed no change in privacy conditions with construction of the deck. He clarified that the approved variance relates only to deck width and confirmed that trees are planned beneath the deck to screen the underside of the structure, separate from the required single mature tree intended to address privacy impacts downhill.

Director Naughton confirmed that Rolling Hills Estates Municipal Code Section 17.06.331(B)(7) already requires adequate screening of structures from adjacent properties through landscaping or other features, as determined by the Planning Director. COMMISSIONER REPP-LOADSMAN noted that while an additional condition may not be necessary given the existing code requirement, it would be reasonable to require confirmation or documentation of the proposed landscaping prior to final permit approval to ensure compliance.

Commissioners discussed whether the valuation cap for the required replacement tree should be increased to reflect inflation, while emphasizing the importance of installing a tree that is mature enough to promptly address privacy concerns. The Commission generally agreed that the existing approach—allowing staff discretion to determine an appropriate mature tree consistent with the street’s species and scale—should remain, with the valuation cap increased to \$11,500 to account for inflationary costs.

COMMISSIONER OLSON made a motion, seconded by COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER to:

APPROVE EXTENSION OF PERMIT TIME NO. 260081 FOR A MAXIMUM ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE EXISTING APPROVAL, SUBJECT TO THE APPLICANT SUBMITTING A LANDSCAPING PLAN IN COMPLIANCE WITH CODE REQUIREMENTS AND INSTALLING A MATURE TREE SIMILAR TO EXISTING STREET TREES, WITH SIZE AND SPECIES TO BE DETERMINED BY CITY STAFF, AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$11,500.

Ayes: Nicklas, Medawar, Olson, Repp-Loadsman, Schachter, Yoo
Noes: None
Absent: None
Abstain: None

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

NONE.

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER noted that Code Section 17.72.110 allows two permit extensions but does not specify a deadline for submitting requests, potentially allowing indefinite delays, and recommended establishing a defined filing timeframe while also suggesting revising the language from “grants” to “may be granted” to clarify that extension approval is discretionary. Director Naughton concurred and stated that staff is working with the City Attorney’s Office on zoning code amendments that will address these issues.

COMMISSIONER OLSON raised concerns regarding recurring unpermitted work and contractor accountability. COMMISSIONER REPP-LOADSMAN noted that the City may report violations to the State Contractor’s License Board. Director Naughton stated the City has no formal reporting policy but could consider reporting repeat or egregious violations, and COMMISSIONER SCHACHTER suggested City Council consideration. He also inquired about contractor records; Director Naughton confirmed no comprehensive list is maintained, and he suggested notifying contractors that violations may be reported as a preventative measure.

COMMISSIONER MEDAWAR raised concerns regarding the condition of the property at 700 Silver Spur Road, citing deteriorated awnings and unpermitted signage and banners, and requested staff inspection. Director Naughton stated the matter would be referred to Code Compliance staff for investigation.

COMMISSIONER OLSON inquired about a deteriorating retaining wall behind the Red Onion property and restricted parking. Director Naughton stated staff would follow up, and COMMISSIONER MEDAWAR noted the property involves multiple owners and possible litigation.

10. DIRECTOR ITEMS

NONE.

11. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

A. CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS, APRIL 14, 2026

THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECEIVED AND FILED ITEM NO. 11A.

12. ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR NICKLAS adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m. to the next regular Planning Commission meeting on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, Rolling Hills Estates.

Respectfully submitted by,

Approved,

Denise Jaramillo, Administrative Assistant

Will Nicklas, Chair