

# Chester Township Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes

| Wednesday, May 17, 2023 7:00 PM |

Meeting Called to Order by Mr. Oswick at: 7:05 pm

## **Roll Call**

Members present: Mr. Chess, Mr. Lauro, Mr. Oswick, Mr. Peto\*

Members absent: Mr. Kats, Mr. Nastasi

Admin present: Ms. McCarthy

\*Mr. Peto is a voting member in the absence of Mr. Kats

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Oswick led the Committee in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Approval of Minutes**

- Move to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2023 meeting as presented.  
Moved by Mr. Chess; Seconded by Mr. Peto  
Mr. Chess/yes; Mr. Kats/absent; Mr. Lauro/yes; Mr. Nastasi/absent; Mr. Oswick/yes  
Mr. Peto/yes  
Motion passed

## **Item 1. Discussion of Geauga Cty Planning Comm Items**

- Supplementary conditions on Variances
  - Group discussion leading to consensus that this would be a good amendment to move forward for the Chester Zoning Resolution. Group sent an email to the Board of Trustees asking for their general approval before moving forward.
- Sub HB 23 potential edits to Chester Zoning Resolution
  - Further investigation confirms there are no mines in Chester Twp. so this change would not be integrated into the Chester Twp. Zoning Resolution

## **Item 2 – Parks as a Potential Zoning District**

- Tabled for discussion when all Zoning Commission members are present.

## **Item 3 - Signage**

- Tabled to next meeting so all members may be present.

## **New Business**

Andy Chess distributed email regarding home synagogues and what is currently happening in Cleveland and University Heights along with Beachwood. Group discussion. Need to identify where we can get info to prohibit use – no further action at this time.

## **Public Comment and Questions**

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**Correspondence Received**

Northeast Ohio Planning and Zoning Workshop – June 30, 2023 at Kent State University hotel and Conference Center. Board of Trustees will cover cost for any Board members interested in attending.

**Open Items**

**Meeting Called to Close at:** 7:59 pm

Approved by:

Chester Township Zoning Commission June 7, 2023

Final Review by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Oswick, Chair

[https://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/news/local\\_news/beachwood-zoning-code-hearing-raises-questions-about-home-synagogues/article\\_ab2085b6-f4aa-11ed-a734-c75a101c7d32.html](https://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/news/local_news/beachwood-zoning-code-hearing-raises-questions-about-home-synagogues/article_ab2085b6-f4aa-11ed-a734-c75a101c7d32.html)

## Beachwood zoning code hearing raises questions about home synagogues

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May 17, 2023

Beachwood City Council held a public hearing as part of its meeting May 15 to discuss proposed changes to its zoning code, which could impact home synagogues.

Titled U5 Zoning Changes, the purpose of the proposed changes is to attempt to bring the city's zoning code up to date with recent changes to state laws and with recent court decisions regarding zoning in other communities, and secondly, to provide "more appropriate standards" for smaller institutional uses such as places of worship while "better protecting" the safety of users of those facilities and "better controlling" the impact of those uses in the neighborhoods they are located.

The proposed amendments also intend to expand the definition of places of worship to be more inclusive than the current definition, and to be more consistent with court decisions. Additionally, the definition of "family" would be modernized and would incorporate the concept of a "single housekeeping unit," which would "more accurately reflect today's societal norms," the agenda said. The designation "residential care facility" would also be revised to comply with the Ohio Revised Code, as well as revise the uses of a U-1 Single Family Residential District designation to include "residential care facilities," as is required by both state and federal law.

The proposed updates would also require institutions to exist on lots at least 18,000 square feet, 100-foot frontage and have at least 10 parking spaces.

Citizen comments ranged from support and opposition of the proposed changes, specifically as it pertained to the house of worship designation and how it would affect home synagogues.

Some residents expressed support for those home synagogues, referring to them as “very convenient,” that if allowed to operate to their fullest potential would “revitalize the area,” and that there are “benefits to be had” in their existence. Most comments supporting the home synagogues did express concern about the proposed amendments’ overarching requirements, like comments from Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP attorney Aaron Evenchik, who wondered why the city isn’t instead “meeting the synagogues where they are.”

“The things shown here don’t get you where you need to be to achieve peace and harmony with (home shuls),” Evenchik said, suggesting the proposed changes shrink the minimum lot size to match existing lots; the elimination of parking requirements; and requesting the city permit home-based synagogue uses as similar/harmonious and compatible or conditional use as to not require complete rezoning.

Those who expressed concerns over the home synagogues brought up parking issues, safety and fire hazards and traffic congestion, and questioned if the home synagogues help property values.

