

**CITY OF OAK FOREST
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 4, 2026**

The Planning & Zoning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Staff Member Paul Ruane.

Pledge of allegiance.

PRESENT: Chairman Ziak
Commissioner Ater
Commissioner Forbes
Commissioner Guisinger
Commissioner LaRoche
Commissioner Larson
Commissioner McGrath
Commissioner Runge
Staff Member Paul Ruane
Staff Member Hunter Heyman

ABSENT: Commissioner Bittner

1. ZC #26-04 – Cicero Avenue Rezoning – Text Amendment: PUBLIC HEARING – The applicant requests review and recommendation of approval of a text amendment to update the following provisions of the City of Oak Forest Zoning Code: Article VI Office District, Part II-F Senior Citizen Housing Regulations, Appendix A: Zoning Table of Uses, Appendix B: Table of Bulk, Space, and Setback Requirements and such other and further zoning relief that may be required to remove the Office District

Community Planner Hunter Heyman presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission about this item. The 2008 comprehensive plan for Oak Forest recommended removing the office district to simplify and streamline the city’s zoning framework. This was further supported by Ordinance 2025-07-1099, which aligned the commercial and office use tables, reflecting that the types of businesses allowed in both districts were essentially the same. The current proposed text amendment aims to simplify the zoning code by officially eliminating the office district designation and folding it into commercial districts, thereby better mirroring existing business realities and making the code easier to navigate and apply.

The amendment introduces several key modifications. For senior housing regulations, the proposal permits senior housing as a residential use above commercial spaces, removing its previous classification as a special use. Regarding building height limits, adjustments were made to accommodate existing structures along Cicero Avenue and 159th Street, where four- and five-story buildings exist; the C1 district retains lower height limits to preserve the character of local commercial areas. Minimum lot size requirements are removed, especially to enable development on smaller parcels common in Oak Forest, providing flexibility without forcing property owners to combine lots.

2. Discussion for the allowance of Hookah Lounges **PUBLIC MEETING**

Community Planner Hunter Heyman shared there has been growing interest from several individuals in Oak Forest seeking to establish tobacco hookah lounges. Currently, the city's zoning code does not specifically list hookah lounges as a permitted use, making a text amendment necessary to clarify and formalize their status. Hookah lounges are defined as establishments where customers smoke flavored tobacco through water pipes in a relaxed, lounge-style atmosphere. Such lounges exist in neighboring municipalities like Tinley Park, Homewood, Matteson, and Richton Park.

State law prohibits smoking in enclosed public spaces and places of employment but exempts tobacco stores and outdoor tents and patios that meet certain conditions, such as being open on at least one or more sides and located at least 15 feet from doors or windows. Retail tobacco stores are currently permitted in Oak Forest and are subject to a \$100 tobacco license fee. Importantly, state law mandates that any new retail tobacco or hookah lounge must be housed in a freestanding structure, meaning it cannot be physically connected to other buildings. Only those establishments operating before January 1, 2008, are exempt from this requirement.

Neighboring municipalities handle hookah lounges and tobacco-related establishments with varying regulations. Homer Glen treats smoking lounges as special uses requiring hearings. Tinley Park classifies tobacco retailers as special uses but allows lounges. Frankfort and Norwich require a tobacco license and adherence to the freestanding building rule, consistent with state law. These examples provide a regulatory framework for Oak Forest to consider while balancing public health and business interests.

The main points of discussion revolved around whether hookah lounges should require special hearings or simply be subject to an administrative licensing process with a \$100 fee, similar to tobacco stores. State law mandates ventilation and HVAC standards (such as MERV filters) to mitigate indoor smoke impacts, and these must be met regardless of local zoning decisions. Commissioners generally favored streamlining the administrative process to avoid unnecessary barriers for businesses, provided that state health and safety requirements are followed.

There was broad agreement among the commission members to permit hookah lounges similarly to tobacco stores, without imposing special use hearings. This approach simplifies the process for applicants and clarifies the city's stance on these lounges. It was also agreed that the zoning code should explicitly allow hookah lounges to avoid ambiguity, making the regulatory environment clearer for potential operators.

City staff will draft a formal text amendment to update the zoning code to explicitly permit hookah lounges under the conditions discussed. This amendment will clarify licensing, building requirements, and use permissions. The proposal is planned for presentation and consideration at the first Planning and Zoning meeting in March 2026, following the required public notice period.

Chairman Ziak asked for a motion for approval of January 7th 2026 and 21st 2026 meeting minutes. Commissioner LaRoche made a motion to approve. Commissioner McGrath seconded.

Roll call.