

City of Zion

Planning and Zoning Commission

Meeting Minutes

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
Thursday, April 2, 2026 7:00pm
ZION CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

I. Opening Protocol

- Call to Order
Chairman Riley called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.
- Attendance
Present: Commissioners Champine, Heffelman, Johnson, Quinn, Smith & Chairman Riley. A quorum was present.
Also present: Director Rich Ianson, Attorney Mike Garriga
- Approval of meeting minutes from December 4, 2025
It was motioned by Commissioner Champine and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve the meeting minutes as presented.
Vote: Commissioners Champine, aye; Heffelman, aye; Johnson, aye; Quinn, aye; Smith, aye; Chairman Riley, aye. Motion passes.

At this time, Chairman Riley swore in all audience members that will be speaking towards any of the dockets.

II. Public Hearings

1. Docket 26-Z-1

Petitioner: Christian Khayat – Khayat Enterprises/Green Fig Solar, LLC
Request: Remove existing PUD and approve new PUD with a Special Use Permit to allow a solar farm and residential subdivision located at 40375 Kenosha Road.

Glenn Christensen and Bernardo Urdaneta reviewed the project's history, noting earlier proposals for the site included an 82-home subdivision, a solar farm with homes, and a solar farm with open space; however, City Council requested that residential development remain part of the plan. The current proposal from Green Fig Solar combines a solar facility on 22.71 acres with 33 single-family homes on 13.28 acres, supported by a letter of intent from KLM Builders to construct the residential portion. The solar project would include about 12,000 panels connected to ComEd along Kenosha Road, with setbacks, landscaping, noise controls, and a required decommissioning bond, while residential access would connect through existing neighborhood streets due to county restrictions on new road access to Kenosha Road. Chris Khayat explained that he is partnering with custom home builder Kim Meyer, who builds homes in small, client-specific batches and would likely build this subdivision in

phases of about a third at a time, meaning full build-out could take around seven years in the current market.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Urdaneta for technical details about the project, including how many solar panels would be installed, their life expectancy, and any associated fire or electrical hazards. Mr. Urdaneta responded that the project would have about 12,000 panels with an expected life of 30–35 years, backed by a 25-year warranty, and that there are no flammable components, with the site monitored 24/7 for safety and performance. Smith also inquired about where the power would go and any impacts on nearby homes, and Mr. Urdaneta explained that the system will interconnect to ComEd via Kenosha Road, produces minimal noise, and the panels are designed to absorb light, resulting in no significant glare and less reflection than water.

Commissioner Champine asked whether the necessary electrical infrastructure was in place for the solar project's output and confirmed that the power would be picked up by Commonwealth Edison (ComEd). Mr. Urdaneta responded that the project's point of interconnection is along Kenosha Road, where six overhead poles will be built parallel to the access road to connect into the existing line. He explained that from there, the power will flow to the nearest substation and into the ComEd system.

Commissioner Heffelman asked Mr. Christensen to clarify how much of the site in the current proposal would be devoted to solar versus residential use. Mr. Christensen said that the plan includes 22.71 acres of solar and 13.28 acres of single-family lots, with 33 homes and reduced road connections designed to discourage cut-through traffic. Commissioner Heffelman questioned the distance from the solar field to existing homes. Mr. Christensen said that panels would be set back 30 feet from property lines, with typical rear setbacks resulting in about 60 feet between existing houses and the nearest panels, plus hedgerows, fencing, and added landscaping. Commissioner Heffelman asked how construction access would work. Mr. Christensen responded that initial heavy grading would use a temporary access from Kenosha Road, after which construction traffic for the homes would likely use existing neighborhood streets, similar to recent developments. He also stated that final road design and construction details would be worked out in formal engineering and must comply with City of Zion standards.

Chairman Riley asked Mr. Christensen to clarify potential noise impacts from installing and operating the solar panels and whether any ongoing noise would affect neighbors. Mr. Christensen responded that apart from some temporary construction noise, the operating facility would be essentially quiet, with only inverters producing a low-level hum that diminishes to background noise at distance, and he emphasized that equipment would be set back and buffered by existing trees and new landscaping.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Urdaneta what would happen at the end of the solar panels' useful life—specifically, how the facility would be decommissioned after the 25-year warranty period. Mr. Urdaneta explained that, as part of the building permit, they will submit a detailed decommissioning plan and cost estimate for city review, commit to returning the property as close as possible to its current condition, and post a decommissioning bond in the city's favor to ensure funds are available to remove equipment and restore the site, while also recovering valuable materials from the project.

Commissioner Quinn asked about keeping a separate construction road along the property line so heavy equipment wouldn't have to loop through the residential subdivision and about timing relative to the solar farm construction. Mr. Christensen explained that the county typically issues a temporary construction permit for major earthmoving and that the feasibility of maintaining such a road would depend on final engineering, with underground utilities likely done all at once and surface improvements (curb, sidewalks, pavement) phased later.

Feltus Sterling, 2702 Mark Avenue, expressed concern that the City Council is prioritizing revenue from new housing over the needs of the 71 existing families in the area. He noted that construction could last seven to ten years, bringing heavy traffic through their street and potentially causing damage to local roads.

Greg Gilmore, 2109 Cypress, expressed concern that Cypress Park's streets and drainage are already in poor condition and prone to flooding, and that construction traffic for the new development would further damage the roads.

Maurice Jones, 2703 Mark Avenue, questioned why more homes are being added when existing infrastructure like roads is already inadequate.

Ron McLaughlin, 2619 Mark Avenue, questioned why the City Council overrode the Planning & Zoning Commission's earlier resident-supported recommendation, arguing that if there were real demand for the already-approved 82-home plan it would have been built in the past 20 years.

Kelly McLaughlin, 2619 Mark Avenue, questioned how the proposed \$300,000–\$400,000 homes would sell when there are already many empty, unsold lots and only recently started new homes in nearby subdivisions like Shepherds Crossing and Cypress Park.

After reviewing the Findings of Facts, it was motioned by Commissioner Champine and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to recommend approval of PUD with a special use permit with a stipulation of a developers bond. **Vote: Commissioners Champine, aye; Heffelman,**

nay; Johnson, nay; Quinn, nay; Smith, nay; Chairman Riley, aye.
Motion fails to pass.

2. Docket 26-Z-2

Petitioner: SunPeak

Request: Seeking a Special Use Permit to install a roof top solar panel system at the property located at 3905 IL Route 173.

Docket was tabled until May 7, 2026.

III. Old Business

There was none.

IV. Docket Updates

Director Ianson stated that Dockets 25-Z-20 and 25-Z-21 were approved.

V. New Business

There was none.

VI. Public Participation

There was none.

VII. Adjourn

With no further business to come before the Commission, it was motioned by Commissioner Heffelman and seconded by Commissioner Champine to adjourn the meeting at 8:57pm. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes recorded by: Sonolito Bronson