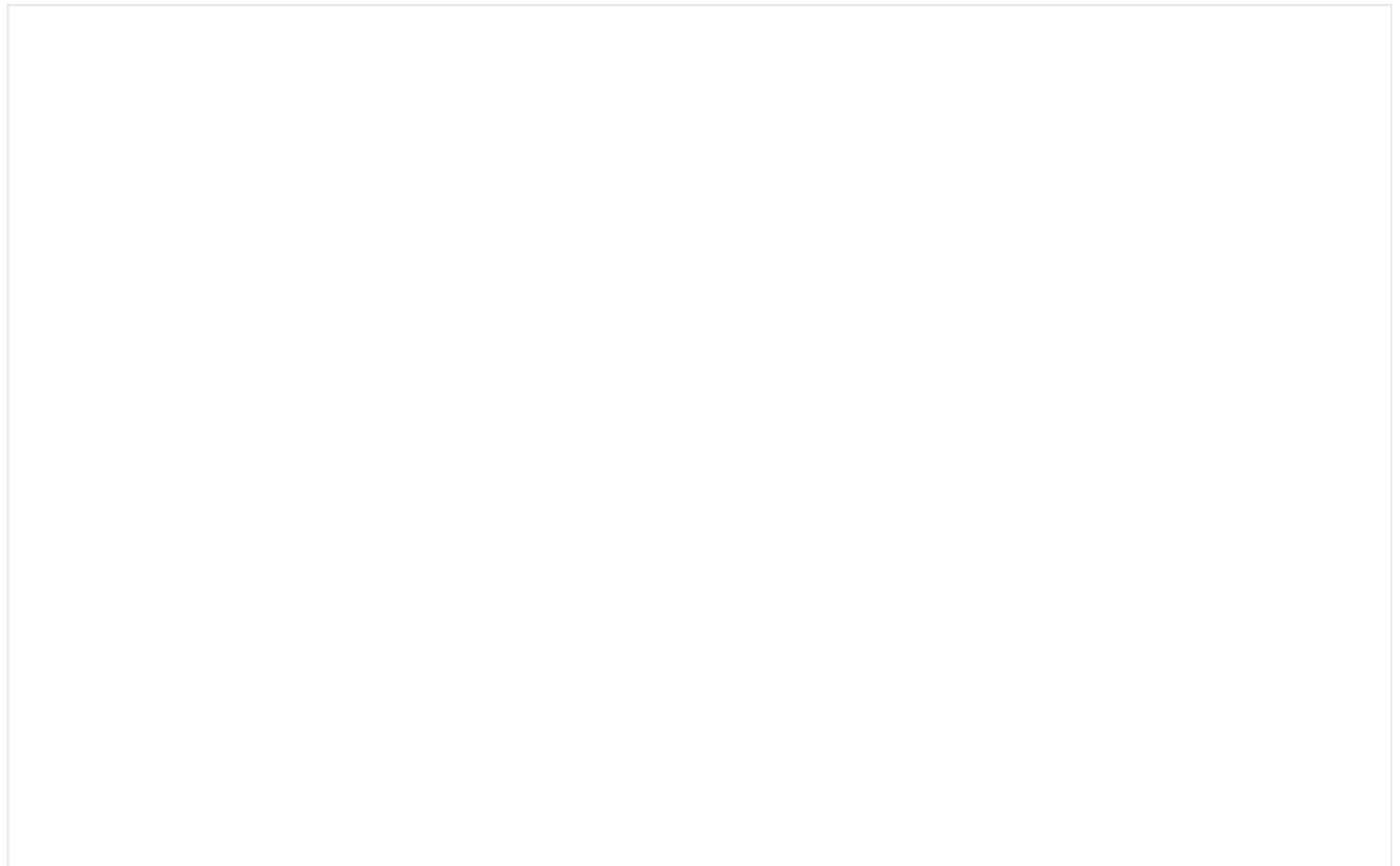
Council first voted on the proposed changes at its April 3 meeting, where members voted unanimously to place the proposal on second reading and referred it to the public hearing. Next, the proposed changes will be sent to council for a third reading.

Council president Alec Isaacson said that since the city is now operating in “the summer months,” meetings will move to once a month. So, unless there is a special meeting, the earliest the proposed amendments would be discussed on a third reading would be its June 12 meeting.

“This is a contentious issue,” he said. “We as council need to deliberate this issue to make the best decision we possibly can. I don’t expect further deliberation on this item this evening.”

*Publisher’s note: Aaron Evenchik is a member of the Cleveland Jewish News Foundation Board of Directors.*

#### RELATED CONTENT





Beachwood proposed zoning updates to include 'places of worship'

Becky Raspe